

Market Corner

In January 2020, the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPAHR) released a comprehensive report entitled: [“The Aging of the Tenure-Track Faculty in Higher Education: Implications for Succession and Diversity.”](#) The results showed that, overall, the professoriate across the United States is an aging population.



For example, in the general labor force, 23 percent of workers are 55 or older. By comparison, in academia, 37 percent of all faculty members fall in this category. More strikingly, women comprise only 27 percent of the professoriate at age 55 or older, while racial minorities make up only 16 percent. The results at stark; they speak for themselves.

The report suggests that age, gender, and minority breakdowns vary widely across broadly defined disciplines. Even so, casual observation suggests that similar demographic trends have played out in departments and units linked to the Agricultural and Applied Economics profession. This demographic shift has been taking place in my department at Virginia Tech, where many retirements have occurred in recent years, providing opportunities for new hiring. Like any department, we have had conversations about our critical needs in certain sub-disciplinary domains. For example, what are our emerging needs in international trade and policy, food and health economics, risk management, applied econometrics, agribusiness management, and so forth? But beyond these, my department has used this opportunity to engage on broader issues relating to diversity. What does a genuinely diverse department look like? Beyond hiring, what support systems are best suited for a more diverse and representative group of faculty members? Should we view the promotion and tenure processes differently than before and, if so, how? How can we fully integrate non-tenure-track faculty members into the activities and shared governance processes in the department?

While many of the above questions linger, we have enjoyed reasonable success in recruiting a more diverse and representative faculty group. Since 2018, the department has added 13 (out of 30) new faculty members. Of the 13, seven are women, and four self-identify as having minority status. Furthermore, eight of the 13 are currently in tenure-track positions, with four of these being women. While we are certainly not prepared to declare victory, we are proud of our successes. Of course, we have also had help. Our college and its leadership remain deeply committed to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion, as does Virginia Tech's senior leadership. In particular, our Office of Inclusion and Diversity, through its Future Faculty Diversity and related programs, has been an important ally for whom we are grateful.

As we think about the student profiles for those we already have plus those we are likely to have. And as we think about the various contours of the internal and external stakeholder groups with

whom we hope to engage. Necessity alone dictates that we be more forward-thinking and proactive in our attempts to build more diverse and representative faculty profiles. Many departments and units in our line of work are already facing an opportunity to rebuild. My hope then is that departments and units similar to mine can use this opportunity to effectively recruit and build a more representative cadre of faculty members. If so, the result will be a more diverse, representative, and inclusive profession. And by definition, one that is more responsive to current and emerging critical needs in our communities and beyond.

Matt Holt, Virginia Tech University

Brandt Forum Recording:

Did you miss our recent Brandt Forum? Do you want to know more about the affects of digitalization on agriculture? [Watch It Here:](#)

Director Spotlight

Chyi-Lyi (Kathleen) Liang (cliang@ncat.edu) is the W.K. Kellogg Distinguished Professor of Sustainable Agriculture and the Director of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) at the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.



CEFS is a unique 3-way partnership in the US between NC A&T, NC State University, and NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Interests: Community entrepreneurship, food systems, food networks, multifunctional agriculture, and innovative opportunities to support small farmers, minority farmers, and under-served communities (e.g., a farm-to-clinic program using specialty vegetables to combat chronic diseases, coupled human-nature system approaches to alleviate food deserts.)

Why NC A&T?: NC ranks as one of the top agricultural producers in the US, while many communities struggle with poverty, poor health indicators, and food insecurity. I came to NC A&T 5 years ago to take on bigger challenges in food systems. I allowed myself to advance my knowledge, skills, experiences, and appreciation by working with diverse organizations and populations.

Hot Stock: I am working with a team of scholars, educators, and service providers to study antibiotic-restricted strategies (i.e., new vaccine, natural treatment, bird wellbeing management, waste management) for the poultry industry to achieve human health, bird's health, environmental health, and long-term prosperity across all scales of poultry operations.

Watchword for 2021: Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Artificial Intelligence in advancing effectiveness and efficiency in agriculture, food systems, and food networks. There is an urgent

need to design, develop, and implement flexible, scalable, affordable, and accessible technology to support all farmers and consumers, particularly for youth groups, socially disadvantaged groups, small enterprises, and limited-resourced communities.

New Directions

Agricultural Exports and Retaliatory Trade Actions: An Empirical Assessment of The 2018/2019 Trade Conflict. This Office of The Chief Economist study estimates the ex-post agricultural trade impacts of retaliatory measures imposed by foreign countries in response to United States' Section 232 and 301 tariffs using a theoretically consistent, monthly, product line gravity equation. Retaliation led to significant US agricultural export losses of \$13.5 to \$18.7 billion on an annualized basis. [The Full Study is Available Here:](#)

“Pivoting” by Food Industry Firms to Cope with COVID-19 in Developing Regions: E-commerce and “Pivoting” Delivery Intermediaries. This Michigan State study looks into how firms “pivoted” to e-commerce to reach consumers and e-procurement to reach processors and farmers. “Delivery intermediaries” pivoted with food firms to help them deliver and procure. The pandemic was a “crucible” that induced this set of fast-tracking innovations... [The Full Study is Available Here.](#)

How Weather Affects The Decomposition of Total Factor Productivity in U.S. Agriculture. This Iowa State and Cornell University study illustrates and quantifies how overlooking the impact of weather shocks can affect the measurement and decomposition of agricultural total factor productivity (*TFP*) change. To assess the role of weather, we conduct a comparative analysis based on two distinct sets of input and output variables. [The Full Study is available here:](#)