

The National Online Faculty Survey: Who Is Doing Research?

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Abstract

Preliminary results of the National Online Faculty Survey ($N = 236$) are reported. Data from 99 individuals (41.9% of the sample) who reported conducting research in the past 2 years (not own dissertation or thesis) are explored. 45% reported doing their research online. Characteristics of the researchers and studies are discussed.

Problem

Very little is currently known about online faculty. This study examines online faculty's research interests and productivity.

Purpose

These data are part of the larger National Online Faculty Survey which examined the work environment of faculty at any online college or university. This sub-sample explores online faculty researchers' demographics, and how the research was conducted.

Research Questions

What are the demographic characteristics of online faculty who report conducting research?

What type of research studies do they report doing?

Do faculty who have not conducted research want to do so? If so, why haven't they?

Relevant Literature

There has been a considerable amount of research focused on the experience and success of online students (e.g., Coldwell, Craig, Paterson, & Mustard, 2008; Smith, 2003). However, there is no research on who online faculty are and their desire to conduct research.

Procedures

Three recruitment procedures were used:

1. Online faculty who attended the 2012 Conference on Distance Teaching & Learning in Madison, WI were sent an invitation to complete a survey on Survey Monkey.

2. Walden's Center for Faculty Excellence posted ads for 3 months in the weekly newsletter inviting participation.

3. All participants were asked to forward the invitation on to other online faculty they knew (i.e., snowball recruitment).

Data Analysis: Demographics

Overall Sample: A total of 236 respondents (female = 168 [71.2%], male = 62 [26.3%]; 6 [2.5%] no response).

200 (85.6%) were white. Highest degree: 169 (71.6%) reported having a doctorate, 61 (25.8%) a master's and 3 (1.3%) a Bachelor's.

38 colleges and universities were represented, Walden had the most identified faculty with 19.1%; however, 117 (49.6%) did not provide an institution. Thirty-six different departments or programs were represented, the largest of which was education ($n=35$, 14.8%).

Sub-sample:

A total of 99 (41.9% of total sample) respondents (female = 70 [70.7%], male = 28 [28.3%]; 1 [1%] no response) conduct research. Thus of the total sample, 42% of female and 45% of male respondents conduct research. Of these, 88 (88.9%) were white; 80 (80.8%) have a doctorate and 18 (18.3%) have a master's degree. Thirty (30.4%) stated they work for 2 or more institutions. Forty-six (46.5%) are full time, 17 (17.2%) part time (36 did not answer). Forty-two (42.4%) indicated they are required to conduct research/publish, 39 (39.4%) were not required, 16 (16.2%) did not know whether it was required.

Fifteen colleges and universities were represented in the sub-sample, of these Walden was the highest with 17 (17.2%).

Data Analysis

99 respondents answered "yes" to the question: *In the last 2 years have you conducted research or been involved with your own research (Do not include your own thesis or dissertation)*

If yes, was the research done online?

	freq	%
Yes	45	45.5
No	54	54.5
	99	

Briefly explain how it was done online

Data available from online source 8 (22.2%)

Online education 10 (27.8%)

Survey 18 (50%)

Was the research done with students as collaborators?

	freq	%
Yes	25	25.3
No	71	71.7
No Answer	3	3.0
	99	

Did you collaborate with other faculty in the research?

	freq	%
Yes	64	64.6
No	33	33.4
No Answer	2	2.0
	99	

Did you have funding for your research?

	freq	%
Yes, from internal source	26	26.2
Yes, from external source	8	8.1
No	61	61.6
No Answer	4	4.0
	99	

*If you indicated that, you have **not** done any research, would you like to?*

	freq	%
Yes	66	67.3
No	32	32.7
	98	

If yes, why have you not done so?

Don't know how to do it online 2 (3.4%)

No collaborator 3 (5.4%)

Research not appropriate for online 2 (3.4%)

Time 49 (87.5%)

No funding to do it 2 (3.4%)

Findings

Online faculty who report conducting research tend to do it in person. Of those doing research online, most conducted surveys and collaborated with other faculty. The majority had no funding for their project. Of those who stated they have not done research, the majority would like to, but reported a lack of time as the main reason they have not done so.

Limitations

It is not known how closely the sample represents the population of online faculty.

Respondents selectively responded to questions, so non-responders' characteristics are unknown.

Conclusions

This study has been the first to examine the research interest and productivity of online faculty.

It has demonstrated a strong research interest in these individuals, however, they report difficulty in finding the time and funding to follow through on their interest.

Social Change Implications

Online institutions can use this information to improve the support of their faculty through providing time and funding for research. It also normalizes the online faculty experience through a comparison with faculty at other institutions.