2016 OCUFA Study: Public Perceptions of Precarious Academic Work

Research Presentation
February 11th 2016
Overview

1. Methodology
2. Key Issues: Public Perceptions and Concerns
3. Post-Secondary Education in Ontario: Public Perceptions
4. Precarious Employment in Academia: Awareness and Impressions
5. Strategic Implications: Charting the Way Forward
The 2016 OCUFA Study of Precarious Employment in Academia was undertaken by Mission Research on behalf of OCUFA.

Findings were derived from online interviews undertaken using a random sample of 1,000 English-speaking Ontarians 18 years of age and over. Data was collected between January 4th and January 8th, 2016.

A corresponding random sample of this size would yield results accurate to within ±3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20; the margin of error for sub-populations is higher due to smaller sample sizes.

Data has been weighted by region, gender and age group using the latest Census figures from Statistics Canada. In turn, results are representative of all adult English-speaking Ontarians.

Detailed findings from the report can be found at: www.OCUFA.on.ca
Key Issues

Public Perceptions and Concerns
Most Important Issue In Ontario:
One In Four Ontarians Identify “Economy” or “Jobs/Unemployment”

- Issues related to education, schools, or tuition were mentioned by just 2% of respondents.
Major Issues of Concern: Quality of University Education of “Some Concern” to Ontarians

- Over half (52%) of Ontarians are concerned about the quality of university education in Ontario at present (rating of =>7.0).

Level of Concern About Issues (scale: 0 – 10)

- The provincial economy: 8.1 (Very concerned)
- Taxes and level of taxation in Ontario: 8.1 (Very concerned)
- Quality of health care in Ontario: 7.9 (Concerned)
- Level of unemployment in Ontario: 7.9 (Concerned)
- Job quality in Ontario: 7.7 (Concerned)
- The provincial deficit: 7.4 (Concerned)
- Adequacy of funding for Ontario’s public services: 7.2 (Concerned)
- The cost of university tuition fees in Ontario: 7.2 (Concerned)
- Quality of education in Ontario: 7.1 (Concerned)
- The quality of university education in Ontario: 6.4 (Some concern)
Post-Secondary Education in Ontario

Public Perceptions
The State of Post-Secondary Education In Ontario:
One In Four Believe Quality of University Education Has “Declined”

Quality of university education in the last five years has...

- Improved: 11%
- Stayed the same: 55%
- Declined: 26%

Priority level for the quality of PSE in Ontario

- Very high priority: 26%
- Somewhat high priority: 52%
- Somewhat low priority: 16%
- Very low priority: 3%

“Priority” = 78%

Overall Concern Rating: 6.0

- Over two in five young Ontarians aged 18-29 believe that post-secondary education should be a “very high priority” for the provincial government (44%).
General Perceptions Of University Education In Ontario:
Four In Five Believe Ontario Universities Provide “High Quality” Education

- Three in five (61%) Ontarians with post-graduate certification believe that the province’s universities do an effective job preparing students for the workplace.
Precarious Employment in Academia

Awareness and Impressions
Perceptions of Precarious Jobs:
Half Identify Jobs in “Hospitality Services”; Less Than One In Five Think Of Academic Jobs

- Ontarians with post-graduate level education are twice as likely as less educated individuals to be aware of the potential precariousness of university faculty positions (30%).
Awareness of Precarious Employment In Academia:
Nearly Two-Thirds of Ontarians Would Prefer Full-Time Faculty Instructors

- Nearly nine in ten Ontarians with very high household income ($200K+/year) would prefer to be taught by faculty who are full-time with job- and earnings-security (88%).
Flexible Employment or Job Security?:
Three In Five Ontarians Think Long-Term Relationships With Faculty Are Best

- Two in three Ontarians with very high income ($200K+/year) believe that “long-term relationships with faculty” is the best employment model for Ontario’s universities (66%).
Support For Job Security Measures In Academia:
Near Full Support For Universities As “Model Employers”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Strongly support</th>
<th>Somewhat support</th>
<th>Somewhat oppose</th>
<th>Strongly oppose</th>
<th>% Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part-time professors should be given sufficient notice and time to prepare for their courses</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities should be model employers and support good jobs in their communities</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities should convert part-time professors to full-time positions before hiring more part-time professors</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time professors should have the first opportunity to teach courses that they have taught before</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time professors should receive equal pay for the same work as full-time professors</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time professors should have same access to benefits as full-time professors</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Psychographic Profile – Type of Faculty, Preference

“PT Faculty/No Preference” Segment Reports “Some” Trust In Private-Sector

“FT Secure Faculty” Segment

- “university degree a necessary asset in today’s world”
- “a lot” of trust in university professors
- “a lot” of trust in student organizations
- Strong support for all measures of job security in academia

“PT Faculty/No preference” Segment

- [disagree] “university degree is a necessary asset in today’s world”
- [disagree] “universities use public money effectively to educate”
- “some trust” in for-profit/private sector organizations
- [oppose] “part-time faculty should have same access to benefits”
- [oppose] “universities should convert PT to FT positions first”

Socio-Demographic Profile
- No distinguishing characteristics

Socio-Demographic Profile
- Aged 18-29 :: PC Voters
Psychographic Profile – Best Employment Model
“Flexible Employment” Segment Reports “No Trust” in the Ontario Government

“Long-Term Employment” Segment

Psychographic profile

- “university degree a necessary asset in today’s world”
- “a lot” of trust in university professors
- “some” trust in the Ontario government
- Strong support for all measures of job security in academia

“Flexible Employment” Segment

Psychographic profile

- [disagree] “university degree a necessary asset in today’s world”
- “no trust” in the Ontario government
- “little/no trust” in university professors or student organizations
- [oppose] “part-time faculty should have same access to benefits”
- [oppose] “universities should convert PT to FT positions first”

Socio-Demographic Profile

No distinguishing characteristics

Socio-Demographic Profile

PC Voters
Support For Public Funding Measures:
Three In Five Ontarians Do Not Support More Public Funding If Personal Taxes Increase

- Women are significantly less likely to favour a personal tax increase even if this means universities are able to hire more faculty full-time (33%, compared to 46% of men).
Strategic Implications

Charting The Way Forward
The argument for fairness (1): Focus should be on job security in academia as an issue of procedural justice

- **Issues of fairness, procedural justice resonate with the vast majority of Ontarians.**

- Description of proposed job security measures for part-time/temporary faculty will be effective with the public.

- Ontarians will engage with the idea that precarity in academia has the potential to undermine education quality – trust in university professors is high; poor job quality could compromise the ability of faculty to make key education-related decisions.
The argument for fairness (2):
We can argue for job security, equal pay, and benefits in the short term.

- Despite majority support for more full-time faculty at Ontario's universities, Ontarians have very little appetite for increased taxes.

- In a period of fiscal restraint the creation of new full-time tenure-stream positions remains a challenge; still, other key aspects of job security for part-time faculty can and should be implemented namely:
  - fairness in the "hiring queue"
  - equal pay for equal work
  - provision of health and social security benefits (extended health- and pension-plan)
  - assurance of adequate course preparation time and the first option to teach familiar courses.

- There is near universal support for these measures among Ontarians.