

Faculty Turnover and Retention

**A Summary of Faculty Exit Surveys
at Texas Public Universities, Health-Related Institutions,
and Technical Colleges**

Fiscal Year 2000

**Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Division of Finance, Campus Planning, and Research
March 2001**

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

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Coordinating Board Mission

The mission of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is to provide the Legislature advice and comprehensive planning capability for higher education, to coordinate the effective delivery of higher education, to efficiently administer assigned statewide programs, and to advance higher education to the people of Texas.

THECB Strategic Plan

Coordinating Board Philosophy

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board will promote access to quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access is unacceptable. The Board will be open, ethical, responsive, and committed to public service. The Board will approach its work with a sense of purpose and responsibility to the people of Texas and is committed to the best use of public monies.

THECB Strategic Plan

Executive Summary

The General Appropriations Act adopted by the 76th Legislature authorized the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop and administer a survey of all tenured and tenure-track faculty who terminate employment at a public general academic institution, health-related institution, or technical college. Institutions were directed to provide departing faculty members with the survey form, which was to be returned directly to the Coordinating Board.

A copy of the survey instrument is provided as Appendix A. Responses were obtained from 490, or 57 percent, of the 856 faculty members who terminated employment during Fiscal Year 2000. Fiscal Year 2000 encompasses the period September 1, 1999 through August 31, 2000.

The following are the principal findings of an analysis of the responses:

- Faculty turnover rates, defined as terminations during Fiscal Year 2000 divided by tenure-track employment during the fall 1999 semester, averaged 6 percent for public universities and Lamar two-year institutions. This is essentially unchanged from Fiscal Year 1999. Because of different policies regarding tenure-track appointments at health-related institutions, turnover rates at those institutions are not comparable. TSTC faculty are not eligible for tenure.
- Faculty turnover rates are lower at larger, better-established institutions than at small institutions. Universities with more than 500 tenured or tenure-track faculty members had an overall turnover rate 5 percent. For all other institutions, it was 7 percent.
- The responding faculty members who terminated employment for reasons other than retirement, and who listed employment at public or private academic institutions in their future plans, decreased 6 percent from last year's survey to 66 percent. Ten percent of these faculty planned to seek positions in industry.
- Of the faculty who returned the survey form, 42 percent were professors, 27 percent were associate professors, and 31 percent were assistant professors. Sixty-eight percent were tenured at the time they terminated employment.
- Of the faculty who returned the survey form, 35 percent had taught at the institution six or fewer years; 37 percent had taught at the institution more than 20 years. Forty-five percent listed retirement as their reason for terminating employment. This is a 10 percent increase over last year.
- Disciplines losing the most faculty were liberal/fine arts – 122, health professions – 116, education – 54, and science/mathematics – 54.
- Among faculty who terminated employment voluntarily, the following three reasons were indicated most often: personal reasons – 138, professional advancement – 134, working conditions – 90.

In general, these data do not indicate the faculty retention is a major problem at this time for most Texas institutions of higher education.

Background

The General Appropriations Act of the 76th Legislature included the following language on page III-51, section 18 (3):

Faculty Exit Surveys and Faculty Retention. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is authorized to develop a survey instrument to be administered by institutions to all tenured and tenure-track faculty who terminate employment at a general academic institution, health-related institution, or technical college. Departing faculty members shall send each completed survey directly to the Higher Education Coordinating Board no later than October 1 of each year.

Tenured and tenure-track faculty are the core faculty members at an institution of higher education. Virtually all of them are full-time employees. In addition to teaching, they do research, counsel students, develop and maintain the curriculum, and perform many other vital tasks. The faculty is the principal resource of any institution of higher education.

The 76th Legislature heard conflicting testimony regarding faculty retention. There is some indication that faculty are abandoning faculty positions for better opportunities in industry or in other states. At the same time, there are some indications in the literature that overall faculty turnover rates are significantly lower than that experienced by private industry or government agencies and that faculty turnover rates are so low that institutions are unable to make strategic changes as the needs of the institutions change. These conflicting perspectives motivated this survey.

Tenured or tenure-track faculty members leave their institutions for a number of reasons. Tenured faculty members retire at some point in their careers, although no mandatory retirement age exists. Faculty members typically go through a six-year tenure-track probationary period prior to being tenured, and many are not successful in their quest for tenure. Others leave for better professional opportunities or simply because they find life in academia different from what they expected.

On average, about one-third of the full-time faculty members at Texas public institutions of higher education are neither tenured nor tenure-track, and this survey does not include these faculty members. It also does not include part-time adjunct or visiting faculty members or graduate teaching assistants.

The survey form enclosed as Appendix A was provided to institutions for distribution to faculty who terminated employment. The survey form has 11 questions designed to require less than three minutes to complete and packaged as a postage-paid, business-reply document.

Table 1 shows the number of tenured or tenure-track faculty whose employment terminated at each institution, as well as the survey response rate.

**Table 1
Survey Responses**

Institution, Type, System	Terminating Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty, Fall 2000	Response Rate Percentage
Universities	706	56
Texas A&M University System	166	49
Prairie View A&M University	11	64
Tarleton State University	18	83
Texas A&M International University	10	50
Texas A&M University at Galveston	5	40
Texas A&M University	52	25
Texas A&M University-Commerce	11	73
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi	17	59
Texas A&M University-Kingsville	7	43
Texas A&M University-Texarkana	2	50
West Texas A&M University	33	55
Texas State University System	85	59
Angelo State University	11	55
Lamar University-Beaumont	21	57
Sam Houston State University	11	55
Southwest Texas State University	33	55
Sul Ross State University	9	89
Texas Tech University	54	54
University of Houston System	58	45
University of Houston	39	36
University of Houston-Clear Lake	7	57
University of Houston-Downtown	11	64
University of Houston-Victoria	1	100
University of North Texas	45	84
University of Texas System	222	56
The University of Texas at Arlington	24	50
The University of Texas at Austin	111	57
The University of Texas at Brownsville	11	45
The University of Texas at Dallas	6	67
The University of Texas at El Paso	15	47
The University of Texas-Pan American	15	73
The University of Texas of the Permian Basin	6	67
The University of Texas at San Antonio	19	47
The University of Texas at Tyler	15	67

Institution, Type, System	Terminating Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty, Fall 2000	Response Rate Percentage
Non-System Universities	76	63
Midwestern State University	9	89
Stephen F. Austin State University	24	67
Texas Southern University	11	27
Texas Woman's University	32	66
Health-Related System/Institution	136	60
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center	14	64
The Texas A&M University System Health Science Center	6	50
University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth	9	56
University of Texas System	107	61
The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center	7	71
The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas	19	47
The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio	46	52
The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston	9	100
The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston	26	69
Technical Colleges	14	71
Texas State University System	14	71
Lamar University Institute of Technology	2	50
Lamar State College-Orange	2	100
Lamar State College-Port Arthur	10	70
All Institutions	856	57

In general, response rates as high as 60 percent would be considered to be good response rates for a survey of this type. The Legislature directed that surveys be returned directly to the Coordinating Board in an effort to obtain complete and candid responses. Still, the extent to which surveys returned represent the views of the total population of terminating faculty members is a valid concern.

Faculty Turnover Rates

Faculty turnover rates were calculated by comparing the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty terminations during the fiscal year with the number of tenure-track faculty reported in each institution's CBM-008 report to the Coordinating Board for fall 1999. Since each institution provided the Coordinating Board with a list of persons who terminated employment during the year, these rates are not affected by survey response rates.

**Table 2
Faculty Turnover Rates**

Institution, Type, System	Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty, Fall 1998	Terminations FY 1999	Faculty Turnover Rate (%)	Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty, Fall 1999	Terminations FY 2000	Faculty Turnover Rate (%)
Universities	11,876	699	6	12,068	706	6
Texas A&M University System	2787	165	6	2912	166	6
Prairie View A&M University	161	11	7	170	11	6
Tarleton State University	177	12	7	201	18	9
Texas A&M International University	100	15	15	106	10	9
Texas A&M University at Galveston	37	1	3	36	5	14
Texas A&M University	1506	53	4	1605	52	3
Texas A&M University-Commerce	189	19	10	178	11	6
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi	192	12	6	199	17	9
Texas A&M University-Kingsville	243	21	9	240	7	3
Texas A&M University-Texarkana	32	4	13	25	2	8
West Texas A&M University	150	17	11	152	33	22
Texas State University System	1377	84	6	1393	85	6
Angelo State University	157	13	8	172	11	6
Lamar University-Beaumont	251	10	4	254	21	8
Sam Houston State University	349	32	9	347	11	3
Southwest Texas State University	545	21	4	544	33	6
Sul Ross State University	75	8	11	76	9	12
Texas Tech University	782	54	7	829	54	7
University of Houston System	1185	69	6	1175	58	5
University of Houston	844	45	5	822	39	5
University of Houston-Clear Lake	163	3	2	166	7	4
University of Houston-Downtown	143	17	12	155	11	7
University of Houston-Victoria	35	4	11	32	1	3
University of North Texas	704	45	6	688	45	7
University of Texas System	4002	224	6	4032	222	6
The University of Texas at Arlington	542	25	5	549	24	4
The University of Texas at Austin	1800	91	5	1786	111	6
The University of Texas at Brownsville	116	11	9	119	11	9
The University of Texas at Dallas	257	12	5	264	6	2

Institution, Type, System	Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty, Fall 1998	Terminations FY 1999	Faculty Turnover Rate (%)	Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty, Fall 1999	Terminations FY 2000	Faculty Turnover Rate (%)
The University of Texas at El Paso	415	11	3	412	15	4
The University of Texas-Pan American	318	29	9	317	15	5
The University of Texas of the Permian Basin	62	4	6	73	6	8
The University of Texas at San Antonio	367	27	7	387	19	5
The University of Texas at Tyler	125	14	11	125	15	12
Non-System Universities						
Midwestern State University	158	7	4	164	9	5
Stephen F. Austin State University	348	23	7	373	24	6
Texas Southern University	236	9	4	213	11	5
Texas Woman's University	297	19	6	289	32	11
Technical Colleges	175	16	9	182	14	8
Texas State University System	175	16	9	182	14	8
Lamar University Institute of Technology	59	5	8	64	2	3
Lamar State College-Orange	43	4	9	48	2	4
Lamar State College-Port Arthur	73	7	10	70	10	14
Universities and Technical Colleges						
	12,051	715	6	12,250	720	6

A Description of Faculty Terminating Employment in Fiscal Year 2000

Based on the results of the survey, the typical tenured or tenure-track faculty member whose employment was terminated during Fiscal Year 2000 was a white male who had taught at his institution for 16 years. Professors taught an average 23 years, and tenure-track personnel terminated after an average of four years. Full professors were more likely to retire, while associate and assistant professors usually left under voluntary circumstances. Sixty percent of the terminations were from one of the following disciplines: health professions, liberal/fine arts, or education.

Tables 3 and 4 compare the gender and ethnicity of faculty members at universities and Lamar two-year institutions with those of all faculty at those institutions.

Table 3
Gender of Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty Members
and those Terminating Employment in Fiscal Year 2000

Universities and Lamar Two-Year Institutions	Male Percent	Female Percent
All Faculty	72.7	27.3
Terminating Employment	68.1	31.9

Table 4
Ethnicity of Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty Members
and those Terminating Employment in Fiscal Year 2000

Universities and Lamar Two-Year Institutions	White Percent	Black Percent	Hispanic Percent	Asian Percent	All Other Percent
All Faculty	81.3	4.7	5.9	6.1	2.1
Terminating Employment	85.2	4.0	5.5	3.8	1.5

These data indicate that women are slightly more likely to terminate their employment than their male counterparts and that ethnic groups generally terminate employment at about the same rates, with the possible exception of Asians.

Table 5 compares the length of employment of persons when they terminated employment, in each sector of higher education. As is common in most organizations, most employee turnover occurs in the early years of employment. In academic institutions, this is even more common because the tenure process requires early termination for those who do not receive tenure.

Table 5
Length of Employment of Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty Members
Who Terminated Employment in Fiscal Year 2000

Length of Employment	Universities	Health-Related Institutions	Lamar Two-Year Institutions
6 years or less	136 (34.5%)	24 (30.8%)	7 (77.8%)
Between 6 and 20 years	103 (26.1%)	30 (38.5%)	2 (22.2%)
Over 20 years	155 (39.3%)	24 (30.8%)	0
Total	394 (100%)	78 (100%)	9 (100%)

Table 6
Disciplines of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty Members
Who Terminated Employment in Fiscal Year 2000

	Universities	Health-Related Institutions	Lamar Two-Year Institutions
Agriculture	6	0	0
Architecture	6	0	0
Business	47	0	0
Education	54	0	0
Engineering/Technology	23	0	5
Health Professions	37	76	3
Liberal/Fine Arts	122	0	0
Science/Mathematics	47	5	2
Other	51	0	0

Reasons for Termination and Future Plans

Retirement was indicated as the reason for termination by 217, or 44.9 percent, of faculty members returning surveys. In addition, retirement was indicated as the reason for termination by 91 percent of those returning surveys who had over 20 years employment at the institution, indicating that long-term employees are unlikely to leave for reasons other than retirement.

While the survey did ask if termination was voluntary or involuntary, the responses are not considered reliable. Most faculty members, when faced with the prospect of an involuntary termination, will resign rather than have an involuntary termination on their records.

Table 7 describes responses for all persons other than those who opted for retirement, indicating the reason(s) that employment was terminated. Since respondents were allowed to indicate multiple reasons, the totals do not correspond with data presented in previous tables. Personal was the reason most often given, followed by professional advancement, working conditions, and compensation. Workload ranked well below all of those reasons in all three sectors.

Table 7
Reasons Identified for Termination of Employment
other than Retirement in Fiscal Year 2000

	Universities	Health-Related Institutions	Lamar Two-Year Institutions	Total
Personal	120	16	2	138
Professional Advancement	98	35	1	134
Work Conditions	71	18	1	90
Compensation	65	8	1	74
Workload	43	6	0	49
Benefits	18	5	0	23
Tenure	7	1	0	8
Other	111	14	3	128

Table 8 describes future employment plans for all respondents other than those who indicated that retirement was the reason for termination of employment. By far, the largest group of terminating faculty intend to seek future employment in public academic institutions, followed by private academic institutions. There does not appear to be a significant flight by faculty out of academic institutions and into industry; however, the category is up from 6.5 percent in Fiscal Year 1999 to 9.9 percent in Fiscal Year 2000.

Table 8
Future Employment Plans of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty Members
Terminating Employment in Fiscal Year 2000 for Reasons other than Retirement

	Universities	Health-Related Institutions	Lamar Two-Year Institutions	Total
Industry	19	6	1	26 (9.8%)
Private Academic	32	9	1	42 (15.8%)
Public Academic	107	24	3	134 (50.6%)
Self Employment	10	1	1	12 (4.5%)
Undetermined	13	2	1	16 (6.0%)
Other	25	9	1	35 (13.2%)
Totals	206	51	8	265 (100%)

Conclusion

This is the second statewide survey of terminating faculty in Texas. The surveys for Fiscal Year 2000 were compiled and analyzed and the response rate was 57 percent.

Statewide, turnover in Texas public universities averages 6 percent per year. Some faculty turnover is normal and desirable. The tenure process is a competitive process in which a portion of new employees are not expected to be successful. Over the course of time, some faculty members will retire. Others will move because they wish to seek administrative positions that might not be available locally, their interests change, they have personal reasons to move, or they have a desire for change.

For most institutions, faculty turnover does not appear to be a major problem in Texas institutions, although a deeper analysis of faculty terminations could reveal a somewhat different situation. For example, while overall turnover rates are reasonable, a systematic loss of the best faculty members would be a major problem for an institution that would not be detected by this survey.

In general, faculty turnover appears to be more of a problem at smaller, regional institutions than at larger research institutions. About 45 percent of those terminating employment are retiring. Over 65 percent of the others are doing so to seek positions at other academic institutions.

In the absence of comparable data from other states, more information can be derived by collecting this data from year to year and noting changes. Continued monitoring of faculty retention data is recommended.

Appendix A

FACULTY EXIT SURVEY

This survey was directed by the General Appropriations Act of the 76th Legislature, Rider 18 (3), page III-51-Faculty Exit Surveys and Faculty Retention:

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is authorized to develop a survey to be administered by institutions to all tenured and tenure-track faculty who terminate employment at a public general academic institution, health-related institution or technical college. Departing faculty members shall send the survey to the THECB by October 1 of each year.

1. Institution Name: _____
2. Last Name: _____ First Name: _____
3. Gender: Female Male
4. Ethnicity: White Black Hispanic Asian
 American Indian International Other (Please specify): _____
5. How many years did you teach at this institution? _____
6. Academic Rank: Professor Assistant Professor Associate Professor
7. Tenure Status: Tenure Tenure-Track
8. Disciplines Taught: Agriculture Architecture Business
 Engineering Health Professions
 or Technology Liberal or Science or
 Fine Arts Mathematics
 Other (please specify): _____
9. Date/Reason for termination: Mo/Yr: _____ Retirement Voluntary
 Involuntary
10. If termination was voluntary, what was the reason(s):
 Benefits Compensation Personal Professional Advancement
 Tenure Work Conditions Workload Other (Specify): _____
11. What are your future employment plans at this time?
 Industry Private Academic Public Academic
 Self Employment Undetermined Other (please specify): _____

Please use reverse side for any additional comments you may have.
Fold and return this survey by mail or fax to (512) 427-6147. Thank you.

Related reports available from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Division of Finance, Campus Planning, and Research.

An Overview of Article III and Article XII, House Bill 1, 76th Legislature, General Appropriations Act, Agencies of Public Higher Education, 2000-01 Biennium, October 1999

Appropriations for Developmental Education in Texas Public Institutions of Higher Education, January 2000

Special Item Funding for Texas Public Institutions of Higher Education, Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001, October 1999

Task Force on the Development of the Technology Workforce Report, April 2000

This document is available on the
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
World Wide Web Site
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