JOB SATISFACTION OF EXPERIENCED PROFESSORS AT A LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

SUSAN H. MARSTON
GERALD J. BRUNETTI

Saint Mary's College of California

This study examined career satisfaction among experienced professors at a moderate-sized liberal arts college and explored their motivations for staying in the profession. Experienced professors were defined as tenure-track faculty who had been teaching in higher education for at least 15 years. Data sources included the Experienced Teacher Survey, returned by 43.5% (N=74) of the experienced professors, and interviews with 25 of these professors selected from the four schools that made up the college: Liberal Arts, Science, Economics & Business Administration, and Education. Results show the importance of professional over practical motivators, and of teaching and scholarship over service. Ways to enhance faculty satisfaction and to support new faculty members are considered.

How satisfied are professors at liberal arts colleges? What are the principal factors that contribute to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction? By listening to the voices of experienced professors, we can gain important insights into their motivations for staying in the profession, as well as their attitudes towards scholarship, service, and other factors that uniquely define their work. Such information could help trustees and administrators—and professors themselves— increase faculty satisfaction and effectiveness, with positive outcomes for the education of students. This information could also be of use to prospective faculty members considering teaching at a liberal arts college, enabling them to more realistically prepare for the rewards and challenges of such an institution.

Austin (2002) reminds us that “one of the long-lasting contributions of most current faculty members lies in preparing highly capable, innovative new colleagues for the challenges they will face” (p. 118).

The purpose of the present study was to examine the level, sources, and nature of satisfaction among experienced professors at a moderate-sized, west coast liberal arts college that has a strong emphasis on teaching. In designing the study, the researchers built on earlier research they had conducted with experienced elementary and high school teachers (Brunetti, 2001; Marston, Brunetti, & Courtney, 2005; Marston, Courtney, & Brunetti, 2006). They sought answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent are experienced college professors satisfied with their work?

2. What are the primary areas of satisfaction that motivate professors to remain in their positions?
3. What role does scholarship play in the lives of professors?

4. How important is it for professors to provide service to their institution?

**Theoretical Framework**

*Job Satisfaction Among College Professors*

Numerous studies have examined job satisfaction among college and university faculty (August & Waltman, 2004; Hagedorn, 1996, 2000; Hagedorn & Sax, 2004; Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Olsen, 1993; Olsen, Maple, & Stage, 1995; Reybold, 2005; Rosser, 2004, 2005; Smart, 1990). Rosser (2005) identifies four significant areas in the literature on faculty satisfaction: rewards and salary, work and career satisfaction, relationships with students, colleagues and administrators, and benefits and job security. Faculty satisfaction has also been shown to have an impact on the turnover of faculty members (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Rosser, 2004, 2005; Smart, 1990). Rosser (2005) identifies four significant areas in the literature on faculty satisfaction: rewards and salary, work and career satisfaction, relationships with students, colleagues and administrators, and benefits and job security. Faculty satisfaction has also been shown to have an impact on the turnover of faculty members (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Rosser, 2004, 2005; Smart, 1990).

Smart (1990) focused on faculty intentions to leave their current institution. He proposed and tested a model that examined three areas of satisfaction: organizational, salary, and career. He found that higher levels of satisfaction with both organizational and career measures reduce faculty intentions to leave their current institutions, while salary satisfaction is significant only for nontenured faculty. Emphasizing the complexity of faculty satisfaction, Hagedorn (2000) proposed a conceptual framework for studying the phenomenon based on “two types of constructs that interact and affect job satisfaction—triggers and mediators.” She defined a trigger as “a significant life event that may be either related or unrelated to the job” (e.g., change in life stage, change in personal circumstances [such as a death in the family], change in rank or tenure) and a mediator as “a variable or situation that influences (moderates) the relationships between other variables or situations producing an interaction effect” (e.g., motivators, demographics [such as gender, ethnicity, discipline], environmental conditions).

Pollicino (1996) found that faculty satisfaction varied significantly in degree and nature based on the kind of collegiate institution (from two-year college to research university). Ambrose, Huston, and Norman (2005) offered “A Qualitative Method for Assessing Faculty Satisfaction” based on semistructured interviews rather than surveys. Though conducted at a different kind of institution (Research 1 university) than the site of the present investigation (comprehensive college), their study does speak to the efficacy of using interviews, thus providing an emic perspective on faculty satisfaction. The study also showed the importance of institution-specific research.

**Life History**

The present study also draws from the seminal work of Michael Huberman (1993), who used both quantitative and qualitative methods in studying the lives of French-Swiss secondary teachers. This approach incorporates life history, described by Goodson and Sikes (2001)
in its application to teachers, and has been used by many researchers to examine the lives of elementary and secondary teachers (e.g. Ball and Goodson, 1985; Knowles and Holt-Reynolds, 1994; Goodson and Hargreaves, 1996; Muchmore, 2001, 2004; Stanford, 2001; Williams, 2001). The present study appears to be unique in combining life history (qualitative) and quantitative methods in studying the lives of experienced professors.

**Methods**

**Context**

The study was conducted at an institution on the west coast of the United States that is classified as comprehensive under the Carnegie categories but that has the "look and feel," in many ways, of an undergraduate liberal arts college. The college serves some 2600 students in its traditional undergraduate program, as well as some 2000 additional students (mostly part-time) in its graduate programs in business, education, and a few additional fields. The number of tenure-track faculty is approximately 170. This faculty was selected for the study due to its convenience, since the researchers had ready access to it.

**Participants**

Researchers focused on experienced professors, which, for purposes of this study were defined as tenure-track professors who had been teaching in higher education for at least 15 years and been at the college for at least 2 years. The Experienced Teacher Survey (described below) was distributed to all tenure-track professors. Of the 170 surveys that were distributed, 74 (43.5%) were returned by experienced professors. The researchers selected 25 of these professors to interview (out of 38 who indicated at the end of the survey that they were willing to be interviewed), seeking a balance in terms of school, subject field, and gender. The final interviewees included 12 professors from the School of Liberal Arts (SOLA), 6 from the School of Science (SOS), 3 from the School of Economics and Business Administration (SEBA), and 4 from the School of Education (SOE). Twelve of the professors interviewed were males; 13 were females. (See Appendix A for additional information regarding the interview participants.)

**Data Sources**

Data for this study were drawn primarily from two sources: 1) a form of the Experienced Teacher Survey (Brunetti, 2001) modified for use in higher education, and 2) extended interviews with select experienced college professors.

*Part 1: Experienced Teacher Survey (ETS)*

The ETS was designed to collect information from professors concerning their job satisfaction and their motivation for remaining in their present teaching position. Using a 4-point Likert scale, the ETS asked professors to rate the importance of a variety of factors—professional, practical, and social (Brunetti, 2001)—that influenced their decision to remain in their present faculty positions. The survey (see Appendix B) yielded mean scores and standard deviations for each factor on the
survey as well as total mean scores for clustered satisfaction factors.

**Part 2: Interviews**

The interviews of experienced professors, which lasted one to two hours, were based on a protocol of questions (see Appendix C) but designed to generate open-ended responses. Professors were encouraged to elaborate in their responses, and follow-up questions were asked to induce further reflection and more detailed explanation. The interviews, which were conducted mostly on campus in spring 2005, were recorded on audiotape. Transcriptions from these recordings were returned to the professors for member checking. Revised transcriptions comprised the data source for the interviews. The researchers first read each of the transcriptions, identifying responses that revealed insights about the research questions. Then, using a constant comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the researchers analyzed the responses for predominating patterns and prevailing themes and then grouped the findings according to the research question the data seemed to address.

**Results**

The findings are presented below for each of the research questions. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are included in the analysis. For each question, the researchers report the basis (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, or both) for their findings.

**Research Question 1: To What Extent Are Experienced College Professors Satisfied with Their Work?**

The Experienced Teacher Survey has four questions that focus on job satisfaction (see Table 1). The experienced professors who returned surveys expressed a moderate to high level of satisfaction, as indicated by mean scores ranging from 3.25 (SD, 0.60) to 3.50 (SD, 0.65) on the 4-point scale. (Total mean score = 3.36 [SD 0.67]). Overall, the survey data suggest that these experienced professors were satisfied with their jobs. The professors’ comments on job satisfaction are incorporated in the analysis of their responses to research questions 2, 3, and 4.

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Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Satisfaction of Experienced Professors (from Survey)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I look forward to coming to work each day. 3.25 (SD, 0.60)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I would like to still be teaching in 5 years. 3.40 (SD, 0.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If I had it to do over, I would choose to be a professor again. 3.50 (SD, 0.65)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I am satisfied with my job. 3.30 (SD, 0.68)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Mean Score = 3.36 (SD, 0.67)</td>
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Table 2

Professional Satisfaction Factors (from Survey)

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<tr>
<th>Professional Satisfaction Factors</th>
<th>Mean Score (SD)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Satisfaction in fulfilling a professional commitment.</td>
<td>3.40 (SD, 0.73)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Satisfying in serving society (e.g., “making a difference” by educating future citizens).</td>
<td>3.58 (SD, 0.63)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Satisfaction in working with students (including involvement in co-curricular activities).</td>
<td>3.66 (SD, 0.54)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Satisfaction in being successful at something you enjoy (“born to teach”).</td>
<td>3.64 (SD, 0.61)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Satisfaction at seeing students learn and grow.</td>
<td>3.84 (SD, 0.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Joy in teaching your subject.</td>
<td>3.79 (SD, 0.49)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. The intellectual challenges involved in teaching.</td>
<td>3.56 (SD, 0.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Freedom and flexibility in the classroom.</td>
<td>3.65 (SD, 0.55)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. The opportunity to be creative (e.g., in designing curriculum and lessons).</td>
<td>3.55 (SD, 0.67)</td>
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Total Mean Score = 3.63 (SD, 0.60)

Research Question 2: What Are the Primary Areas of Satisfaction That Motivate Professors to Remain in Their Positions?

Professional satisfaction factors

The ETS includes nine questions that, in earlier studies (Brunetti, 2001; Marston, Brunetti, & Courtney, 2005; Marston, Courtney, & Brunetti, 2006), appeared to represent core values for teachers (see Table 2). In their survey responses, the professors identified these factors as powerful motivators for keeping them in the classroom. All but one of the factors yielded mean scores above 3.50. In two cases (i.e., satisfaction at seeing students learn and grow, and joy in teaching your subject) the mean scores were over 3.75, suggesting that they were particularly strong motivators.

The interview responses appear to corroborate the importance of these Professional Satisfaction factors in contributing to job satisfaction and persistence in the classroom. Professors continually emphasized their work with young people, for instance, as a powerful source of satisfaction with their work (Items 3 and 5; mean scores = 3.66[SD, 0.54] and 3.84 [SD, 0.40] respectively). A female education (SOE) professor responded to the interview question, What has influenced your decision to continue as a college teacher? by saying, “The primary motivation for me has been watching transformational changes in people as individuals…and…to experience and share in the growth that occurs within them during that semester.” Another professor (male, SOLA) stated, “What energizes me and is very exciting for me is the interaction with students – I find it inherently rewarding, the relationship with students.” In responding to the interview question, How do you
describe your relationship with students and how important is that relationship to you? one participant (male, SOLA) stated: “I enjoy being with students. The connection with students...[is] satisfying... Young people are like wine. They’re kind of intoxicating, I think, for me.” A male professor (SEBA) replied: “I love being in the classroom, and I love to be able to help these students learn.”

One professor reported: “[I] try to be a very open person in the classroom and be there within limits to talk to students about what’s going on with them. But...[I] don’t see myself as their pal” (female, SOLA). A female SOE professor added, “I also want to be very clear about what my boundaries are so that I’m not too personal or inappropriately personal.”

Some professors identified their being able to learn and grow themselves as a source of satisfaction: “I think of teaching as something like gardening...because...every year you get a new chance” (female, SOE), and “I feel like every year brings challenges that keep me growing in different ways” (female, SOLA). Another female SOLA professor responded to the question, What influenced your decision to remain a college professor? by saying, “Because you are constantly learning yourself.”

Professors’ love of their subject had a powerful impact on their remaining in the classroom (mean score = 3.79 [SD, 0.49]). As one male SOLA professor commented: “I stay in the classroom because, to one degree or another, classrooms (in which I teach) have all got conversational, shared inquiring, and they all have the moment of metastrophic questioning that makes them [students] open their eyes... and that’s what I live on. ...It’s nice to be able to do that on a kind of daily basis with students who oftentimes get it.”

Freedom and flexibility in the classroom (mean score = 3.65 [SD, 0.55]) is another reason why professors remained in the classroom. One male science (SOS) professor identified the major factors being “the ability to pretty much be my own boss....tremendous amount of freedom...academic freedom.”

Table 3

Practical Satisfaction Factors (from Survey)

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<td>11.</td>
<td>The holidays: summer vacation, Christmas and spring breaks, etc.</td>
<td>2.73 (SD, 0.93)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Job security (tenure)</td>
<td>2.97 (SD, 0.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Salary and benefits (sabbaticals, etc.)</td>
<td>2.55 (SD, 0.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Enjoyment of the college as an institution.</td>
<td>3.13 (SD, 0.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Advantage of a teaching schedule for someone raising a Family.</td>
<td>2.62 (SD, 1.12)</td>
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Total Mean Score = 2.80 (SD, 0.95)
Looking to the future, one male SOLA professor stated: “What energizes me is the opportunity to have greater impact on the world and on society” (i.e., through the students he teaches).

Overall, both the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that Professional Satisfaction factors contributed substantially to the professors’ overall satisfaction with their work and were an important reason for their remaining in teaching.

**Practical satisfaction factors**

Practical factors such as job security/tenure, salary/benefits, and advantages of a teaching schedule (see Table 3) were important to professors, but not as important as the Professional Satisfaction factors. The total mean score for the Practical Satisfaction factors was 2.80 (SD, 0.95), compared to a mean score of 3.63 (SD, 0.60) for professional factors. Enjoyment of the college as an institution (mean score = 3.13 [SD, 0.77]) and job security (mean score = 2.97 [SD, 0.88]) were the practical factors that professors assigned the highest ratings to.

In the interviews, several of the professors discussed some of the practical reasons why they remained in the profession:

- It is beneficial to my family – two small children and my wife works in the city. It gives me flexibility to be away when I need to be away. It would be nice if the pay were a bit more, but in my particular family the time flexibility and my pay is balanced by my wife’s work. (male, SOS)

- Another professor commenting on the benefits of flexibility noted that “having a family has been important to me” (female, SOS).

- One male SOS professor identified the “academic schedule” as a major factor in his decision to remain at the college. Some people stayed in the profession because it provided them with special benefits (e.g., opportunity for funding to do research). A female SOLA professor commented:

  Well, I think if I were to retire, I would miss that aspect [scholarship] more than teaching... One of the things that has kept... [me]... going is the fact that we have things like faculty development money that
Professors identified the factor of job security/tenure (mean score = 2.97 [SD 0.88]) as the second highest (but not particularly high overall) in the practical satisfaction section of the survey. One male SOS professor commented: “I was awarded tenure and I’ve been working here since, so, that’s why I stopped thinking about other jobs.”

In responding to the interview question, Have there been times in your career as a professor that you’ve considered leaving the profession? one female SOLA professor expressed that monetary pressures was a cause for her to stop and reflect: “I did consider leaving after about seven years...because...(other people) were making tons of money and I wanted to know why I wasn’t.”

Social satisfaction factors

Both in the survey and interview, experienced professors were asked about their relationship with faculty colleagues and administrators. Table 4 presents the mean scores on the two Social Satisfaction factors (having good faculty colleagues and administrators). Having good relationships with faculty colleagues (mean score = 3.26 [SD, 0.79]) appears to have been significantly more important than relationships with administrators (mean score = 2.66 [SD, 0.87]) in these professors’ decision to continue teaching at the institution. The data also suggest (when looking at each social factor separately; no total mean score was computed) that having good faculty colleague relationships (mean score = 3.26 [SD, 0.79]) were more important to professors than practical factors (total mean score = 2.80 [SD, 0.95]) and relationships with administrators (mean score = 2.66 [SD, 0.87]), but not as important as professional factors (total mean score = 3.63 [SD, 0.60]) in motivating professors to remain in the classroom.

Faculty colleagues. The interview data provided some additional insights. In responding to the interview question, How about your relationships with fellow teachers? Are these relationships important to your work as a professor? one female SOE professor expressed, “Absolutely. Completely important to me...I really value my friendly relationships with other faculty as being highly important. And it’s painful when that isn’t there. It’s very painful to me.” Another professor recalled:

I didn’t feel like all of my support was coming from my department, and I quickly developed friendships with people across the college. I couldn’t wait to get elected to a committee and then that contributes to the development of other relationships. Building those relationships, along with the relationships I have with my students, has been one of the most rewarding aspects of being a college teacher (female, SOLA).

On the other hand some professors commented on the isolation in a small liberal arts college. “I feel a little more isolated then I did. (My previous institution) was a bigger campus and there was a really good mix of people...a much more empowering environment for someone who was interested in research as well as
Table 5

Other Factors of Being a Professor (from Survey): The importance of

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Importance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The opportunity to engage in scholarship?</td>
<td>3.38 (SD, 0.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The opportunity to participate in shared governance (e.g., through committee service)</td>
<td>2.47 (SD, 0.88)</td>
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Another professor added: “I would say the more collegiality the better. Clearly one of the huge disappointments is where people live...You know, people by and large, they’re scattered everywhere, and so far away that it makes any sort of social contact difficult” (male, SOS).

Another professor commented on less-positive relationships, stating, “Well, I think I’ve run into some difficulties getting along with my colleagues. I think there are expectations... and usually we tend to disagree on them” (female, SOLA). A male SOLA professor explained, “Well, some of my colleagues...they’ve given me a little trouble. And of course, they’ve also been tremendously supportive. So, they’re the people that can hurt you the most and they’re the people that can help you the most.”

Administrators. Concerning administrators, the question asked in the interview, How would you describe your relationship with administrators, and how has this affected your work as a teacher? yielded a variety of responses. One male SOS professor responded, “I mean, they’re fine. But you just avoid them. They do things that I don’t want to do.” Another professor commented, “I think that when the administrators really know what they’re doing and have sensitivity toward all different aspects of the college, it makes everyone’s work a lot easier. I think there are more conflicts when there are less capable administrators” (female, SOLA).

Another professor commented on less-positive relationships, explaining, “There are moments that frustrated me; and I must say, there were two times that I did seriously consider leaving and it was all – it was administratively induced” (male, SOLA).

Other professors described the characteristics they wanted to see in an administrator:

I definitely see administrators and faculty as...sharing common goals. And so it’s unfortunate when that goes awry. And I really think this is important for faculty...to believe that an administrator will not only hear you, but will try to act on whatever the situation is. (female, SOE)

Another female SOE professor commented:

I think the best administrators that I’ve had have been people that I felt were supportive and honest, with high integrity. People who didn’t talk down to me, but...were committed
Table 6

Importance of Various Factors (from Survey)

| Professional Satisfaction Factors | 3.63 (SD, 0.60) |
| Opportunities to Engage in Scholarship | 3.38 (SD, 0.72) |
| Good Faculty Relationships | 3.26 (SD, 0.79) |
| Practical Satisfaction Factors | 2.80 (SD, 0.95) |
| A Good Administrator | 2.66 (SD, 0.87) |
| Opportunity to Perform Service | 2.47 (SD, 0.88) |

to working with me so that we could face challenges and problems together and work them through.

Yet another professor commented on administrators at smaller institutions rather than bigger campuses: “I feel that our administrators are fairly accessible here...and more approachable. And if you’re willing to work with them...if you don’t go in with a closed mind...they’re often willing to work with you” (female, SOLA).

Research Question 3: What Role Does Scholarship Play in the Lives of Professors?

Both in the survey and interview responses, experienced professors were asked about two other components of being a professor: scholarship and service. Table 5 presents the mean scores for these factors. Scholarship responses are discussed below; service responses are discussed in Research Question 4.

Engaging in scholarship (mean score = 3.38 [SD, 0.72]) appears to have had a greater influence on the participants’ decision to remain in the profession than the opportunity to perform service (mean score = 2.47 [SD, 0.88]). Overall, the mean score on scholarship appears to be comparable to that on collegial relationships (mean score = 3.26 [SD, 0.79]); both are higher than any Practical Satisfaction factors (total mean score = 2.80 [SD, 0.95]) in motivating professors to remain in teaching (see Table 6).

Responses from the interviews reveal that scholarship played an important role in the lives of many of these professors, but time and expectations were constraints. A female SOLA professor stated: “Passion for the subject ultimately drives my relationships with students and my dedication to teaching. Scholarship is what feeds the passion.” A female SOE professor added that scholarship played a pretty big...[role]...and it’s a role that I didn’t get to have as a high school teacher. It certainly was a big reason for going into college teaching. And I do think that whatever I work on or think about or write about is relayed to my students...because...you always teach yourself. And so the more you grow and learn, the more your students...
benefit. So, scholarship is really central to me.

And a female SOLA professor commented that "I don't think that I would have stayed interested in teaching all these years, if it hadn't been for research. The teaching is interesting because I come back from that research all fired up." Another professor commented:

My scholarship is not directly related to teaching in the classroom – but I couldn't be content if I didn't have that aspect in my life... The problem is not enough time... I need to focus on scholarship with real time; and when I’m teaching, it's just not there. The time is not there (female, SOLA).

Another female SOLA professor corroborated this time constraint, noting: "I find it very hard, once the semester starts, to think about research, writing... and usually if I’m doing anything on scholarship, it has to be during my free time." A female SOS professor agreed: "I think I would have to get a sabbatical or a grant to start a new project because it just takes so much effort. If I did not have such a heavy service requirement, it would be bigger."

One female SOE professor commented, "Scholarship is incredibly important, and I’m trying to maintain a research program at a teaching college. It’s hard, though; it’s very hard. It’s hard to some degree because of the time available... but it’s also hard because there are no master’s students [in my area]."

Other professors commented on the expectation aspect of scholarship. A male SOS professor stated:

Scholarship is enjoyable. It's a fun way to stay current, to stay active... and to keep myself connected in my discipline and to involve students. I guess the downside of that is the way it's been incorporated into rank-and-tenure decisions and that sometimes it is also sort of like the ball and chain.

A male SOLA professor responded to the question, What role does scholarship play in your life as a professor?

It plays a large role – I spend more time at it now than I did when I was young. Because when I was young, I did 32 or 33 [class] preparations, you know. So it's more important now, and I'm a little resentful of the degree to which [this institution] has done what I think is a real error, kind of barbaric – the notion of scholarly production... [this institution] seems to have fallen in - maybe not wholeheartedly or comprehensively, but to some degree there's a notion of steady rate of production - scholarship - understood as published works and articles, books, you know.... But that notion of direct output is a little upsetting.

In response to the same question, a male SEBA professor said:

Scholarship played a big role early in my career, because I'd scored the position where I had [to]. But it never played – once I was in [this institution]. It should probably play a big role – really it's easy to let yourself just slide a little as you go, but you have to say, hey!
Another professor explained: I think scholarship for some people is wonderful. I know that there are some great people that just love scholarship...and they should be encouraged to do it; but those...who don’t consider that as important, I don’t think we should be forced to do it. (male, SEBA)

Research Question 4: How Important Is It for Professors to Provide Service to Their Institution?

Overall, the opportunity to perform service (see Table 6) was the lowest quantitative factor professors identified (mean score = 2.47 [SD, 0.88]) as an influence in their decision to remain in the profession.

Most professors found service to be important but also stressed concerns. The themes of community and contribution kept emerging from the interview data. A female SOLA professor thought that “we should take service a lot more seriously as an institution...it really is what holds our academic community together...service is really important and in some ways more important than scholarship for the life of the institution.” A male SOLA professor added,

If we’re going to be good citizens of any community then you have to really provide service in an appropriate fashion. So that doesn’t mean that everybody should do it all the time; but when the time requires your talents, your interests, your energy, your thinking, you’d better chip in to do it.

A female SOS professor responded to the question, How important do you think service to the College (e.g., service on committees or as department chair) should be in the life of a professor? by saying, “I think it is critical. People who come to the office, teach, go home – that’s enough for them but that doesn’t help create a community.” A female SOLA professor stated, “I do think that it is important though for the professors to contribute to the smooth running of the place.”

Even though faculty recognized the importance of service, there were definite concerns expressed. One had to do with the issue of equity, since “relatively a small pool of people is taking on the majority of the load – it is not uniformly distributed across campus” (male, SOS). A female SOE professor added, “The same people serve over and over again at the college...because the more people have served, the better known they are and the more they then get elected”; and a female SOLA professor explained that “there’s a lot of inequity involved in that. We should see ourselves existing in a community, and in a community...you all have to do your part.” One male SEBA professor even stated, “I don’t like to point it out – maybe they should have some policy about going to the same people who can’t say no. Then you get people who say no a lot and just don’t do service.” And another female professor (SOLA) observed:
[Service] is a heavy workload...so we should get some kind of time compensation for it. If you're going to be an integral part of campus, I'd say that you really do need to serve the community in a variety of ways. I think the college sometimes expects a lot, though.

Identifying a common concern about service, another professor stated: “And all the meetings are too long! And I definitely think the reason that the meetings are too long is not that everybody hasn’t said everything that has to be said: it’s just that everybody has to have a chance to say it” (female, SOLA). A male SOS professor added, “All of those committee things are kind of a fraud. They give people the vague impression that their voice is heard. Of course, it’s not.” Finally, a male SOLA professor declared, “What irritates me...what happens is that service is defined as servitude...service at [this institution]...not more exalted, just hierarchical.”

Discussion

Listening to the voices of experienced professors from a liberal arts college provides important insights into the profession. These voices can help that institution better prepare future faculty for life in the profession and provide understanding to current professors about academic rewards and challenges. The voices might also be of use to campus leaders in other colleges and universities as they strive to provide leadership to their institutions. According to Rosser (2004):

The goal of institutional leadership should be to examine more thoroughly those individual worklife issues...that are important to their campus faculty and generate positive or negative responses to work. This will, in turn, enhance faculty members’ satisfaction...which will have an impact on the retention and persistence of individual faculty members. (p. 305-306).

In this section we will provide a brief summary of our findings, then focus on three areas that seem, in addition to Professional Satisfaction factors, particularly important in influencing faculty satisfaction: scholarship, service, and relationships with fellow faculty and administrators. The article will conclude with a reminder about the study’s limitations and suggested directions for further research.

Summary of Findings

Experienced professors in this study identified Professional Satisfaction factors (e.g., satisfaction in working with students and seeing them learn, joy in teaching one’s subject, freedom and flexibility in the classroom) as the most powerful motivators that induced them to remain in the classroom. Scholarship was also a great source of satisfaction for the professors (although time and expectations were constraints), as was their relationships with colleagues. Most experienced professors found service to the institution to be important but rated it lowest among factors that motivated their decision to remain in the profession. Practical Satisfaction factors (e.g., salary and benefits, summer breaks) were also generally rated lower as motivators.
Scholarship

Clearly, scholarship was a source of great satisfaction to many—but not all—professors at this college. The interview responses, however, reflected some tensions in this area, as scholarly professors sought to maintain an active research agenda at an institution whose primary mission was teaching. The tension emerged most clearly in the area of time management, with professors struggling to find time for their scholarly pursuits in the face of compelling demands for teaching and service.

Knowing about time constraints would be helpful to new professors at the college—to know, for instance, that many experienced professors acknowledged that they lacked the time to do scholarship during the teaching semester. If the institution values scholarship, it needs to protect professors' time to engage in this activity and support it through sabbaticals, grants, and relief time from service. The professors themselves have the responsibility of setting aside time for scholarship and maintaining a scholarly worklife schedule.

The issue of scholarly output at different points in professors' careers, which emerged in the findings, presents an interesting contrast in perceptions. Should so much emphasis be put on scholarly output so early in one's career? Perhaps it should be emphasized later in one's career when she or he has more to say. What are ways to value or emphasize scholarship so that professors continue to do it throughout their career? Can the institution or faculty peers force professors to do scholarship when they no longer “need to” (i.e., for rank-and-tenure purposes)? What about post-full-professor review? Would the expectation of continuing scholarship alienate or would it engage/reengage professors? It might be worthwhile for administrators and faculty at this and other institutions to examine college policies and how they are implemented through various campus committees (e.g., rank and tenure), since these policies and practices reveal a great deal about colleges’ attitude towards scholarly output, which in turn affects professors’ satisfaction in this area.

Service

In his 2004 study, Rosser reported: There is no other aspect of academic work than the service and committee work component that can quickly draw the life and time away from a faculty member. Although it is critically important to serve all aspects of academic life, the amount of time allocated to service and committee work can have positive and negative implications on faculty members’ work, satisfaction and whether they pursue other career alternatives, particularly to women and ethnic minorities. (p. 302)

This reminds us that even though service is sometimes thought of as the least important of the three faculty responsibilities, it can have a powerful effect on faculty satisfaction. And Rosser’s study suggests that “those faculty members with higher levels of satisfaction are less likely to leave their institution or their career” (p. 305).

One implication of the study for small
colleges (and this campus in particular) is that alternate service models might be developed to respond to some of the concerns of faculty that emerged in this research (e.g., faculty input into decision-making disregarded, service not equitably distributed). Perhaps developing and implementing new models of service (e.g., a model that eliminates most elected positions and assigns service on a rotating basis) would help to more evenly distribute service across faculty.

Another kind of faculty service was proposed by Mooney and Reder (2007): “Creating model programs that include and draw on the experiences of senior faculty to support mid-career faculty is one area where small colleges can make significant contributions” (p. 168-169). In the present study, very few professors mentioned mentors from the institution when responding to the interview question, Did you have any role models or mentors that influenced you becoming a teacher or the way you work as a teacher? Engaging senior faculty with mentoring midcareer faculty, perhaps as a component of the new service model mentioned above, is another practice that this college and others might examine and develop.

Faculty Relationships

According to ETS data, the importance of good relationships with faculty colleagues (mean score = 3.26 [SD 0.79]) is almost as important to professors as the opportunity to engage in scholarship (mean score = 3.38 [SD, 0.72]). As Hagedorn (1996) reports:

The most common and consistent response to “what makes you most satisfied or most dissatisfied with your job” pertained to the social aspects of the profession. Colleague relationships may be even more important for college faculty because unlike many other professions, the competence of colleagues has personal implications (p. 571).

Olsen (1993) adds that due to a lack of collegiality among coworkers, new faculty members are frequently dissatisfied at work. Given the importance of collegiality in the academy, how can we help new professors entering the academic life be prepared for challenges (as well as rewards) they might face around good faculty colleague relationships?

Interview data suggest that developing relationships both within one’s department and across campus is important. The professor who reported there was “a really good mix of people” at her previous institution brought to light the need for new professors in particular to examine their organizational fit (Wright, 2005) with the college/university in terms of values and priorities. A male SEBA professor stated:

I think you have to kind of figure out what you like best and then make sure you match with your institution because there are a lot of unhappy academics, let me tell you. Yeah, just make sure you’re at a place that values what you see, what you value in yourself.

Olsen, Maple, and Stage (1995) remind us, too, that “the degree of fit with university values and goals is as much a product of perceptions of fit (influenced
by factors like gender and race) as it is a convergence of institutional and individual goals and values (p. 285).

Relationships with Administrators

Overall, having a good administrator ranked near the bottom of factors professors identified as important for their job satisfaction (see Table 6). Although there were some positive statements about administrators, many professors seemed to have the attitude, “Let them do their thing and leave me alone.” These findings could be revealing to campus leaders as they continue to examine satisfaction through faculty perspectives. Campus administrators should be held accountable for their work because (1) as quoted earlier, “there are more conflicts when there are less capable administrators” (female, SOLA); and (2) administrators’ policies and attitudes can affect faculty satisfaction and their intent to stay in the profession (e.g., the professor who considered leaving, noting that this near decision was “administratively induced”). To foster collegiality among coworkers, administrators could possibility be more proactive (e.g., promoting social interaction to help build and maintain positive relationships across camps); and administrators at all levels should heed the warning signs of civility issues on their campus and respond accordingly, with the leadership and resources needed to ameliorate the problem. Reybold (2005) reminds us that “profound dissatisfaction can result in isolation and disengagement or even incivility and aggression toward students and colleagues” (p. 107).

Limitations of the Study

Like every other college and university, the target college has a unique campus culture—a mélange of expectations, power relationships, decision-making processes, and so forth—that strongly affects the lives of tenure-track faculty. The findings from this study, accordingly, cannot be directly applied to other institutions. Some of the issues raised in this study, however, are clearly characteristic of other comprehensive colleges and universities; and hence the findings might be useful to their administrators and faculty. Moreover, there is a sound argument to be made for the efficacy of conducting research on the faculty of a particular institution (Johnsrud & Rossler, 2002).

Areas for Future Research

Preparing people to enter the daily realities of academic life is, according to Austin (2002), one of the long-lasting contributions and significant responsibilities of current faculty members. The voices of experienced professors provide a critical perspective from which to view and learn. Knowing the kind of satisfaction professors in a small, comprehensive liberal arts college experience in their work might inspire others to examine their own institutions of higher education with a view to enhance faculty members’ satisfaction. This type of study—i.e., mixed methods with an emphasis on faculty voices—might also be extended to other institutions of higher education: e.g., two-year colleges, large public institutions, Research 1 universities.
Job Satisfaction...

References


## Appendix A

Characteristics of Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Department/Programs Represented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts (SOLA)</td>
<td>12 total</td>
<td>Performing Arts, English, Theology &amp; Religions Studies, Liberal &amp; Civic Studies, History, Integral, Philosophy, Modern Languages, Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 f 5 m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science (SOS)</td>
<td>6 total</td>
<td>Psychology, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 f 4 m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics &amp; Business Administration (SEBA)</td>
<td>3 total</td>
<td>Economics, Graduate Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (SOE)</td>
<td>4 total</td>
<td>Secondary Education, Elementary Education, Master’s Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 f</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Experienced Teacher Survey (includes results)

Gender: ___(M or F) Age: ___under 40 ___40-49 ___50-59 ___over 60
Ethnic group (optional): ____ School: ____________
What subject(s) do you teach? ________________________________
How many years have you been at your present school? _____
Have you taught in other schools? ____ Yes ____ No
If Yes, where?
City State Grade Level Number of Years

__________________________________________________________

How many years total have you been teaching? _____________
Do you hope to still be teaching in 5 years? ____ Yes ____ No ____ Do not know
If No, why not? ____________________________________________________________________________
When you stop working, what do you plan to do? __________________________________________________________________________
Do you plan to continue working with young people in some capacity? ____ Yes ____ No
____ Do not know
If Yes, please describe: ____________________________________________________________________

To what extent has your decision to continue working as a professor been influenced by the following factors, some intrinsic to your work, others extrinsic? For each factor, circle the number indicating how important it is for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Of Little Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Survey (N=85) Mean</th>
<th>Survey (N=85) SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Satisfaction in fulfilling a professional commitment.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Satisfaction in serving society (e.g., “making a difference” by educating future citizens).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Job Satisfaction...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Of Little Importance</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Survey (N=85) Mean</th>
<th>Survey (N=85) SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Satisfaction in working with young people (including involvement in extracurricular activities).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Satisfaction in being successful at something you enjoy (&quot;born to teach&quot;).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Satisfaction at seeing young people learn and grow.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Joy in teaching your subject.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The intellectual challenges involved in teaching.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Freedom and flexibility in the classroom.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The opportunity to be creative (e.g., in designing curriculum and lessons.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Nowhere else to go (after many years in teaching).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The holidays: summer vacation, Christmas and spring breaks, etc.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Job security (tenure)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Salary and benefits.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>Of Little Importance</td>
<td>Somewhat Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>Survey (N=85) Mean</td>
<td>Survey (N=85) SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Enjoyment of school as an institution.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Advantages of a teaching schedule for someone raising a family.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Good teacher-colleagues (e.g., interesting, supportive, committed to teaching).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. A good administrator-program directors, dept. chairs, deans (e.g., able, open, supportive, good manager).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Supportive alumni community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The opportunity to engage in scholarship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The opportunity to participate in shared governance (e.g. through committee service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. The opportunity to serve as an administrator (e.g., department chair)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For each statement below, please circle the pertinent number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Survey (N=85) Mean</th>
<th>Survey (N=85) Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I look forward to coming to work each day.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If I had it to do over again, I would choose the teaching profession again.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am satisfied with my job.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I would still like to be teaching in 5 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have further explanations or comments, please write them below or on a separate piece of paper.

I would like to conduct individual interviews with some of you to explore further your experiences in teaching and your motivations for remaining as a college professor. I anticipate that each interview, scheduled at your convenience, will run approximately 1 to 1 1/2 hours.

Would you be willing to be interviewed? ___ Yes ___ No ___ Possibly. Please call me.

If you answered Yes or Possibly, please include your name and telephone number so that I can call you.

Name _______________________________ Phone Number: (_____) ________________________

Thank you for your time and willingness to complete this study. Please return it in the enclosed self-addressed envelope by ________.
Appendix C

Experienced Professor Survey Interview Protocol

Please tell me a little about your career as a professor. You may want to mention how you got interested in teaching, where and when you began, what schools you've taught at; what subjects, kinds of students, highlights of your career, etc.

As you know, in this study I am principally interested in exploring with professors their motivation for remaining in the classroom. Can you tell me what has influenced your decision to continue as a college professor for ____ years?

Have there been times, during your years as a professor, when you considered leaving the classroom? What were your thoughts at the time and what made you change your mind?

What are the principal things you are trying to accomplish as a professor?

What do you see as your most important responsibilities as a professor?

Did you have any role models or mentors that influenced your becoming a professor or the way you work as a professor?

How important is your subject matter to your work as a professor? Is it, for instance, your passion for teaching a variety of subjects that energizes your teaching and continues to motivate you? Or is the subject matter primarily a vehicle for working with young people in a higher-education setting?

What have been your most rewarding experiences as a professor? And conversely, what experiences have been the most depressing or discouraging?

How would you describe your relationship with students, and how important is this relationship to you?
How about your relationships with fellow professors? Are these relationships important to your work as a professor?

And what about administrators? How would you describe your relationship with administrators and how has this affected your work as a college professor?

What role does scholarship play in your life as a professor? Explain.

What kinds of activities do you undertake to remain current in your field and to develop and maintain your teaching skills?

In what ways have you been involved in the life of the college outside the classroom?

How important do you think service to the College (e.g., service on committees or as department chair) should be in the life of a professor?

How has your life outside school influenced and been influenced by your work as a professor?

In looking back at your career, how have you changed since your earliest years as a professor?

How do you feel about the three traditions? What do these traditions mean to you and how do they affect your work as a professor?

Are there any other comments or observations you would like to make about your work as a professor?