REATIONS OF PROFESSORS TO RETIREMENT: A Comparison of Retired Faculty from Three Types of Institutions

Lorraine T. Dorfman, Karen A. Conner, William Ward, and Jean B. Tompkins

Dorfman et al. (1982) compared the professional activities of retired professors from liberal arts colleges, a comprehensive university, and a major research university. This companion piece based on the same survey compares the professors' reactions to retirement. Results show that a majority of faculty from all types of institutions plan for retirement, are positive about retirement, and give suggestions for institutional retirement policy. The retired professors recommend the following: (1) help in planning, (2) more information about retirement, (3) support for continued work, (4) gradual retirement. Major differences among institutions are the following: (1) comprehensive university faculty plan for retirement more than do faculty from the other institutions, (2) faculty from both universities begin financial planning at a younger age than do faculty from the liberal arts colleges, (3) research university faculty miss work and like having time to spend on professional activities more than do faculty from the other institutions.

Recently Dorfman et al. (1982) compared the professional activities of retired professors from liberal arts colleges, a comprehensive university, and a major research university. This companion piece based on the same survey compares the professors' reactions to retirement. No previous investigations have compared retired professors from different types of institutions; data either have been aggregated for colleges or universities or for the public and private sectors of higher education (Fillenbaum and Maddox, 1974; Gernant, 1972; Havighurst et al., 1976; Havighurst et al., 1979; Ingraham, 1974; Kell and Patton, 1978; Moore, 1951; Rowe, 1972, 1973, 1976) or have been reported for single institutions of higher education (Benz, 1958; Dorfman, 1979, 1980a; Patton, 1977; Roman and Taitz, 1967). Comparative
studies of retired professors can provide useful information for institutional planning on retirement and can help avoid "industry-wide" conclusions (Hughes, 1981) that may mask important differences among institutions.

The Carnegie Council on Policy Studies (1976) has made a distinction among research universities, comprehensive universities, and liberal arts colleges. This study investigated the reactions to retirement of professors from 4-year liberal arts colleges and a comprehensive university, and compared the findings for these institutions with the findings of recent studies of retired professors from a major research university (Dorfman, 1979, 1980a). An important goal of the research was to determine if findings for the research university hold for other types of institutions. By using the case study method, it was possible to study in depth five midwestern institutions. The results for these institutions will have to be replicated at other institutions in other geographical locations in order to test their generalizability.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The small available literature suggested that the following aspects of faculty reaction to retirement be investigated.

Preparation for Retirement

An early study (Benz, 1958) found that most professors do not plan very carefully for retirement. Although 74% of the retired professors in the Benz sample had checked on their annuities one year prior to retirement, only a minority had discussed retirement with their relatives (24%) or colleagues (31%) or had planned future living arrangements (36%). More recently, Fillenbaum and Maddox (1974) found that significantly more professors who worked after retirement made plans for retirement than professors who did not work after retirement. These plans most frequently involved work. Kell and Patton, in a study of early retirees (1978), found that a majority of retired professors had not prepared themselves, financially or otherwise, for retirement; however, only a minority of the professors had made long-term plans to retire early. A number of studies indicate that retired professors urge professors who are approaching retirement to plan ahead: to discuss retirement with relatives and friends; to investigate what perquisites will be available after retirement; and to plan for activities, use of time, and where to live (Benz, 1958; Ingraham, 1974; Moore, 1951). The research on the major research university (Dorfman, 1979, 1980a) found that the respondents did little planning for retirement until they were in their 60s; the