
CAMPUS SCOPE

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Tens of thousands of professors needed across the United States

Economics text mixes fiction and instruction

Claire Zulkey
Georgetown University

How many college textbooks - let alone economics textbooks - can be labeled "a page turner?"

"Life, Love, and Economics," the brainchild of Purdue University professors Gavin Sinclair, Robert W. Taylor, and Dee E. Cuttell, is just that.

First utilized last semester, Sinclair wanted to write a practical book that would at the same time interest his students.

V. Dion Haynes
Chicago Tribune

LOS ANGELES - Faced with a large enrollment surge from the children of Baby Boomers and a flurry of expected retirements, colleges and universities across the nation are bracing for a shortage of tens of thousands of professors.

Education experts are predicting that overall college enrollment will rise by 2 million to 16 million students over the next decade. No one has an exact figure on the number of faculty positions that will open over the next decade, but with an average 20-1 faculty-student ratio, the figure could reach an estimated 100,000 positions.

The college faculty crunch comes at a time when elementary and secondary schools are encountering their own teacher shortages and when all schools are facing intense public pressure to raise the quality of education. Experts say the competition for faculty could create a sellers market, which in turn could drive up salaries, exacerbating universities' current practice of hiring more part-time and non-tenured professors and forcing institutions to introduce more independent study courses to reach more students with fewer instructors. In the 1960s and 1970s, enrollment also surged when millions of Baby Boomers flooded the nation's colleges and universities.

"I wanted to write an economics book that was more useful and applicable to real life," says Sinclair. "When I called Bob Taylor to talk about it, I said, 'How would you feel about making it a romance novel?'"

The book, detailing the love and adventures of Jason Cooley and Samantha Fletcher, certainly bears resemblance to a Harlequin novel. However, somebody reading it may accidentally pick up a little economics instruction, as Samantha woos Jason by teaching him financial planning (knowing that he "would have picked out a good investment-grade diamond"), and, tragically, as Jason's Uncle Mitchell goes to that big balance sheet in the sky. "He gave his life so that we could talk about estate planning and funeral planning."

Apparently, students are eating this up. According to surveys conducted by Gavin, students confessed to only reading 15 percent of their old economics textbooks, while they are now reading 85 percent of "Life, Love, and Economics," probably skipping over the boring mushy parts to get to the juicy home loans sections.

Back then, schools responded by building new campuses, expanding curricula and hiring new professors.

Now tens of thousands of those professors have reached their 50s, 60s and 70s and are nearing retirement, according to the Project on Faculty Appointments at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. Though colleges and universities banned mandatory retirement in 1994, one-third of the nation's faculty is 55 and older compared to one-fourth a decade ago.

If the hot job market and lure of Internet start-ups continue, finding enough qualified faculty to replace retirees and to meet future demand could be much tougher this time around, some experts said.

During the first boom, "we didn't have the acute competition from the private sector," said Patrick Callan, president of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, a think tank in San Jose, Calif. "The competitive impact is strong," Callan added. "But in California, [the problem of hiring new faculty] is more pronounced, with a combination of high student demand, high cost of living and Silicon Valley."

Experts said the shortage of college professors will be particularly dramatic in Texas, Florida, Arizona and California. In a decade, for example, California alone is expecting 793,000 additional public and private school students. The population of college-bound students has been growing steadily for 15 years. The number of high school graduates in the U.S. has risen to 2.8 million this year from 2.3 million in 1985, according to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education in Boulder, Colo.

The population is expected to reach 3.2 million by 2008. Moreover, the number of so-called non-traditional students—adults 25 and older—has been climbing rapidly. Illinois' college enrollment is expected to grow a modest 87,000 by 2020, according to the state's Board of Higher Education.

Unlike the first boom in the 1960s, which was spread throughout the country, this second wave will be concentrated in 20 states mainly in the West, Pacific Northwest, Southwest

After some major re-writing, Sinclair estimates that the book will be available to all schools within a year.

"We added four new chapters," he says, promising even more life, love, and economics to be read about in the lives of Samantha and Jason.

E. coli scare pushes SUNY to new provider

Matthew McGuire
TMS Campus

The State University of New York at Albany will begin using a new food service provider after an E. coli breakout sickened seven students who ate cafeteria food provided by Sodexo Marriott Management.

Chartwell's, which provides food services to 225 other colleges and universities, will begin serving up grub at SUNY-Albany July 15, just as the New York Giants arrive on the university's campus for summer training camp.

An investigation last spring by the Albany County Health Department found undercooked hamburgers and

and South.

A survey conducted by the State Higher Education Executive Officers showed that college officials considered attracting and retaining professors and maintaining competitive salaries for faculty their No. 2 and No. 3 most important issues.

"At least 17 states said they are considering new initiatives on [faculty] supply and demand," said Alene Russell, senior research associate for the Denver organization, which represents higher education boards in all 50 states.

In Arizona, where college enrollment is expected to grow to 120,000 in 10 years from 105,000, Gov. Jane Hull recently signed legislation placing a proposition on the November ballot that would increase higher-education spending by \$40 million a year. A large portion of that money, according to Arizona education officials, would be used to address future faculty shortages.

The huge demand for top-notch research faculty by Arizona, California, Texas and Florida could intensify competition among institutions and draw away talent from other states. Thus, even states with low shortages are studying how they can prevent a brain drain.

"Maryland is seeking more state funds to attract and retain faculty," Russell added. "North Dakota is making recommendations on how to get more money for faculty salaries, and Maine is looking into bringing its university salaries in line with salaries of similar institutions."

Still, higher education experts say that the low supply and high demand for faculty won't necessarily spur across-the-board raises or reverse the 1990s trend in which institutions began relying more on part-time, non-tenured professors.

Salaries and perks may rise significantly for faculty in engineering, computer science and other popular fields in which professors already are in short supply, they said. Salaries are expected to remain flat for humanities and social science professors.