



Institution Budget Survey 2016

Executive Summary

In the summer of 2016, conversation among some National Women's Studies Association institutional members about proposed women's studies department mergers with other campus units led to a request that the organization collect data on program and department resources and challenges.

In response the Association conducted a survey of its institutional members that draws upon a previous report, the [*National Women's Studies Association Program Administration and Development Budget Survey 2012*](#).

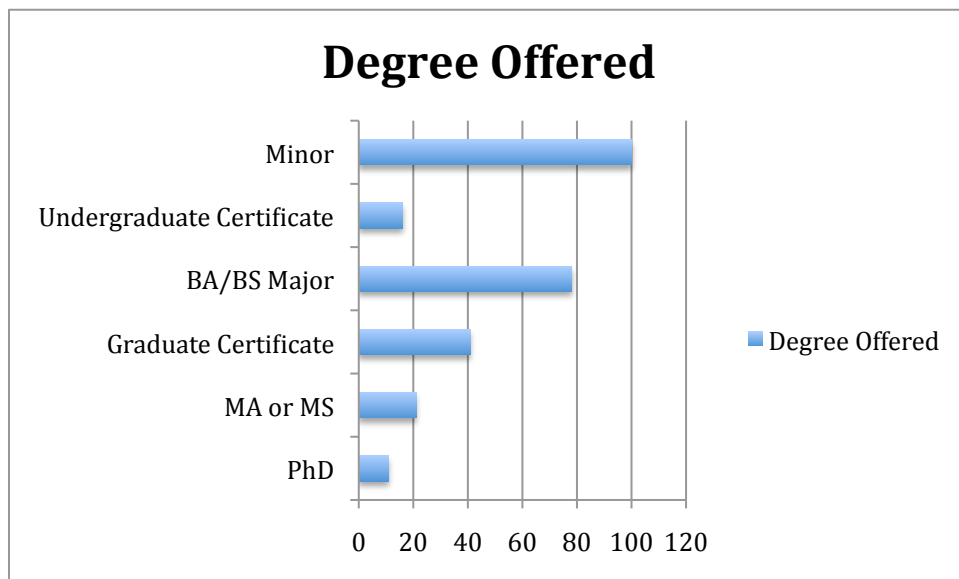
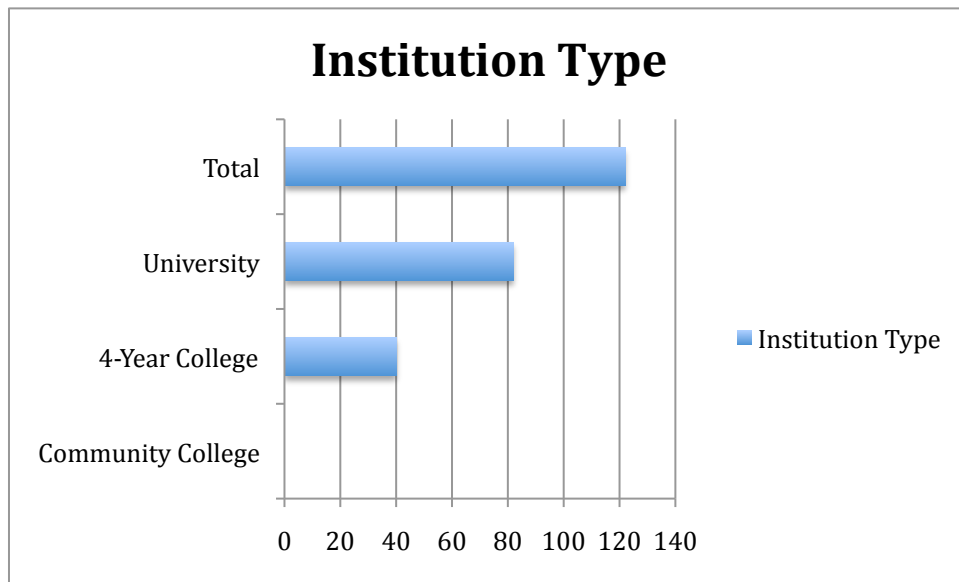
Key findings include the following:

- The field as a whole **has held steady or seen gains in tenure-track faculty over the past three years.**
- The **number and percentage of departments reporting an increase in tenure-track faculty positions has nearly doubled** when compared with data from the 2012 Budget Survey.
- **Resources vary greatly by region**, as one respondent indicates: "As the Illinois state budget crisis has continued and deepened, we have had almost all of our small budget cut, affecting student aide money, travel money, and funding for speakers, purchasing films, and other curriculum support."
- **Eighty-seven percent of respondents have not experienced a department or program merger.**
- **Growing administrative burdens for staff** as smaller campus units merge is a cause for concern.

Survey Demographics

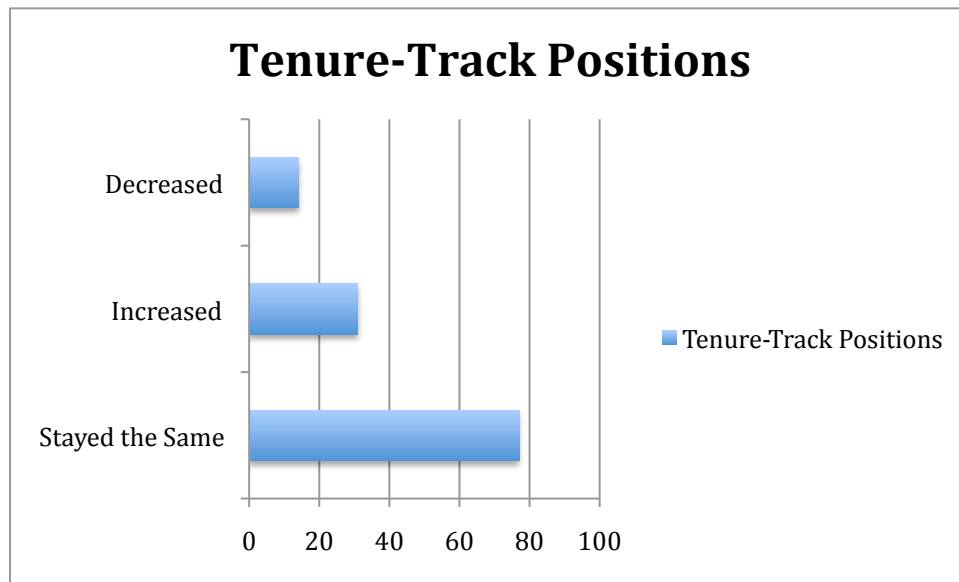
The 2016 survey was sent to 321 institutions and received 120 responses, for a response rate of 37%. Sixty-eight percent of respondents represent universities, while 33% are located at 4-year colleges. Although the survey was sent to community colleges, none submitted responses.

Sixty percent of respondents are located at public institutions while 41% are at private colleges or universities. Almost all respondents' institutions offer a minor—83%—while 66% offer a major, 34% offer a graduate certificate, 18% offer the MA or MS and 9% offer the PhD.

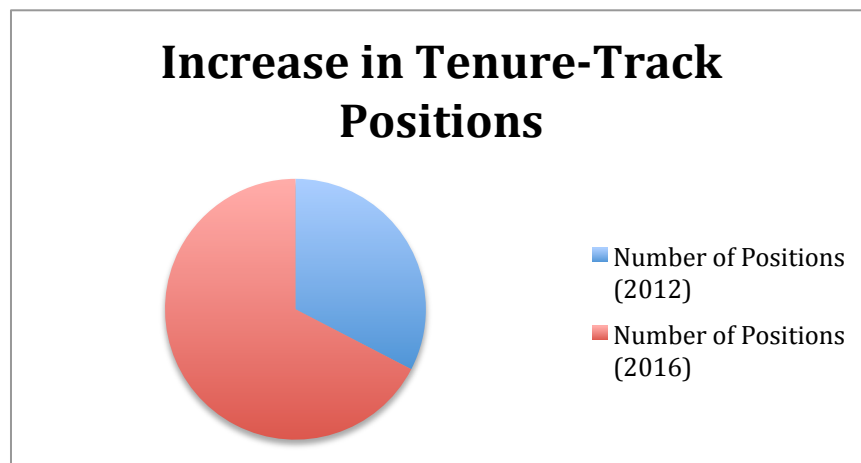


Tenure-Track and Contingent Faculty

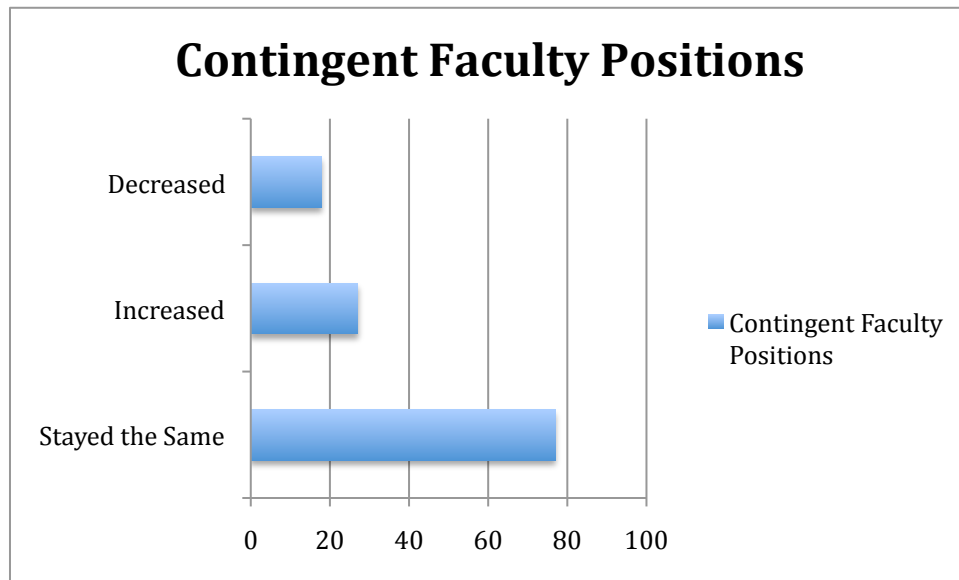
The survey asked respondents to indicate whether tenure-track and contingent faculty positions have stayed the same, increased, or decreased since 2013-2014. Twelve percent of respondents reported a decrease in tenure-track positions, but 63% of respondents indicate that tenure-track positions have stayed the same, while another 26% reported increases.



These figures suggest that while some programs and departments face challenges—and certainly this is especially true for some states and geographic regions—the field as a whole has held steady or seen gains in tenure-track faculty over the past three years. In fact, the number and percentage of departments reporting an increase in tenure-track faculty positions has nearly doubled when compared with data from the 2012 Budget Survey. In 2012 the number was 15, or 12.6% of respondents; in the 2016 survey the number was 31, or 26%.



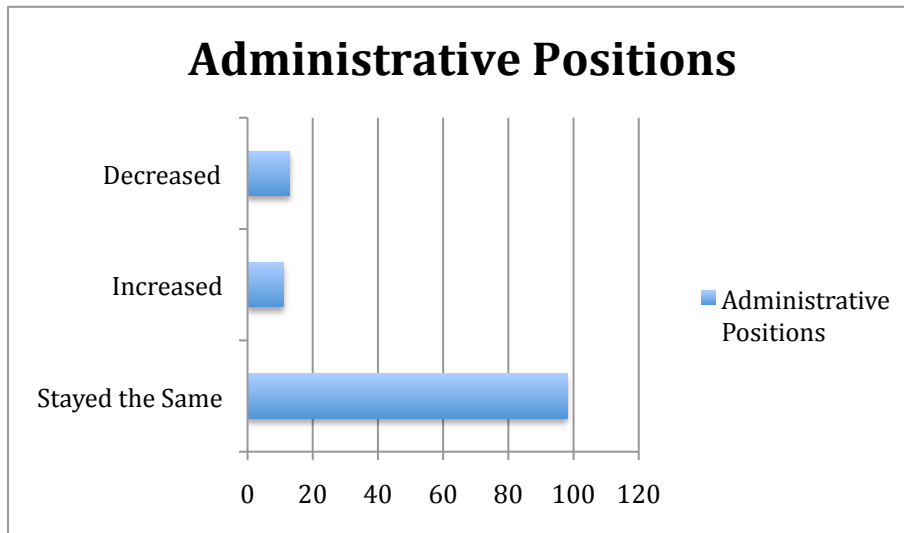
With respect to contingent faculty positions, the response rates are very similar: 63% of respondents have seen their number of contingent faculty positions remain the same, while 22% have seen the number of contingent faculty positions increase and 15% noted a decline in the number of contingent faculty.



NWSA will continue to monitor trends related to contingent faculty. As the organization's Contingent Faculty Solidarity Statement notes, "[c]ontingent faculty colleagues often face heavy teaching loads, commute between multiple positions, and lack basic support in the academy."

Administrative Positions

The majority—82%—of departments and programs responding to the 2016 survey noted that the number of administrative positions in their units have stayed the same since 2013. Only 8% of respondents noted an increase in administrative positions, while 11% indicated a decrease.



Other Resources

The survey asked if other resources had changed since 2013-2014; 55% indicated yes, while 46% indicated no. Many respondents pointed to changes in the department's overall operating budget. For example, one person wrote, "our institution underwent a zero-based budgeting process and as a result of that, our WGST budget actually increased by more than half—from \$4000 to \$9,000. This was due to a supportive dean." Another respondent indicated, "Bigger budget after increasing number of students have declared minors in WGS."

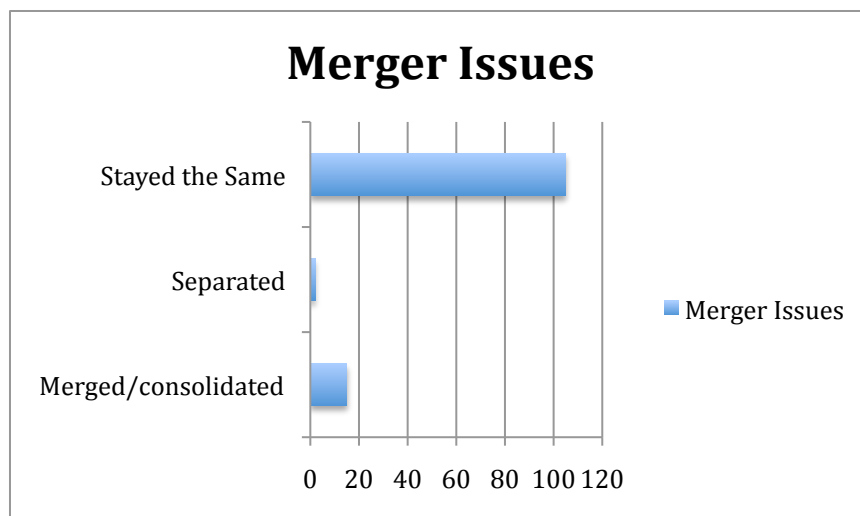
Of course, respondents also noted reductions to operating budgets. For example, one person wrote, "We have had several budget callbacks of 2%, and a base budget callback of 3.853%." Another respondent explained, "As the Illinois state budget crisis has continued and deepened, we have had almost all of our small budget cut, affecting student aide money, travel money, and funding for speakers, purchasing films, and other curriculum support."

Mergers

Most respondents—87%—report that their program or department status has stayed the same since 2013-2014. Fifteen respondents, or 12%, reported that their program or department has merged with another campus unit over the past three years.

Many respondents noted an increased workload for support staff as campus units merge. For example, one person wrote, “Instead of a dedicated staff, my full-time admin and three student workers now assist six programs. As a result, I rarely receive help and must do my own clerical work and errands.” Another said, “The duties of our department manager have been increased steadily due to this reorganization.”

Others noted that mergers would allow smaller programs to meet minimum student major or minor target numbers. For example, “The 20 or so LGBT Studies minors are now counted in the Women's and Gender Studies Department's statistics on majors and minors.” Another noted a similar goal, “Should we succeed in merging with Ethnic Studies, we hope to establish credible numbers for our major, and increase numbers in both minors (WGS and Ethnic Studies).”



Successes

The survey asked respondents to identify successes addressing budget challenges or merger/consolidation issues on their campuses. Some important themes emerged: proactively addressing a proposed merger had the potential to yield positive results.

For example, one respondent noted, “The Women's Studies Department faculty has, in essence, defined its own role in merging with Liberal Arts and Sciences. . . .By being “on it” and proactive, we have largely defined for ourselves how this merger will work and what the GWS curriculum will be within LAS. Because we had it all planned out and clearly defined relatively early on, the administration has largely given us free rein in developing the merger plans.”

Others noted unexpected gains. For example, “The merger has been a success so far—we are on the radar of the Dean and have been granted meaningful support to achieve long-term strategic initiatives that were previously unattainable.”

Another described a campus relocation that proved to be a catalyst for other important changes, growth, and visibility: “Accessibility was gained as we moved from a house on the edge of campus to the heart of the university in a central academic building. There was also a director change. An increase of minors and grad students has occurred since. More effort has been undertaken to include students and faculty from all colleges on campus. . . . Director supervision from a Dean that and regular meeting with other college chairs and directors has fostered more communication and awareness of our program on campus.”

Looking Ahead

To be sure, some women’s and gender studies programs have faced very challenging circumstances, particularly in states such as Illinois. Growing administrative burdens for staff as smaller campus units merge is a cause for concern.

These circumstances reflect broader trends in higher education, as one respondent noted: “From my perspective, the attack on Women's and Gender Studies programs we're seeing has less to do with our specific content area than it does with the general disdain for the liberal arts we've been seeing in state and national government.”

Despite these challenges, the state of the field remains strong overall. Most women’s and gender studies programs have seen faculty and budget resources remain unchanged or increase over the past three years. Further, women’s and gender studies programs have seen important gains in tenure-track faculty lines, doubling the number of positions added compared with a 2012 Budget Survey.

Some respondents note that online courses and external fundraising could lead to potential growth for the field. For example, one respondent commented, “We began an online BA in Fall of 2015 and it has grown exponentially, giving us an additional 30 majors.”

Another wrote, “One of my university's development people told me that she is seeing the first large wave of independent women donors emerging -- that is, women giving gifts to the university without them being attached to a man (father, husband, etc.). She thinks this bodes well for women's/gender studies programs, as such women often have feminist values, and we're bound to see more of this type of giving in the future. I encourage everyone to talk to their development office about ways to connect with such donors/alumna.”

NWSA remains committed collecting data at regular intervals to assess potential vulnerabilities and opportunities for growth.