JOB SATISFACTION AMONG ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS

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This study was designed to determine the facet-specific or dimensional job satisfaction of academic administrators at selected institutions. A survey composed of demographic items and a standardized job satisfaction instrument, the revised Job Descriptive Index (JDI), was mailed to a stratified random sample of presidents, academic vice-presidents, and deans at four-year colleges and universities. There was an overall response rate of 76 percent. The Carnegie classification of the respondents' employing institutions had no effect on their JDI scale scores. However, the level of the respondents' administrative position did have a significant effect on the mean scores of three JDI scales. When the median JDI scores for each administrative position were compared to a norm group, it was found that chief academic officers and deans are relatively dissatisfied with the nature of their work. It is recommended that future research activities investigate the root causes of the dissatisfaction. It is also recommended that the JDI continue to be administered to this population on a continuing basis to document changes and trends in the job satisfaction of academic administrators over time.

As recently as twenty years ago, administrators in higher education tended to remain permanently fixed in their positions while faculty members frequently changed jobs. This trend has now reversed itself (Richman and Farmer, 1974; Wolotkiewicz, 1980). In 1984, the Commission on Strengthening Presidential Leadership, headed by Clark Kerr, reported that the average presidential term was only seven years. There were also fewer long-term presidents than in previous years, and during any two-year period about one-fourth to one-third of the presidents surveyed were in some phase of leaving or thinking of leaving. The commission believed that a presidential term of seven years was entirely too short to effectively serve some of the major interests of institutions of higher education (Association of Governing Boards, 1984).

The American Council on Education has also published data on turnover in administrative positions. In the 1980-81 academic year, the turnover rate for
presidents was 10.6 percent while chief academic officers and deans of arts and science had turnover rates almost double this at 18.2 and 19.2 percents respectively (Anderson, 1981). More recently, the council plotted the median years of service for academic administrators by gender over a five-year period from 1983 to 1988. Their data show a decline in length of service for both sexes in the positions of president, academic vice-president, and dean, with none having a median length of service greater than five years (Anderson, Carter, Malizio, and San, 1989).

A desire to determine what might be an explanation for the high turnover rates among top-level administrators provided the impetus for this study. Research shows that there is generally a consistent, moderate, negative correlation between turnover and job satisfaction (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, and Meglino, 1979). Although there are some alarming data concerning turnover in higher education, there is little information about job satisfaction among college and university administrators. A literature review was conducted that included a search of the Education Resources Information Clearinghouse (ERIC) and Dissertation Abstracts International computer data bases and a manual search of the Education Index and Abstracts in Higher Education.

Job satisfaction in general has been the subject of extensive study beginning in the early 1900s and continues to be of interest today. Job satisfaction is defined as being an affective response by individuals resulting from an appraisal of their work role in the job that they presently hold (Locke, 1976; Price and Mueller, 1986; Vroom, 1964). Job satisfaction can be measured globally to establish a general level of satisfaction or dimensionally to determine the various facets or variables of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction variables that have been identified and measured with dimensional or facet-specific instruments are financial rewards, working conditions, supervisory practices, company policies, co-workers, opportunities for advancement, security, and content of the job.

Blue-collar workers were the subjects most typically studied in early research projects (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939), followed by white-collar workers (Morse, 1953). Interest in studying those at managerial levels did not develop until the early 1960s (Porter and Lawler, 1965, 1968). The study of job satisfaction among faculty and administrators at institutions of higher education, however, is an even more recent development.

In a recently published monograph, Lawler (1986) summarizes research findings about job satisfaction among managers. It has been established that motivation and performance are more strongly associated with future reward than with past satisfaction. Satisfaction, however, is clearly related to an individual's desire to continue to be an employee of an organization. Lawler (1986) also states that managers and administrators have a high need for self-fulfillment. Those organizations that provide them with the opportunity to participate