FACULTY IN TRANSITION:  
A Longitudinal Analysis of the Role of Perceived 
Control and Type of Institution in Adjustment to 
Postsecondary Institutions

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As postsecondary institutions undergo major changes in the coming years, they will be hard-pressed to maintain the quality of their programs unless they can successfully attract and retain new faculty. Understanding something about the experiences of new faculty should enable postsecondary institutions to be more effective in the recruitment process. The present study examined the adjustment of newly hired faculty at the point of entry into their institutions and subsequently for a three-year period. It was expected that perceived personal control, teaching experience, gender, type of institution, and time would be particularly critical to the adjustment of new faculty. Three surveys were administered one year apart to newly hired, tenure-track faculty who responded to questions about their adjustment experiences. The results indicated that perceived control is a critical factor affecting new hires' emotional well-being, stress levels, job satisfaction, etc., either by itself or in combination with institution type and time. Overall, new hires who were identified as having greater control believed they had more control over their teaching and career in general, were more satisfied with their teaching and career, had less teaching- and career-related job stress, and were less likely to consider quitting their job. The type of institution also affected new hires' adjustment, with the liberal arts colleges and a comprehensive institution having the most negative impact compared with a community college and a research institution. Finally,

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time had an unexpected negative effect on adjustment. These findings were discussed in relation to the career development of faculty.

At a time when intellectual and technological innovation are becoming more critical to society's economic vitality, financial cutbacks, deteriorating infrastructures, and low faculty morale are eroding the operational capabilities of postsecondary institutions. Coping with these new realities will require more creativity by both institutions and faculty alike in order to meet their educational commitments. Although downsizing is bound to place increasing pressure on established faculty, it is likely to be even more difficult for recently hired faculty who have the added burden of adjusting to a new institution. Because new hires, particularly junior faculty, represent the future of postsecondary institutions, it is imperative that their adjustment be as smooth as possible.

Empirical evidence on the recruitment and adjustment of new faculty is relatively sparse in comparison to the substantial research literature on established faculty (e.g., Braxton, Bayer, and Finkelstein, 1992; Boyer, 1990). Much of the data on new hires are derived from studies having a cross-sectional design, with only a few having a longitudinal design (for a review, see Dunn, Rouse, and Seff, 1994). The present study adds to this literature by using a longitudinal design in which the adjustment of new faculty is assessed in each of their first three years of employment. Although three years is a relatively short period of time in an academic career (Baldwin and Blackburn, 1981), those years can be very critical if they occur at the beginning of a career or at the point of entry into a new institution (e.g., Boice, 1991; Sorcinelli and Austin, 1992). For our purposes, new hires, in contrast to established faculty, were defined as having been appointed just prior to the beginning of the study and having academic ranks ranging from unspecified to senior full professor. 1

Recognizing that adjustment is multifaceted, the present study focused on one major aspect of the process, namely teaching, since it is ubiquitous to all postsecondary institutions. Research and service, the other two key elements of an academic's job responsibilities, are more variable across institutions, with research typically not part of workload in community colleges and service deemphasized in research I institutions. Based on the premise that adjustment in new hires has both individual and situational origins, four variables of direct relevance were selected, namely perceived personal control, teaching experience, gender, and type of institution, along with time as the longitudinal variable. Of the three individual differences variables, perceived control was viewed as being critically important to career development, even though it has received little attention in the postsecondary literature to date. Gender and teaching experience were included as variables that might possibly moderate...