



Faculty, Academic Careers, and Environments (FACE)

Institutional Data Providers Focus Groups Report

by:

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Project Overview



The purpose of the Faculty, Academic Careers and Environments (FACE) project is to understand who faculty are, what their academic careers look like, and how the environments in which they work shape their ability to thrive as instructors, researchers and public scholars in the community. The goal of the project is to examine and pilot test how best to create a national survey of faculty teaching at colleges and universities of all types across the country.

With funding from the National Science Foundation, we are developing and testing the infrastructure, procedures, and survey instruments necessary to successfully achieve these goals. The FACE project is led by Adrianna Kezar at the University of Southern California, KC Culver at the University of Alabama, and Caren Arbeit at RTI International, an independent nonprofit research institute that specializes in education and workforce research.

Between 1988 and 2004, The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) administered four iterations of the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF), which served as the primary source of nationally representative data on faculty work. Given that NSOPF was last administered in 2004, this project explores how a nationally representative study of academic personnel might be done most effectively 20 years later.

Recently published books on faculty (Finkelstein et al., 2016; Kezar et al., 2019) have lamented the lack of publicly available data that provide a comprehensive national picture of academic careers and faculty working environments across institution types, disciplines and career roles. Recent reports from the

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Project Overview

National Academies (2018) and from the NSF-funded INCLUDES/ASPIRE alliance (Bennett et al., 2020) also identified the need for nationally representative, comprehensive data on faculty members' multiple and intersectional identities; institutions' use of practices that support the success of minoritized faculty; and faculty work experiences, including instructional practices that determine the quality of undergraduate STEM education. In addition, GAO (2017) highlights the lack of compatibility across existing data sources that makes it difficult to find basic information such as the number of faculty and salary information by discipline.

The National Academies report (2018) explicitly identifies NSF's interest in reviving the NSOPF, and a nationally representative survey is critical to understanding the organizational, behavioral, and psychosocial factors influencing academic employment. In particular, there is a need for data that illuminate faculty in terms of their positionality and roles, thereby allowing a better understanding of the composition of the academic workforce and efforts to diversify it, the institutional environments that influence faculty's opportunity to perform, and the work experiences that shape outcomes for faculty, students, and higher education overall.

There are a wide range of roles, responsibilities and day-to-day working conditions among the professoriate. The FACE project aims to capture the experiences of the academic workforce broadly, including all of the part-time and full-time professionals whose roles emphasize instruction and/or research¹, regardless of whether they are designated as



faculty. We aim to capture the experiences of tenure-line and contingent faculty across disciplines and across not-for-profit sectors of higher education (e.g., public and private, two-year and four-year, minority serving institutions). It is especially important to capture different institutional contexts as faculty lives and experiences can vary.

The vision for the FACE project at full-scale is to create a national sample of faculty members, as the U.S. Department of Education did previously. In order to accomplish this, the FACE project employs a two-stage sampling design: we will first create a sample of colleges and universities and then ask those institutions to supply us with rosters of their faculty members so that we can survey them directly. Designing and executing a study that achieves a nationally representative, comprehensive understanding of faculty is a complex undertaking. Most importantly, it requires that we collect data both from institutions and from faculty members, so that we can learn about institutional policies and practices as well as individual experiences.

¹ During our pilot, we also included professionals whose roles emphasized public outreach.

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The information gained from the focus groups informed the development of our data collection procedures, particularly in terms of identifying survey language and definitions.

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Goals and Aims of the Institutional Data Provider Focus Groups

Given the critical role of institutional data collection for the FACE project, we conducted focus groups with institutional researchers from different institutional contexts to inform our institution-level data collection instruments and processes because we were interested in speaking first with the people who would be responding to our requests at the institutional level. We hoped that speaking with the people who work with faculty data at the institutions (primarily people in institutional research) would allow us to get a better sense of what data exists and what would work best for institutional researchers (and other individuals who work with faculty data such as human resources professionals) in providing us with faculty rosters.

We conducted focus groups of institutional data providers to understand the specific data that institutions maintain on faculty (e.g., length and continuity of employment, advancement, office space, instructional load), which institutional offices maintain those data, the format of the data, and institutional policies related to data sharing. The information gained from the focus groups informed the development of our data collection procedures, particularly in terms of identifying survey language and definitions. Through this process, we evaluated opportunities for optimizing the use of existing institutional data to reduce the burden on institutional researchers as well as faculty respondents.



Recruitment and Sample

We sent out the call for focus group participants via our project Advisory Board, endorsing organizations, social media and personal connections in October 2022. Our extensive outreach campaign included outreach via Twitter, LinkedIn, College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR), The Association for Institutional Research (AIR), the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS) and University of Southern California's Pullias Center for Higher Education. We received 158 responses, although many of these were not legitimate responses from college or university faculty data providers. Ultimately, we divided our 17 focus group participants into four institutional segments: community colleges (3), private universities (7), regional public universities (3), and major research universities (4). We invited 11 other initial respondents (all from private universities) to complete a pre-participation form (see appendix A); six did so but did not participate in a focus group, and 5 did not complete the pre-participation form. Table 1 presents an anonymized list of focus group participants. Table 2 lists respondents who completed the pre-participation form but did not attend a focus group, as well as those who were invited to complete the pre-participation form but did not respond. Each focus group participant received a \$150 gift card as an incentive.

17 FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

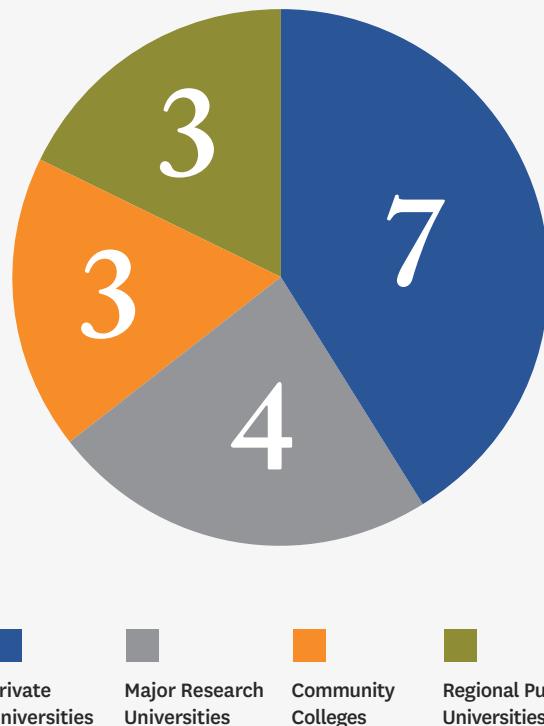


TABLE 1. Focus group participants.

Participant ID	TITLE	SEGMENT	MSI STATUS
1	Director of Institutional Effectiveness	Community College	NOT MSI
2	Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Research	Community College	HBCU
3	Executive Director, Institutional Effectiveness, Research & Planning	Community College	NOT MSI
4	Senior Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness	Private	NOT MSI
5	Associate Provost, Institutional Research, Planning and Student Success	Private	NOT MSI
6	Associate Director for Institutional Research	Private	NOT MSI
7	Director of Institutional Research	Private	NOT MSI
8	Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research and Effectiveness	Private	NOT MSI
9	Director of Institutional Effectiveness	Private	NOT MSI
10	Director, Institutional Research	Private	NOT MSI
11	Vice President for Strategic Research	Regional	NOT MSI
12	Assistant to the President and Director, Institutional Effectiveness & Planning	Regional	NOT MSI
13	Assistant Provost of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Assessment	Regional	NOT MSI
14	Director, Office of Decision Support	Major Research	EMERGING HSI
15	Senior Director of Academic Appointments	Major Research	NOT MSI
16	Associate Vice Provost for Institutional Research and Decision Support	Major Research	HSI
17	Director of Faculty Analytics	Major Research	NOT MSI

TABLE 2. Additional survey respondents.

Respondent ID	TITLE	SEGMENT	MSI STATUS
Pre-Participation Form without Focus Group			
18	Assistant Vice Provost of Institutional Research and Analysis	Private	NOT MSI
19	Director of Institutional Research	Private	NOT MSI
20	Assistant Vice President, Institutional Research and Planning	Private	NOT MSI
21	Director, Institutional Research and Assessment	Private	NOT MSI
22	Director, Institutional Research	Private	NOT MSI
23	Associate Director of Institutional Research	Private	NOT MSI
Invited to Focus Group but Did Not Respond			
24	HR Generalist	Private	NOT MSI
25	Associate Provost for Institutional Research; Professor of Sociology	Private	NOT MSI
26	Associate Vice President for Institutional Research and Effectiveness	Private	NOT MSI
27	Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness	Private	NOT MSI
28	Executive Director, Institutional Effectiveness	Private	NOT MSI

In addition to speaking with institutional researchers, following a suggestion from our Advisory Board we met with four university legal counsel representatives in order to gain their perspective regarding potential legal issues with the FACE data collection process. We used our social networks to reach out to legal counsel. We spoke with 3 members of legal counsel from large public institutions and one from a large private institution. We did not speak to legal counsel from any community colleges or smaller institutions.

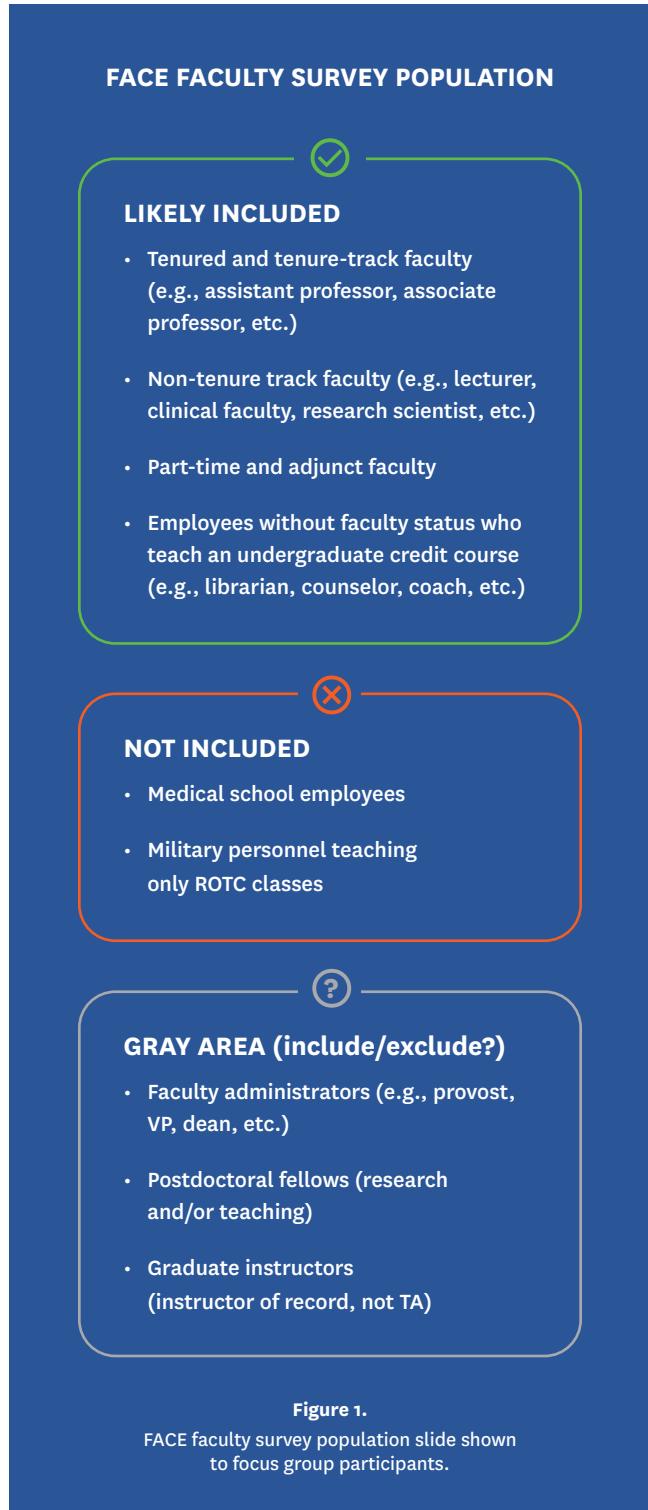


Data Collection

We held four focus groups and one interview (organized by institutional segment; see Table 1) between October 24 and November 10, 2022. Focus groups were held remotely over Zoom. Each focus group was scheduled for two hours, but the actual times ranged from 47 to 86 minutes.

During the focus groups, we prioritized hearing each participant's perspective to ensure that we captured the realities of their institutional data work. Additionally, participants were encouraged to respond to one another (in conversation and using the Zoom chat function) and share the challenges and difficulties of working with data on faculty and academic personnel. We asked questions about the FACE project population of interest, including challenges in identifying and defining academic personnel, as well as providing accurate counts. We also asked questions about the type of data institutions have available on faculty, where it is stored, whether it can be shared, and how to best promote institutional participation. Our discussion guide is included at the end of this report (See Appendix B).

Findings



Our findings from the focus groups cover three broad areas: the survey population, institutional policies and practices, and encouraging institutional participation. Below we describe our main findings in each area. Except where noted, findings are synthesized across institutional segments.

Survey Population

We asked the focus group participants to engage with us in a discussion of the intended population for the faculty survey and how best to describe this population. In order to stimulate discussion we provided participants with a graphic showing academic personnel who would likely be part of our target population (tenure track and non-tenure track faculty, part-time faculty and employees without faculty status who teach), personnel we did not intend to include (medical school employees and military personnel teaching only ROTC courses), and a “gray area” of personnel we were deciding whether to include (faculty administrators, postdoctoral fellows and graduate instructors). Figure 1 shows the graphic we displayed to participants.

Defining our Survey Population

The consensus among the participants was that the use of the term “faculty” would produce different lists from different institutions. For example, at some institutions adjunct instructors would not be categorized as faculty in internal administrative records. Similarly, participants felt that the title “faculty survey” might discourage some individuals we want to include (such as academic personnel who do not have a faculty title) from responding. Results from the focus group suggest that we should use an expansive title centered around functional work such as “academic personnel,” or list functions such as “employees conducting the work of teaching,

Findings

research and service/community engagement.” Furthermore, participants noted that it would be relatively easy for them to identify individuals who teach courses for credit.

Another perspective provided by a participant of the major research universities focus group was that librarians are considered faculty at many institutions regardless of whether they teach or not. Multiple participants mentioned the idea of FACE using the International Postsecondary Education Data System’s (IPED) definition of faculty as a starting point for our data collection. Lastly, participants noted that the population definition related to professional schools other than medicine (such as dental, veterinary, nursing) would need to be clarified as faculty classifications within professional schools may vary by institution.

Challenges for identifying or reaching faculty/personnel conducting faculty work

Aside from defining the survey population, most of the challenges that participants described were related to locating academic personnel and the timing of data collection. For example, at some institutions contracts for non-tenure-track faculty are renewed each year, making it difficult for institutional researchers to input an accurate initial year of hire. Participants suggested that we may want to use the date of most recent hire for this group. However, this means they will be unable to provide data about how long a non-tenure-track faculty member has been employed over time. Relatedly, for postdocs or part-time faculty who move into full-time positions, prior employment history may be lost when they transition into their new roles.

Participants noted that timing is an important factor when providing faculty lists. For example, IPEDS only counts fall faculty, so a part-time faculty member teaching only during the spring or summer semesters would not be reported. This conversation led to the suggestion that we may want to ask institutional researchers to include any academic personnel who taught over the past year. Another potential challenge would be collecting teaching loads for individual faculty members, since institutions may calculate those differently or may handle summer teaching differently. Two participants from the regional universities agreed that timing may also be

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Aside from defining the survey population, most of the challenges that participants described were related to locating academic personnel and the timing of data collection.

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Findings

an issue for staff who teach because they are categorized with a different position code only for the term(s) in which they teach.

There are additional challenges that exist for the participants we spoke with, specifically concerning access to information about contingent and part-time academic personnel. One participant from the private institutions focus group shared that instructors who teach lessons (applied or performing arts, physical education) may be difficult to locate as they may not be on campus often and records may be stored only within their department. Locating part-time and contingent faculty was also seen as a challenge at institutions where these faculty lose access to their institutional email addresses.

In some cases instruction may be contracted out, and institutional researchers indicated that they may have limited information on the instructors. In other instances, participants noted that part-time faculty may be hired informally through local connections within the department. Additionally, participants reported that it can be difficult to distinguish between contingent faculty who are actively teaching and those who may stay active in administrative records for several years even if they are not teaching.

Faculty Roster Data Elements

We showed participants a list of potential data elements for the faculty rosters (see *Figure 2*). This list included faculty name, gender identity, sex, race/ethnicity, position, department, year of hire, contract length, contact information, office or lab space, instructional load and salary. The consensus among the participants was that asking institutional researchers to provide any information beyond name, institutional e-mail and basic employment status may raise questions about definitions for demographic categories as well as privacy protections.

FACULTY ROSTER POTENTIAL DATA ELEMENTS

- NAME**
 - First and last name
 - Preferred name
- SEX/GENDER**
 - Sex (binary male/female)
 - Gender identity (woman/man/trans/non-binary)
- RACE/ETHNICITY**
- POSITION**
 - Role category (faculty, academic support services, etc.)
 - For faculty, tenured/tenure-track or non-tenure track
 - Specific job title
 - Full time/part time
- PRIMARY DEPT/PROGRAM/UNIT**
- YEAR OF HIRE**
- CONTRACT LENGTH**
- HIGHEST DEGREE EARNED**
- CONTACT INFORMATION**
 - Institutional email
 - Secondary email
 - Non-work phone number
- ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS**
 - Office/lab space
 - Instructional load
 - Salary

Figure 2.
Faculty roster data elements slide shown
to focus group participants.

Findings

For context, institutions responding to the 2004 NSOPF survey omitted data on sex and race/ethnicity in about 33% of cases (Cataldi et al., 2005). Participants suggested it is possible that individual-level race/ethnicity and gender identity data would be best asked of faculty directly. Further, gender identity beyond the binary and race/ethnicity data collections are not standardized in institutional reporting, and are therefore potentially complicated. Some participants noted that conversations have been initiated around including gender identity in faculty data, while others acknowledged that these conversations are not happening. Further, participants offered that demographic information may be missing for part-time faculty.

As noted earlier, participants identified a potential issue with limited institutional e-mail access for part-time faculty. In general, it seems unlikely that institutions would be able or willing to provide non-work e-mail or phone number for academic personnel.

One participant mentioned that highest degree earned is likely in a different data system, meaning that they would need to merge this element from another system. Data pertaining to faculty office or lab space (assignment and size) raised a lot of questions; participants were generally in agreement that lab and office space data is not stored in institutional research databases and would be difficult and time-consuming to procure. Finally, participants from private institutions agreed that faculty salary data could only be provided in the aggregate, while participants from public institutions noted that this data is publicly available and can be accessed from other sources.

Institutional Policies and Practices Related to Faculty

The National Study of Postsecondary Faculty had a separate institutional questionnaire that included questions about institutional policies and practices related to faculty, including changes in the number of faculty over five years; changes in tenure policy; number of faculty considered for and awarded or denied tenure; and early or phased retirement incentives, among others. We asked participants whether they would provide responses to items like these if asked.

Participants from major research institutions indicated they would be able to provide information on faculty counts over time if asked. Some were not sure whether the information was tracked in their system and mentioned a concern for how this data would be used. Participants suggested that changes

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The data available and the ability to share it was different across institutional types.

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Findings

in the number of faculty should be pulled from IPEDS by FACE team researchers rather than requested from institutions in order to reduce burden on the institutional research office.

Participants informed us that tenure decisions were private personnel records that would be difficult to locate and likely raise privacy concerns. One participant noted that tenure denials were relatively few because individuals who are aware they will not be granted tenure may leave before being denied. The participants from community colleges we spoke with mentioned that policies regarding tenure or early retirement incentives would require consultation with other offices before any data were released. By contrast, one participant from a regional university noted that data on early retirement existed in their system already and could be made available.

In general, focus group participants agreed that decisions regarding which information institutional researchers could provide would come from the provost or vice provost, and in some cases we were told it would need to go through faculty senate. One participant explained, “I don’t see the harm, but depends on what leadership wants.”

Focus group participants responded that they would be more likely to participate in FACE if the study were administered by a government agency such as the U.S. Department of Education. A participant from a private university noted that his institution does not participate in any surveys unless it is federally mandated to do so, though this was not a consensus view among participants.



Involve ment of Legal Counsel

The four university legal counsel representatives we spoke with varied in their opinions about the need for a legal agreement. Their answers ranged from “If we were provided a description of the intended use of the data, which data would be provided, and what protections would be in place we could decide whether a legal contract would be necessary” to “We would look upon a legal agreement positively.” In addition to these conversations, we asked focus group participants whether they would feel the need to contact the office of legal counsel at their institution before providing data for a project such as FACE. One focus group participant from a regional university said that they would feel better contacting institutional legal counsel regardless of the level of detail of the data they were asked to provide and cited their collective bargaining agreement. Alternately, one participant from a community college informed us that contacting legal counsel was not typically part of their process, but they might want to contact the state board of regents. The consensus among focus group participants regarding the involvement of legal counsel was that there would be some concern if more sensitive, (non-directory) personally identifiable data were requested.

Findings

Encouraging Institutional Participation

The focus groups we conducted helped us gather important information about how to encourage institutional participation in the FACE project.

Overall, participants felt that the primary incentive for participation in FACE would be the availability of peer comparison data. For example, one participant from a community college shared that having access to an institution-level aggregate report organized by institutional segment would be beneficial, especially if it might help them hire and retain diverse faculty.

One participant mentioned altruistic benefits to participating, such as larger national issues that the project might solve, and how their institution's participation might help others.

As noted previously, participants agreed that getting top-level buy-in (from institutional presidents and provosts, for example) was important. Interestingly, endorsements from relevant professional organizations such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR), and the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) and IRB

approvals apparently serve to demonstrate the project's legitimacy but do not serve as a true incentive for participation.

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One participant mentioned altruistic benefits to participating, such as larger national issues that the project might solve, and how their institution's participation might help others.

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Findings

Ideally, participants suggested that coordinating with other major faculty data projects such as IPEDS, Harvard's Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE), Indiana University Bloomington's College and University Teaching Environments Survey (CUTE), and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Faculty Compensation Survey on the timing of data collection and the definition of faculty

would be helpful and reduce the burden on institutional research professionals. One participant noted, "If an institution is doing both (CUTE and COACHE), how do we make a case for participating in another survey?" Relatedly, participants mentioned that we should only ask things that are not already known. The consensus was that there may be proxy data from other national surveys of faculty that are close; they suggested that we not ask for information that might be available elsewhere.

Another way to encourage institutional participation would be to make the respondent's tasks as clear and convenient as possible. In the words of one community college participant, "The likelihood of our participation is inverse to length and complexity of the request." Institutional research personnel (who are the likely respondents to any institutional requests) would like to be provided precise definitions and a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs), as well as a clear statement of the project's purpose and description of how the data will be used. One participant mentioned that having lead time (a semester, for example) as well as messaging about what is coming and who should be involved would be important.

The timing of a potential data request was also important. Participants mentioned the need to protect their faculty from "survey fatigue." Summer was mentioned as a good time for data collection; fall and early spring were not.

When asked about who would be the institutional data coordinator for a project like FACE, participants named themselves. For this reason, participants had a vested and informed interest in reducing the administrative burden for this project. In some cases, they indicated they would coordinate with other offices, such as human resources.



Limitations



It is important to note several limitations when considering the information gathered through the FACE project focus groups. First, there are a small number of institutions represented, and few minority-serving institutions. This limited our ability to report differences by institutional segment; however, we made efforts to provide examples from specific institutional

segments whenever possible. We aimed to speak with at least 30 individuals, and our total was 17. Additionally, participants self-selected by indicating interest and following up to schedule a time to meet. As a result of this self-selection, we spoke exclusively with individuals working in institutional research (broadly defined) and not with anyone from human resources.

Considerations for Future Study

The information contained in this report informed the development of our data collection instruments and procedures with a focus on identifying clear language and definitions related to faculty and what information we asked for. We also developed relationships with institutional researchers that in two cases led to an institution's participation in the pilot study. For these reasons, it was important to talk with institutional data providers as we develop the survey process and questionnaires.

Future researchers looking to collect faculty data from institutions should carefully consider how they define faculty and academic personnel when approaching this work, as small changes can result in excluding populations of interest such as contingent and part-time faculty or other personnel who perform faculty work but may not have that title. As stated earlier, one of our goals is to make it easy for institutional data providers to fulfill our data requests. However, not all institutions are resourced equally, and care should be taken when requesting information that will take time and burden institutional researchers, especially those from community colleges and regional universities.

The information learned from focus groups was a crucial part of the pilot phase of FACE project. Learning about how to best work with institutional researchers to define and collect data on faculty may impact our response rates as well as the reliability and validity of the data, and consequently the overall understanding of these large-scale, nationally representative data on faculty.



The individuals we spoke with in our focus groups possess a wealth of knowledge regarding data on faculty and academic personnel. They were passionate about data security, accuracy, and employee privacy. Focus group participants were forthcoming regarding the limits of their authority as to when institutional leaders, faculty senates, or even state representatives would be in charge of making decisions. They were interested in the purpose, use, and outcomes of FACE and should be seen as valuable collaborators and sources of information on faculty data.

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Appendix A

FACE Focus Groups Pre-Participation Form – October 2022

Q1

The purpose for our upcoming focus group is to learn more about the specific data that your institutions and systems maintain on faculty, which institution offices maintain those data and have reporting responsibilities, the format of the data, and your campuses' policies related to data sharing. Our goal is to make it easy for institutional data providers like you to fulfill our data request.

In order to inform our focus group discussion, we would like you to complete the following form. This will provide our research team with a strong understanding of the ways your institution collects and maintains data on faculty so that we can spend our time during the focus group learning more about how you interact with that data.

For the following questions, please respond to the best of your knowledge. There is no need to run a data query. If you don't know, please feel free to indicate so using "unknown." This form will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Please type your name below.

Q2

What is your institutional email address?

Q3

Based on the responses we received so far, we scheduled a focus group for (specific day and time).

Will you be able to join us for this focus group?

Yes

No, a better time/date for me would be:

Appendix A

Q4

Please list the titles/roles (e.g., assistant professor, lecturer, research scientist) that are included within the faculty category at your institution.

Q5

If employees in other roles (e.g., coach, librarian, academic advisor) have taught credit-bearing and/or developmental courses for undergraduates in the past 3 years, please list these job titles/roles. If there are none, please respond with N/A.

Q6

Please list the job titles and/or categories your institution uses to indicate part-time (adjunct or contingent) faculty and/or instructors.

Q7

Does your office submit faculty data to IPEDS? If not, which office(s) is responsible for this?

- Yes
- No. The office responsible for submitting faculty data to IPEDS is:

Appendix A

Q8

Does your office submit faculty counts and aggregate faculty data for other possible required or optional reporting for state agencies, benchmarking, accreditation, or other purposes? If not, which office(s) is responsible for this?

- Yes
- No. The office responsible for this is:

Q9

Does your office submit individual faculty rosters (individual names, highest degree held, institutional email address, etc.) for other required and/or optional reporting for state agencies, benchmarking, accreditation, or other purposes? If not, which office(s) is responsible for this?

- Yes
- No. The office responsible for this is:

Q10

What are the preferred format[s] (e.g., Excel file, comma separated, etc.) for providing rosters of individual faculty at your institution?

- Excel
- CSV
- TSV
- Other (please type in below)

Appendix A

Q11

We understand that there is wide variation in the data elements that institutions collect and how they are managed. Thinking in terms of potentially providing a faculty roster at the individual level, please indicate the following:

Do you (or someone in your office) have access to this data? (yes/no)

If yes, can the data be retrieved from the most comprehensive source of faculty data at your institution (e.g., human resources database, data management platform such as Workday), or does this data exist separately (e.g., course schedule, budget)? (together/separate)

Can this data be provided to us for survey sampling or to invite the individual to a survey? (yes/no)

	DOES THIS DATA EXIST AT THE INSTITUTION LEVEL?		IS THIS DATA PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE DATA FILE OR STORED SEPARATELY?		CAN THIS DATA BE PROVIDED TO US FOR SURVEY SAMPLING OR TO INVITE THE INDIVIDUAL TO A SURVEY?		COMMENTS
	YES	NO	TOGETHER	SEPARATELY	YES	NO	
First and last name	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Preferred name	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Sex (binary male/female)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Gender identity (woman/man/trans man/non-binary)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Race/ethnicity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Role category (faculty, academic support services, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
For faculty, tenured/tenure-track or non-tenure track	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Specific job title	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Primary department, program, or unit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Year of hire	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Contract length	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Full time/part time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Highest degree earned	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

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FACE Institutional Data Providers Focus Group Discussion Guide – October 2022

Introductions

Thanks very much for being willing to join our focus group today. We are working on a research project based at the University of Southern California studying college and university faculty.

Description of the Project and Process

The project is “Understanding Faculty, Academic Careers, and Environments in Service of Equity” (FACE) and is funded with a grant from the National Science Foundation. The goal of the project is to examine and pilot test how best to create a national survey of faculty teaching at colleges and universities of all types across the country. The US Department of Education used to do a National Study of Postsecondary Faculty, but that was last done in 2004; this project is exploring how such a study might be done most effectively 20 years later.

The method we would use to create a national sample of faculty members, as the Department of Education did previously, would be to create a sample of colleges and universities and then ask those institutions to supply us with lists of their faculty members so that we can survey them directly. That’s why we are starting the process by talking with the people who work with faculty data at the institutions—primarily people in Institutional Research or Human Resources—to get a better sense of what data they have and what would work best for them in providing us with lists. We also have an advisory board for the project, including leaders from the Association for Institutional Research (AIR), CUPA-HR, and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) to name a few.

Our purpose today is to learn more about the specific data that your institutions maintain on faculty, which institution offices maintain those data and have reporting responsibilities, the format of the data, and your campuses’ policies related to data sharing. What we learn from you will inform development of

our data collection procedures with a focus on identifying clear language and definitions related to faculty and what information we ask for. Our goal is to make it easy for institutional data providers like you to fulfill our data request.

In terms of how we are going to proceed today with the focus groups -- we have a few questions where we will ask for anyone to chime in, and we encourage you to also respond to one another. For a few of our questions we will go around and ask each person for their perspective to ensure we’re capturing the realities of institutional data work. Throughout, we’re hoping that you share the challenges and difficulties of doing this work and feel free to offer up different perspectives. Feel free to use the chat function to add comments you’re worried you might forget. And feel free to use the “Reactions” function to raise your hand so that you can add a point to today’s discussion, we will call on you. We will be monitoring both the chat and participant functions.

We also want to get your agreement to record the session, so that we can focus on the conversation and not have to worry as much about taking notes. We will not attribute any individual comments to specific people, and recordings and transcripts will be destroyed when the project is completed.

Are there any questions about the process before we begin with introductions?

We would like to begin by having everyone introduce themselves, please just tell us your name and the name of the college or university where you work, your title there and how long you’ve been there.

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We have four topics that we'd like to cover, and we want to encourage discussion. So we're going to try to cover each question in about 8-10 minutes. Of course, we may stay on some questions longer and some might lend themselves to shorter answers.

We're going to begin by talking about how to create clear definitions that help us identify the population for our survey.

Survey Population

Our initial thinking is that the population for our survey will include all institutional employees who are in the faculty role, regardless of whether they teach, as well as other full-time employees who teach courses, regardless of their status as faculty.

So, the survey population includes part-time or adjunct faculty, research faculty, lecturers, professors, and public service faculty, as well as academic administrators who are faculty, and professionals like librarians, coaches, or counselors who teach an undergraduate course. The only categories we definitely will not be including in our survey population are medical school employees such as physicians and military personnel who teach only ROTC courses, but there are several categories we are not sure about—and that is one of the main reasons we want to hear from you.

1. What labels do we need to use to capture the population we are interested in studying?
2. Are there categories of instructors or faculty you find difficult to classify for IPEDS?
 - a) Do IPEDS definitions exclude any categories of faculty you feel should be included?

3. What challenges might you face in identifying individuals in any of the categories potentially included in our population?
 - a) For instance, would it be difficult to identify a full-time staff member who taught an undergraduate class in the previous semester?
 - b) We know that part-time and adjunct instructors may be under-represented in IPEDS and other faculty data sources. What challenges might you face in identifying and providing accurate lists of these faculty?
 - c) What about categories shown in our gray area, would those be individuals you could identify at your institutions?

4. Have you identified any gaps in the types of faculty data that is collected and maintained by your institution?

Faculty Roster Data Elements

We will ask each institution in our sample to provide a faculty roster that includes demographic information, name, and e-mail address at the minimum. We are also interested in getting more information about individual faculty members that will help us construct a sampling frame that is nationally representative. Here is a list of the data points we are interested in, and we'd like your feedback on how feasible it may be for you to provide them.

5. In your pre-participation form, you provided information about whether this information exists, where it's stored, and whether it can be shared. As you went through these data points, what stood out to you as information that is not available at all or would be very difficult to provide?
 - a) Is there an issue at your institutions of multiple personnel data systems or having to extract information from systems set up for other purposes, such as the class schedule?

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6. One issue we are anticipating is that some institutions limit access to e-mail to current employees, so if we asked you for an institutional e-mail address for a part-time instructor who taught last semester, there might not be a working institutional e-mail address for you to provide. Have you faced challenges like this in the past?
 - a) What do you do when you face challenges such as these?

Institutional Policies and Practices

7. In the past, the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty had a separate institutional questionnaire that included questions about institutional policies and practices related to faculty, including:
 - changes in the number of faculty over five years;
 - changes in tenure policy;
 - number of faculty considered for and awarded or denied tenure; and
 - early or phased retirement incentives, among others.
 - a) Some of these items would require actual counts of faculty, while others are questions about whether policies have been used. Would you be able to provide responses to items like these?
 - b) Would you be more inclined to provide this information if the study were administered by a government agency, such as the US Department of Education?

Encouraging Institutional Participation

Finally, we're interested in learning about how we can promote institutional participation.

8. Providing faculty data to IPEDS is required. But when you get a request to voluntarily provide data to outside groups, what are the most important factors that contribute to your decision to participate?
9. Would you feel a need to contact your institutional office of legal counsel before providing data for a study such as this?
10. Are there any professional organizations whose endorsement of this project would significantly enhance the credibility of our data request?
11. If you received an invitation to participate in this project, who would you identify as the most logical data coordinator for the project? Why?
12. What potential benefits do you see for your institution to participate in a data collection like this?

Anything Else?

13. Is there anything else you've thought of today that could help us make this project more effective?

Thank You!

Authors



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Project Funding

The “Understanding Faculty, Academic Careers, and Environments in Service of Equity (FACE)” project is funded from the **National Science Foundation’s EHR Core Research program within the Division of Human Resource Development** of the National Science Foundation, under Grant No. NSF 2200769. The content, statements, and recommendations expressed on this website are those of the FACE Project and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.



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Promoting Equity in Higher Education

The world’s leading research center on student access and success in higher education, the Pullias Center for Higher Education advances equity in higher education and provides innovative, scalable solutions to both improve college outcomes for underserved students and to enhance the performance of postsecondary institutions. The Pullias Center is located within the USC Rossier School of Education.



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Suggested citation: Koren, E. R., Curtis, J. W., Kezar, A., & Culver, K. C. (2024). *Faculty, Academic Careers, and Environments (FACE) institutional data providers focus groups report*. Pullias Center for Higher Education. <https://pullias.usc.edu/>

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