

ATS provides insight on member school faculty trends

By CHRIS MEINZER

In the past year, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) wrote a report—Economic Status of the Profession—of university professors. The report comments on the broader annual survey that AAUP publishes, offering reflections on employment, salaries and benefits, the impact of COVID-19, and institutional health. AAUP provided key findings that show faculty compensation has declined, COVID-19 has impacted the profession in terms of appointments and compensation, and the prevalence of contingent faculty continues to grow.



Within the context of this broader analysis from AAUP, we sought to discern the state of the profession of faculty at ATS schools. In this article, I will review data collected in the ATS Annual Report Form process and will use the most recent data collected in fall 2020. Although not a direct comparison of the issues raised in the AAUP report, we believe the data demonstrate some similarities and differences in ATS faculty versus what is occurring in broader higher education.

Change in full-time faculty

In comparing the number and rank of full-time faculty in ATS schools from fall 2016 to fall 2020, there are some important findings. The numbers in Table 1 represent the same set of 258 ATS member schools.

The number of full-time faculty across the same set of ATS schools has declined by 8.8% during the last five years. The relative proportion by rank, however, has been quite stable during the five years, with “professor” representing about 43% of faculty each year; “associate professor,” 27%; “assistant professor,” 21%; and “others,” 9%. As full-time faculty have declined, each rank has been impacted proportionally.

Table 1. Full-Time Faculty in ATS Schools, Same Set 258 Schools

	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
Professor	1550	1547	1479	1428	1407
Associate	967	979	968	937	891
Assistant	764	765	722	725	707
Others	326	316	300	294	283
Total	3607	3607	3469	3384	3288

Table 2. Percent of Schools by Change in Full-Time Faculty

	All ATS	Evangelical	Mainline	Roman Catholic/ Orthodox	College/ University	Freestanding
Increased	28%	25%	28%	31%	20%	33%
Decreased	56%	59%	55%	52%	62%	51%
Held Steady	16%	16%	17%	17%	18%	16%

When looking at individual schools and the changes in total full-time faculty during this time, I also found some interesting trends. From fall 2016 to fall 2020, Table 2 shows the percent of schools that either increased, decreased, or held steady their numbers of full-time faculty. The table shows the changes for all ATS schools by ecclesial family and related or freestanding structure. In each case, between 50% and 60% of schools decreased their full-time faculty and between 40% and 50% held steady or increased their faculty head count.

Use of part-time faculty

Across higher education and within the AAUP report, there has been a consistent message that the number of part-time or contingent faculty is growing. To analyze the trend in ATS schools, I looked at the full-time faculty head count, the part-time faculty head count, and the full-time equivalency of those part-time faculty (Table 3). I then compared the relative percent of part-time faculty in terms of head count and full-time equivalency. For this analysis, I used the same set of 258 ATS schools that were members for all five years.

The proportion of part-time faculty in terms of head count and full-time equivalency has not changed dramatically during the last five years. In fact, according to my analysis, there has not been a significant change in these relative percentages in the last three decades. In 1992, part-time faculty represented 55% of the total head count and 27% of the full-time equivalency.

Although there is certainly some change in the number of part-time faculty and their workload (full-time equivalency), it has not been as prominent as demonstrated within higher education or the AAUP report.

Tenure in full-time faculty

In the AAUP report, they found that 37% of faculty in universities were either tenured or tenure track in fall 2019, while 63% of faculty were on contingent appointments (20% as full-time contingent and 43% as part-time contingent). In fall 2020, 54% of faculty in all ATS schools were tenured or tenure track, and 46% did not have tenure (with about half of those identified as permanent faculty without tenure). Tenure is more prevalent in ATS schools than in higher education.

When looking at ecclesial family and structure, there are also some noticeable differences in terms of the full-time faculty who are tenured or tenure track. For this analysis, we used the same set of 258 member schools and show the percent of tenured and tenure track full-time

Table 3. Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty Load

Calculation	Category	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
a	FT Faculty HC	3607	3607	3469	3384	3288
b	PT Faculty HC	4789	4922	4959	4926	4729
c	PT Faculty FTE	1445	1475	1474	1421	1427
=b/(a+b)	PT HC as % of All Faculty HC	57%	58%	59%	59%	59%
=c/(a+c)	PT FTE as % of All Faculty FTE	29%	29%	30%	30%	30%

faculty in fall 2016 and in fall 2020 (Table 4). This allows for comparison in the current year and trajectories across these categories.

Table 4. Percent of Full-Time Faculty Who are Tenured or Tenure Track

	All ATS	Evangelical	Mainline	Roman Catholic/Orthodox	College/University	Freestanding
Fall 2020	55%	50%	76%	35%	70%	44%
Fall 2016	59%	55%	80%	36%	70%	51%

Perhaps not surprisingly, tenure is most prevalent in mainline schools and schools connected to a larger college or university. In addition, even though tenure is still used significantly throughout ATS schools, the percentage of full-time faculty who receive it is decreasing.

Salaries in full-time faculty

Regarding full-time faculty salaries, I compared fall 2019 and fall 2020 data. Faculties among ATS schools tend to be much smaller than at the schools surveyed by AAUP. As a result, fluctuations from year to year are more prone to be influenced by changes within ATS schools. Nonetheless, I believe the data show some important trends.

I looked at average salaries by school within rank. Overall, from fall 2019 to fall 2020, average salaries grew by 0.3% for assistant professors, 1.3% for associate professors, and 1.9% for full professors. As indicated in the AAUP report, the US inflation rate was 1.4% at this time, so the increases would not have kept pace in many instances.

When looking at individual schools and the changes in full-time faculty salaries, I also found some interesting trends. From fall 2019 to fall 2020, Table 5 shows the

percent of schools that increased salaries. For example, across all ATS schools, 52% of schools reflected increased average salaries for full professors, 53% reflected increased average salaries for associate professors, and 49% reflected increased salaries for assistant professors. Overall, average salaries were up 1.2% for full-time faculty among all ATS schools. The chart also shows the changes for all ATS schools by ecclesial family and by related or freestanding structure.

While the rate of increase in salaries did not keep up with inflation overall, in most cases, ATS schools were more likely than not to increase salaries for full-time faculty. Only within mainline schools do we see each rank under 50% and the overall rate of change decreasing. In every other stratification and rank, we find that increases were at or above 50%, or half of the schools.

Conclusions and questions

Regarding faculty in ATS schools, there are some similarities and differences when compared to broader higher education as reflected in the AAUP report. ATS schools have been decreasing the number of full-time faculty, and the declines have been widespread across each segment of the membership. Although there have been changes regarding part-time faculty in ATS schools, the relative count and workload (full-time equivalency) have not changed much in the last three decades.

Tenure is still used throughout the ATS membership, but the percentage of faculty who are tenured or tenure track appears to be trending downward. Finally, average salaries for full-time faculty increased, but simply seem to have kept pace with inflation during the last year.

Table 5. Percent of Schools with Salary Increases for FT Faculty

	All ATS	Evangelical	Mainline	Roman Catholic/Orthodox	College/University	Freestanding
Professor	52%	59%	39%	54%	49%	54%
Associate	53%	57%	48%	54%	48%	49%
Assistant	49%	49%	42%	57%	51%	55%
Avg. Change	+1.2%	+1.3%	-0.9%	+3.8%	+1.3%	+1.1%

What has been happening at your institution? How have the broader trends in faculty within ATS schools and higher education been similar to or different from your school? How have these changes helped or hindered your ability to fulfill your mission?

If you want to explore more of this data, please review your school's [Institutional Peer Profile Report \(IPPR\)](#) or [Strategic Information Report \(SIR\)](#). If you have specific questions or want to explore these resources further, please email [Jo Ann Deasy](#) or [Chris Meinzer](#).



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