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Shortage Seen For Faculties For the 1990's

By EDWARD B. FISKE

Unless preventive steps are taken soon, American colleges and universities face a major shortage of faculty members starting in the next several years, according to the most comprehensive study yet conducted of the academic job market.

Contrary to the common wisdom, the study, released yesterday, found that the biggest shortfalls will occur not in the sciences but in the humanities and social sciences, and that the shortage will be caused mainly by growth in student enrollments and not by large-scale retirements of professors.

"We need to increase overall production of new Ph.D.'s by two-thirds," said William G. Bowen, co-author of the report. "In the humanities and social sciences, we need to double the current numbers."

The study was conducted by Mr. Bowen, former president of Princeton University, who is now president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and Julie Ann Sosa, a Princeton graduate now studying at Oxford University.

Their research provides the first statistical confirmation of a faculty shortage that has been discussed anecdotally in academic circles for the last three years.

It also puts some new twists on the debate, starting with its rejection of prevailing thought that the expected faculty shortages will result primarily from the extensive retirement of faculty members hired as American higher education was expanding in the 1950's and 1960's.

While such retirements will create

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Major Faculty Shortages Foreseen for the 1990's

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much of the vacancies, the year-by-year rate at which they occur is expected to be steady. The major cause of the shortage will be the opening up of new jobs to accommodate a growth in enrollment expected to begin in 1997. "The main factors are demographic," Mr. Bowen said, referring to the bulge of students now moving through elementary schools.

This finding alone could reduce concern about new Federal legislation banning mandatory retirement.

"Eliminating mandatory retirement won't kill off jobs," said Mr. Bowen. "You're talking about a couple of percentage points."

The study, "Prospects for Faculty in the Arts and Sciences: A Study of Factors Affecting Demand and Supply 1987-2012," is being published by Princeton University Press at 41 William Street in Princeton, N.J. 08540.

The picture the authors paint of what Mr. Bowen called a "serious staffing problem" in higher education contrasts sharply with popular images since the 1970's, when hiring became sluggish and the taxi-driving Ph.D. an established part of the American scene.

The study reported that in the 1987-1992 period, there will be 1.6 candidates available for each available teaching position. But by 1997-2002, the figure will drop to 0.83 for each job, with 30,834 new faculty members to fill an estimated 37,091 positions. For 2002-2007 the figure is projected to be 0.82.

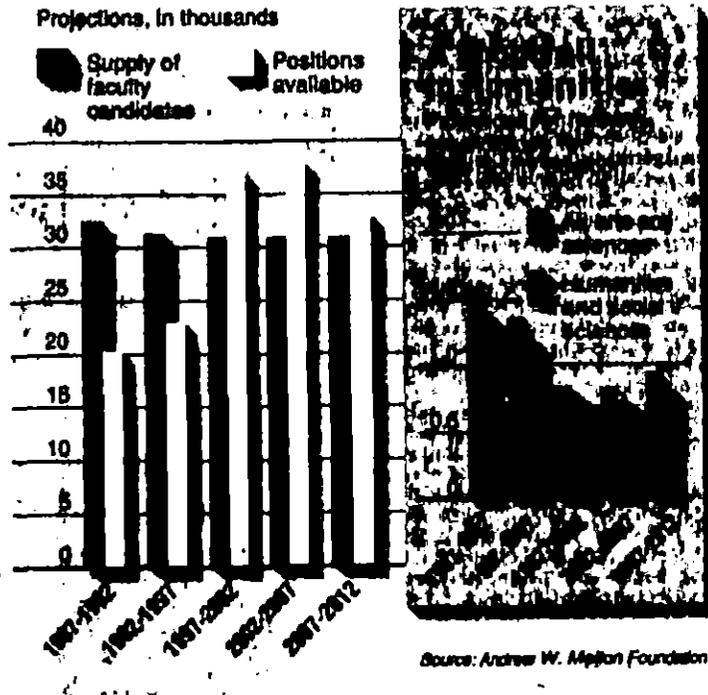
Where Real Shortfalls Lie

The study found that contrary to widespread belief, the pending faculty shortage would not be concentrated in the natural sciences. "There's a problem in the sciences," said Mr. Bowen, "but the real shortfalls lie in the humanities and social sciences."

The study estimated that in the 1997-2002 period the candidates-to-jobs ratio would be 0.71 in the humanities and social sciences, 0.80 in mathematics and the physical sciences, and 1.13 in the biological sciences and psychology.

Mr. Bowen said a "flight from the arts and sciences" was the cause. His

Faculty Outlook: Supply and Demand



Source: Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

The New York Times/Sept. 13, 1989

Shortfalls are expected in the humanities and social sciences.

data show that from 1971 to 1985 the percentage of graduate and undergraduate degrees conferred in the arts and sciences fell to 25 percent, from 40 percent. By contrast, major increases occurred in business and engineering.

Mr. Bowen emphasized that as in any industry, the ideal situation would be a ratio of roughly 1.3 candidates available for each job. "You

'If you're looking for a Renaissance scholar, it doesn't help much to have an economist available.'

business.

Mr. Bowen emphasized that the findings of the study were projections rather than predictions. "Enlightened policies can be adopted to increase the pipeline so that the shortages we envision do not come to pass," he said.

Steps to Ease Shortage

He said universities should shorten the time required to obtain a Ph.D., which now ranges from about 7 years in mathematics to more than 12 years in the humanities. One way of doing this would be to ease up on the number of hours that candidates must spend teaching.

Another need, he said, is to increase the number of fellowships and the amount they pay. Part of the responsibility for this, he said, lies with colleges and universities and part with the Federal Government, whose support for fellowships has declined substantially since the late 1960's.

"Prospects for Faculty in the Arts and Sciences" is the first major study of the academic labor market since a 1974 report by Allan M. Cartier that discussed the tight conditions of the recent period.

The two researchers analyzed faculty employment data and other statistics compiled by the National Research Council and other sources. They were the first to use computers to develop overall conclusions about faculty employment by assembling data on various trends, like birth or college-going rates, and by factoring out Ph.D. holders likely to seek non-academic employment and foreign nationals likely to return to their own countries.

never have a perfect match," he said. "If you're looking for a Renaissance scholar, it doesn't help much to have an economist available."

The study estimated that restoring the overall ratio to the 1.3 level would require a 64 percent increase in new doctorates. To do so in the humanities and social sciences would require a 92 percent increase.

Quality problems are also an issue. A ratio close to 1.0 means that colleges are in the position of having to hire just about anyone who comes along. The quality issue is magnified, he said, by data showing that the proportion of doctorates being awarded by major research universities is declining.

The study focused on the arts and sciences in four-year institutions and did not cover professional schools or their undergraduate equivalents in fields like education, engineering or