

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

William M. Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

April 19, 2023

Chairman Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the reauthorization of the *Education Sciences Reform Act*. Tracking the policy impacts on the nation's education system from early learning through postsecondary education is essential to ensure a strong and informed workforce in the United States. To this end, IES does a great job providing information on K-12 teachers and administrators, however this data is not currently gathered among post-secondary faculty who provide the training and instruction for all our nation's educators. **The National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) provides nationally representative, individual level data about the experiences of postsecondary educators; however, it has not been conducted since 2004. We urge the HELP Committee to revisit this important data source, previously collected by the National Center for Education Statistics, and reinstate funding for this data collection effort.**

In the past, NSOPF¹ has provided a national profile of part-time and full-time faculty and instructional staff who are working at public and private non-profit 2- and 4-year institutions in the US. These institutions are selected at random for each iteration providing a probability-based sample of higher learning institutions which in turn provide national estimates for faculty backgrounds, workloads, salaries, benefits, and future plans. The study has been conducted periodically four times in 1987-88, 1992-93, 1998-99, and 2003-2004. NCES is uniquely qualified to conduct this study as a federal agency which will convince institutions to take the information collection request seriously and maximize the response rate. Conducting this study without federal sponsorship would be cost-prohibitive and the response from institutions would not be as robust.

Education researchers have been eager to initiate a new round of data collection of NSOPF for quite some time. At the 2022 Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology (FCSM) Research and Policy Conference a session² was dedicated to the data gaps for post-secondary faculty which have arisen over the past 20 years and the need for this study to be conducted once again to:

- Define and count the postsecondary faculty in the US;
- Advance equity and diversity among our nation's faculty;
- Provide discipline-level data for education researchers; and
- Provide institution-level data on tenure and promotion practices.

¹ <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/nsopf/about.asp>

² <https://www.fcsm.gov/events/2022-fcsm-conference/>, Session F-4. The Need for a National Study of Post-Secondary Faculty

A recent article in Inside Higher Ed³ by Laura Perna at the University of Pennsylvania laid out the need for better data on faculty diversity which NSOPF has provided in the past. Diversity among faculty the students at these institutions and the benefits of this are clear when the corresponding data is collected.

In sum, we encourage you to consider reinstating funding for the National Study of Post-secondary Faculty. This vital data resource for policy makers and education researchers will provide a solid return on investment and further strengthen the nation's education system for all Americans.

For further information, please contact Paul Schroeder, Executive Director at the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics at paul.schroeder@copafs.org or 202.683.5285.

Sincerely,

American Association of University Professors

Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics

³ <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2023/01/10/why-we-need-better-data-faculty-diversity-opinion>