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# *REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMICS*

**OCTOBER 2-3, 2009  
HYATT REGENCY HOTEL  
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK**

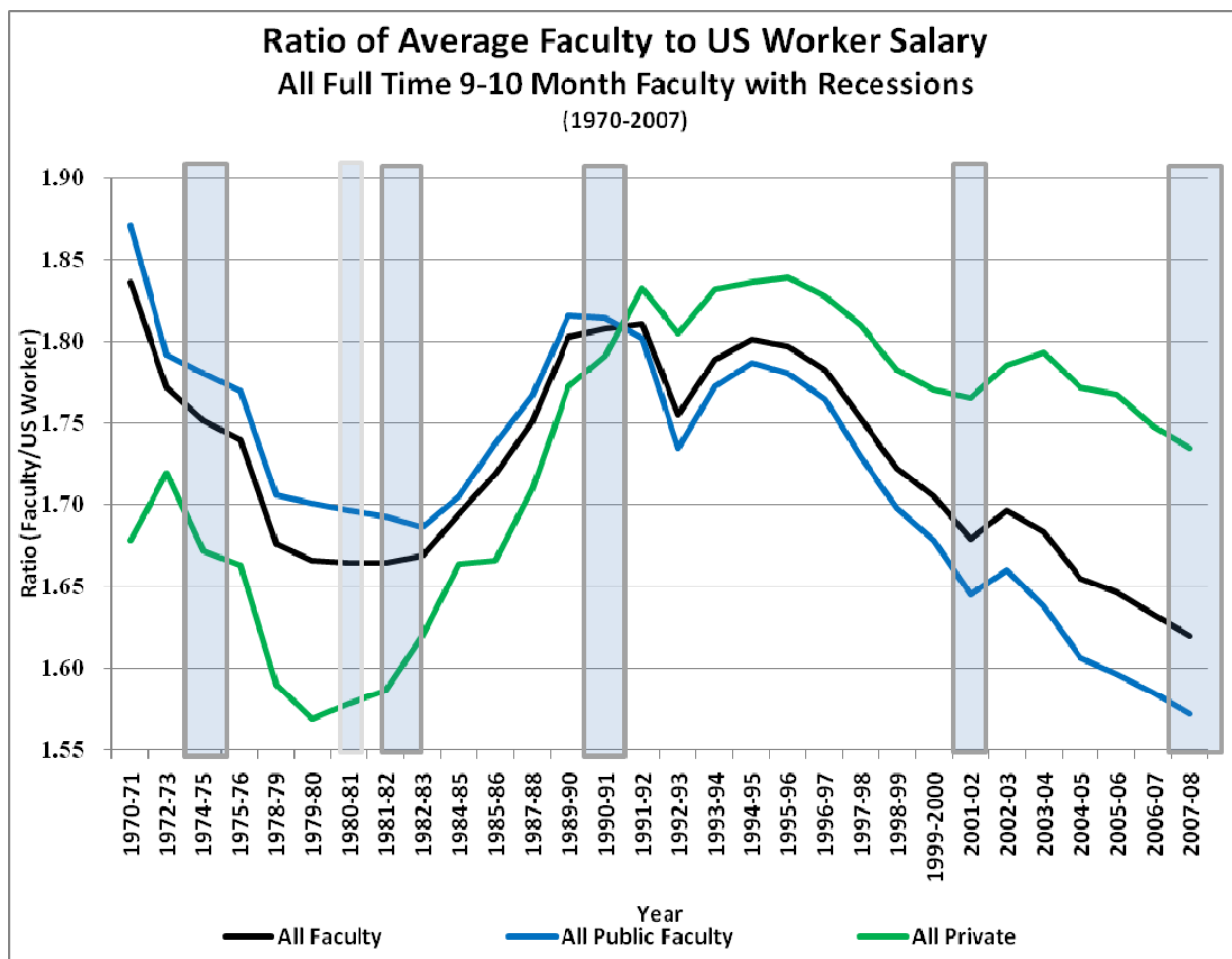
*“I have learnt silence from the talkative, toleration from the intolerant, and kindness from the unkind; yet strange, I am ungrateful to these teachers”.*

Kahlil Gibran

## **ACADEMIC UNION RESEARCH**

Since my last report, I participated in a number of conferences looking at the economics of higher education. The current recession has laid bare the cracks in the foundation of the U.S. higher education system. In listening to the participants at these conferences, a major theme has become evident. As colleges and universities compete in the marketplace, they are falling into the old trap which ensnared the car companies in the 1950s. They compete, not on quality, but on the bells and whistles they provide. “Flash” is the only important thing. In higher education, tuition increases go to provide better workout rooms instead of better classrooms.

In a paper I gave at the Annual AAUP Conference, faculty nation wide are losing ground when compared to average workers with less education. More disturbing is that this trend has been going on for more than twenty years.



The graph above shows in 1970-71 the average faculty member made about 85 percent more than the average worker. This should be expected given the additional education and time faculty must take to earn their degrees. This rate of return to education drops for public sector faculty by 30 percent in 2007-08. The trend is similar for the private sector as well. For new assistant professors, the return is even less; they can expect to earn no more than 35 percent above the average American worker even after working seven to ten years on a degree with little or no pay over that period.

It is little wonder the United States is dropping compared with other nations when it comes to higher education; we are not investing in the major components of education. Instead, just like the auto companies, we are competing on who has the largest fins. If you would like a copy of my entire paper entitled, "*The Historical Rate of Return of Full Time Faculty in the U.S.*". It is available on our Web site under the working papers series.

## **MENTORING**

In Greek mythology, Mentor was the person to whom Odysseus entrusted his children while he was on his travels. Over the summer, I talked with a number of our retired and senior faculty about how we can develop a more supportive environment for our junior faculty. At this Delegate Assembly, I will meet with COARM to ask them for help in developing a mentoring program. In this critical time, new members need someone who can support them. Together, I believe we need to build a strong mentoring program. If you would like to help or have ideas about how a program should look, please let me know.

## **WORKLOAD WORKSHOPS**

During the spring and summer semesters, I and several Labor Relations Specialists held workshops on the increase in workload and how to deal with the myriad issues surrounding workload in general. The workshops started by talking about the protections in our contract and the Taylor Law and then turned to realistic strategies on how to control increases in workload, using such things as faculty governance and department meetings. Of key importance is that workload increases can decrease quality and increase student dropouts. In the end, we must make clear that we are fighting to keep a high quality education for all SUNY students, not simply fighting against more work.

Workload issues will be a continuing discussion on campus. If you would like me to attend or hold a workshop, please let me know.

## **REGIONAL MEETINGS**

Our first regional meeting for academics in the North Country is on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. The meetings are a set of workshops OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS. Other regional meetings are being set up for the rest of the state over the current academic year. The idea is to have a Saturday morning set of workshops which will be attractive to our members. If you have a suggestion on a workshop you would like to see, please call me and I will see if we can include it.