

Dental School Vacant Budgeted Faculty Positions, Academic Year 2002-03

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Abstract: The number of vacant budgeted full-time faculty positions has changed little over the last three years, standing in 2002-03 at 280. The number of part-time vacancies, though, has continued to decline to twenty-seven. The average number of vacancies per school was 5.7, down from 6.4 of the past several years. The average number of vacancies reported to be usual and normal at any one time was 3.6. Forty-three percent of the schools reported four or fewer vacant budgeted faculty positions in 2002-03. Overall, the order of primary disciplines by their number of vacancies varies from year to year; however, with no particular trend by discipline. Also there does not appear to be any significant correlation between discipline and the length of time a position has been vacant. Fifty-five percent of the vacant positions had been vacant less than seven months. Salary/budget limitations and lack of response to position announcements were the most frequently reported factors influencing the ability to fill a position. There were 921 reported faculty separations in 2002-03. Forty-six percent were a result of faculty leaving for private practice. The number of new faculty reported in 2002-03 was 1,231. Fifty-one percent of the new faculty came from private practice. The total number of faculty reported in 2002-03 was 357 more than reported in 2001-02. Rather than a perceived pending shortage of faculty, it may be more of an endemic number of vacancies due to the amount of time needed to fill a position. While there is no indication expressed in the survey that current vacancies are adversely affecting the quality of dental education, foresight, planning, and necessary steps need to continue to ensure the preparation and continuity of a dental workforce sufficient in size and expertise to meet the teaching, research, patient care, and administrative needs of the dental education community.

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The upward trend in the number of vacant budgeted faculty positions in U.S. dental schools during the early 1990s led to the establishment of a 1998 task force and a 1999 AADS president's report on the future of dental school faculty,¹ along with the initiation by the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) of a more extensive survey of vacant positions and factors contributing to the number of vacancies. The data from the 2001-02 survey of vacant positions were presented as part of a larger association report on trends, challenges, and responses to meeting the demand for future dental school faculty.² It appeared that the number of vacant budgeted full-time positions had plateaued, and the number of part-time positions peaked in 2000 and began to fall in 2001. Beginning with the 2001-02 survey, effort was begun to obtain information regarding the number of budgeted positions that were lost, rather than just retained as vacant, and the number of vacant bud-

geted positions considered to be usual at any one period of time. These factors are important in assessing the severity of the reported number of vacancies and the effect that number might be having on the ability of dental schools to fulfill their missions in education, research, patient care, and administrative needs of the dental education community. This 2002-03 report updates the trend line for vacant faculty positions and extends the information regarding the nature of dental school vacancies, factors influencing faculty separations and recruitment, and implications to ensuring a faculty of size and expertise that meet the needs of dental education.

Survey Methodology

The 2002-03 survey instrument for reporting vacant faculty positions was sent to the dean of each U.S. dental school. The following information was

to be provided for each currently vacant budgeted faculty position at the dental school or dental school-sponsored program: primary appointment, primary discipline, full-time/part-time status (along with full-time equivalency of the part-time position), newly established or extant position, active or inactive search, length of position vacancy, and factors influencing recruitment efforts for the vacancy.

Data were obtained from fifty-two of fifty-four dental schools. (The University of Nevada at Los Vegas dental school was not included in the 2002-03 survey.) An estimate of the total vacancies was reached by determining the average number of full- and part-time vacancies of the fifty-two schools and adding in those numbers for the two non-reporting schools.

Number and Discipline Areas of Vacant Budgeted Positions

The fifty-two responding dental schools reported a total of 296 vacant budgeted faculty positions in 2002-03: 270 full-time positions and twenty-six part-time positions. Extrapolating as described above, it can be estimated that for the fifty-four schools there were 307 vacant budgeted faculty po-

sitions: 280 full-time positions and twenty-seven part-time positions. Using the estimated numbers for the fifty-four schools and comparing them to the numbers reported by those schools in 2001-02, this is a decrease of thirty-seven positions from the number of vacant budgeted positions that were reported in 2001-02 (Figure 1). As has been the case over the past several years, the change in the number of vacant positions was due primarily to a change in the number of part-time rather than full-time vacant positions. That is, in 2002-03, there was an increase of seven full-time vacancies and a decline of forty-four part-time vacancies. (In Figure 1, the data for the years 1992 and 2000 are from the ADA Survey Center. The data since year 2001 are from the ADEA survey of vacant faculty positions. In the overlap year of 2000, the ADA and ADEA survey data were most similar: 358 vacant positions reported by the ADA and 360 positions reported by ADEA.)

Figure 2 displays the number of schools that fell within three ranges of vacant positions. Twenty-three of the schools reported four or fewer vacancies, one less than the number of schools reporting such in 2001-02. Five schools reported no vacancies in 2002-03. Three schools reported no vacancies in 2001-02. Twenty-four schools had five to nine vacancies, up from sixteen such schools in 2001-02. Seven schools reported ten or more vacancies, down from fourteen schools reporting such vacancies in 2001-03. The average number of vacancies per school

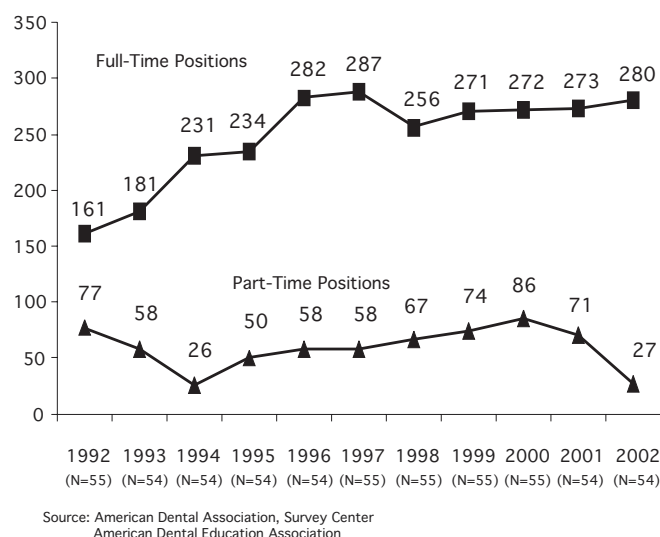


Figure 1. Number of vacant budgeted faculty positions in U.S. dental schools, 1992-2002

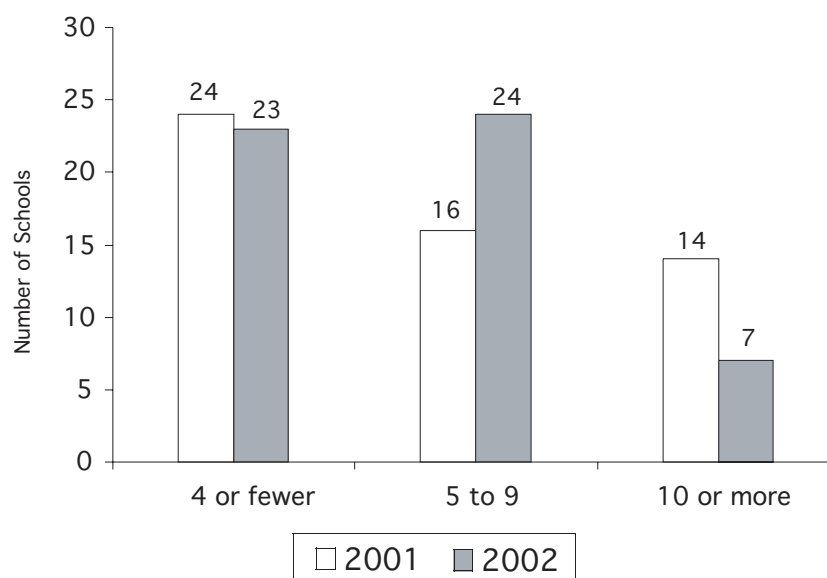


Figure 2. Number of vacant budgeted positions by school, 2001 and 2002

was 5.7 in 2002-03, down from the 6.4 averages of the past several years. While there was a tendency for the smaller schools to report a smaller number of vacancies and larger schools to report a larger number of vacancies, there were small, medium, and large schools in all three categories of vacancies.

The average number of vacancies reported to be usual at any one time was 3.6. It can be estimated, then, that 194 or almost two-thirds of the total vacancies of 2002-03 fell within what was considered usual. Forty-three percent of the schools reported four or fewer vacant budgeted faculty positions.

In addition to reporting the number of vacancies usual at any one time, information was obtained regarding the effect of a school's vacancies on fulfilling its mission. Using a five-point Likert scale of insignificant to significant, forty-two of the fifty-two responding schools indicated the effect of their vacancies on mission. The mean of all responses was 3.04, with the same number of responses on each side of three. In looking at the number of vacancies at the schools that reported a higher significance to the vacancies, it appears that six vacancies was the tipping point at which schools reported higher significance. Still there was not always a direct correlation between the reported number of vacancies and significance. Several schools with a number of vacancies well above the average number of usual va-

cancies indicated their vacancies had no significant effect on mission, whereas several schools with a number of vacancies below the average number of usual vacancies indicated their vacancies had a most significant effect on mission. As could be expected, it can be the nature of the vacancies rather than the number of vacancies that can determine the significance of the vacancies on mission.

Of the 296 reported vacant positions, 270 (91.2 percent) were full-time (Table 1). The survey defined full-time as eight or more half-days per week of dental school obligations. Seventy-three percent of vacant faculty positions (full-time and part-time) were primary appointments in the clinical sciences. Six percent were in the basic sciences. The percentage of vacancies in the primary appointment areas of allied dental faculty and behavioral science faculty were 2 and 1 percent respectively. All of these percentages are similar to the percentages reported in 2001-02. The number of vacant positions in administration, however, increased from twenty-six to thirty-five, from 8 percent to 12 percent of the total vacant positions. The percentage of vacancies in the primary appointment of dental research decreased from twenty-seven to nineteen, from 8 percent to 6 percent of the vacancies in 2002-03.

In Table 2, the number of faculty vacancies in 2002-03 are displayed by primary discipline. The

greatest number of reported vacancies (forty) was in general, operative, restorative dentistry. This represents over 13.5 percent of the total reported vacancies. General, operative, restorative dentistry and periodontics reported the greatest decrease in the number of vacant positions, reporting twenty-four and twenty fewer vacancies, respectively, in 2002-03 than in 2001-02. This represents a decrease of 37.5 percent and 44.4 percent, respectively, for these disciplines. The greatest increases in the number of reported vacant positions were in oral maxillofacial surgery, pediatric dentistry, and endodontics, reporting five, four, and seven more vacant positions respectively than in 2001-02. The number of vacancies in prosthodontics decreased by eight. The number of vacancies in orthodontics, oral medicine, community dentistry/public health, and basic science all experienced slight decreases. Oral biology and oral pathology each reported one more vacant position than in 2001-02. Allied dental education reported seven vacancies, and biomaterials and radiology each reported five vacancies, similar to what was reported for these disciplines last year. All other disciplines reported less than five vacant positions in 2002-03. Overall, the order of the disciplines by their number of vacancies does vary from year to year, but with no particular trend by specialty/discipline.

Of the 296 reported vacant positions in 2002-03, seventy-two were newly established positions, that is, positions being filled for the first time, while 224 were extant positions (Table 3). Two hundred and thirty-six of the vacant positions had ongoing active searches. While the remaining sixty positions (20 percent) were accounted for on the budget, no search was in progress. This is lower than the 27 percent of vacant positions with inactive searches in 2001-02 and similar to the 21 percent of vacant positions with inactive searches in 2000-01. Twelve of the 72 new positions in 2002-03 had inactive searches.

The length of time for which the position has been vacant was reported for 278 of the 296 vacant positions (Table 4). Twenty-seven percent of the positions have been vacant for one to three months, an increase from 22 percent in 2001-02. Twenty-eight percent have been vacant from four to six months, the same percentage as in 2002-02. Nineteen percent have been vacant between seven and twelve months, a decline from the 29 percent of positions vacant between seven and twelve months in 2001-02. Twenty-six percent of the 2002-03 reported va-

Table 1. Vacant faculty positions by primary appointment, 2002-03

Area of Primary Appointment	Vacant Positions		Total Full-Time and Part-Time Vacant Positions	Percentage of Total Faculty Vacancies
	Full-Time	Part-Time		
Clinical Sciences	199	18	217	73%
Basic Sciences	16	2	18	6%
Behavioral Science	2	0	2	1%
Administration	34	1	35	12%
Allied Dental	1	4	5	2%
Research	18	1	19	6%
Total Indicated	270	26		
Not Indicated	0			
Total	296			

Table 2. Vacant positions by discipline, 2002-03

Primary Discipline	Number of Vacant Positions
General, Operative, Restorative Dentistry	40
Oral Maxillofacial Surgery	37
Pediatric Dentistry	28
Endodontics	25
Periodontics	25
Prosthodontics	24
Orthodontics	18
Oral Biology	13
Oral Medicine	11
Community Dentistry/Public Health	10
Oral Pathology	9
Basic Science	8
Allied Dental Education	7
Biomaterials	5
Radiology	5

Table 3. Status of vacant positions

		Full-Time	Part-Time
New Position to Be Filled	72	69	3
Extant Position to Be Filled	224	201	23
Active Search	236	218	18
Inactive Search	60	52	8

cancies have been vacant for over a year. This is an increase over the 20 percent of positions vacant for over a year in 2001-02 and represents the second consecutive year where there has been an increase in the percentage of positions vacant for over a year. In assessing primary disciplines by length of vacancy,

Table 4. Length of time positions have been vacant

Length of Time in Months	Number and Percentage of Positions Vacant	Number and Percentage of Positions with Inactive Search
1-3	75 (27%)	12 (16%)
4-6	78 (28%)	18 (23%)
7-12	54 (19%)	11 (20%)
13-18	24 (9%)	5 (21%)
19-24	31 (11%)	5 (16%)
>24	16 (6%)	5 (31%)

there does not appear to be any significant correlation between discipline and length of vacancy.

Table 4 also displays the number of vacant positions, by time period, for which searches were inactive and the percentage of the total number of vacant positions by time period that these inactive search positions represent. Of the seventy-five positions that had been vacant one to three months, 16 percent had inactive searches. Twenty-three percent of the seventy-eight positions that had been vacant from four to six months had inactive searches. At the seven- to twelve-month time period, 20 percent of the fifty-four vacancies had inactive searches. Overall, almost 20 percent of the 207 positions vacant for one year or less in 2002-03 had inactive searches. This is down from 26 percent of the 2001-02 positions vacant for one year or less having inactive searches. At the thirteen- to eighteen-month time period, the percentage of inactive searches is down to 21 percent from 30 percent in 2001-02. For the periods of nineteen to twenty-four months and greater than twenty-four months, the percentage of vacancies from inactive searches also decreased, from 32 to 16 percent and from 40 to 31 percent respectively. Overall, 21 percent of the positions vacant for more

than a year had inactive searches, down from 33 percent in 2001-02.

In addition to the establishment of new positions that are as of yet unfilled, the total number of vacant budgeted positions reported annually is affected by the number of positions that are lost as they are vacated or no longer held as a vacant budgeted position to be filled. Seventeen schools reported losing thirty-nine positions: twenty-four full-time and fifteen part-time. This loss of positions can account for some of the decline in vacant positions from that reported in 2001-02.

Factors Influencing the Ability to Fill a Position

The ADEA survey of vacant faculty positions requests information regarding factors influencing the ability to fill a position (Table 5). Salary/budget limitations and lack of response to the position announcement were the most influential factors in the ability to fill a position, each influencing 38.5 percent of the faculty vacancies that were reported in 2002-03 (114 of the 296 reported positions). Meeting position requirements was the third most reported influencing factor at 27 percent (eighty of the 296 reported positions). Salary/budget limitations, lack of response to the position announcement, and meeting position requirements were also the three most frequently reported factors in 2000-01 and 2001-02.

Other factors reported as influencing the ability to fill a position were significantly less important. These factors include: other department needs/priorities (17 percent), meeting scholarship requirements (15 percent), meeting licensure requirements (10 percent), board eligibility/status requirements (9 percent), and geographic location/cost of living issues (8 percent).

Table 5. Factors influencing the ability to fill a position

	2002-03
Salary/Budget Limitations	114
Lack of Response to Position Announcement	114
Meeting Position Requirements	80
Other Department Needs/Priorities	49
Meeting Scholarship Requirements	45
Meeting Licensure Requirements	29
Board Eligibility/Status Requirements	26
Geographic Location/Cost of Living	25
Other	16

Factors Influencing Faculty Separations

The annual ADEA Survey of Dental Educators (SODE) obtains information regarding faculty separations. There were 921 reported separations in the 2002-03 SODE, which updates the 2001-02 ADEA aggregate roster of dental school faculty. This means that 8.4 percent of the dental school faculty

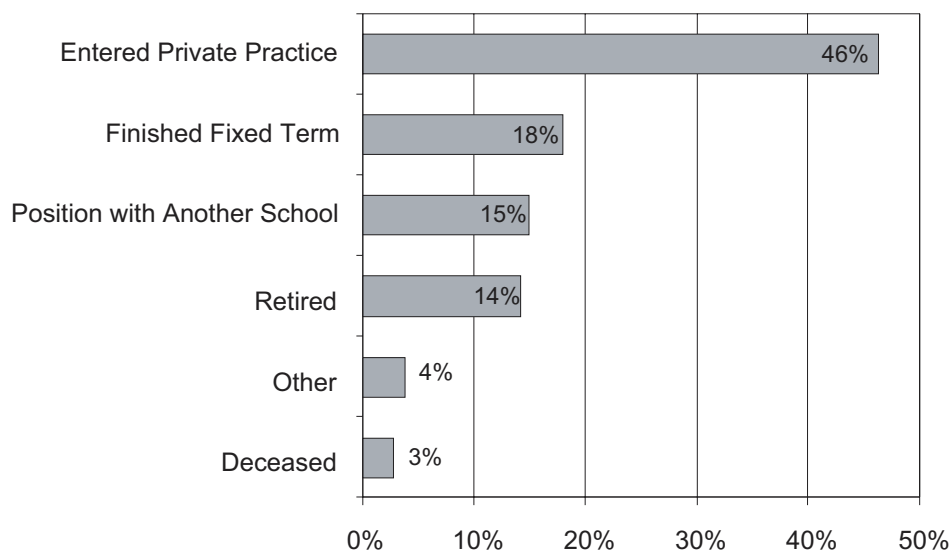


Figure 3. Reasons for separations of faculty, 2002-03

separated some time between reporting years 2001-02 and 2002-03. The year before, almost 10 percent of dental school faculty separated. The reason for separation was provided for 73 percent of the 2002-03 reported separations.

Figure 3 displays the reasons for separation as a percentage of the total reported reasons. Of the 2002-03 separations, 46 percent were a result of faculty leaving to enter private practice. Eighteen percent of the separations were accounted for by individuals that finished a fixed term contract with a school. Almost 15 percent of the separations were due to a faculty member obtaining a position with another school. Retirement accounted for 14 percent of the separations. Almost 4 percent of the separations were due to another reason, such as temporary leave or sabbatical, and almost 3 percent were due to the death of a faculty member. These percentages are most similar to those reported in 2001-02 and continues the trend of leaving to enter private practice as the primary reason, by far, for faculty separations.

Sources of New Faculty

The number of new faculty reported in the 2002-03 Survey of Dental Educators was 1,231. The survey also requested information on the source of the new faculty. Source information of where these individuals came from was provided for 54 percent

of the new faculty. Table 6 displays this information. Over half (51 percent) of the new faculty came directly from private practice. Twenty-four percent of new faculty came from another dental school. Another 18 percent of new faculty came directly from an advanced education program. The remaining 7 percent of new faculty came from a first-degree program (4 percent) or the uniformed services (3 percent). Thirty percent (369) of the reported new faculty was hired into full-time positions; 31 percent (401) of the separating faculty and new faculty positions were full-time. It would appear that, by and large, full-time vacant and new full-time positions are being filled with full-time faculty.

Implications of the 2002-03 Survey

The number of vacant budgeted full-time faculty positions has changed little over the last several

Table 6. Sources of new faculty

From private practice	51%
From another dental school	24%
From an advanced education program	18%
From a first degree program	4%
From the uniformed services	3%

years, standing now at 280. The number of vacant budgeted part-time positions has continued to decline significantly, falling from seventy-one to twenty-seven. Admittedly, some of this little change in the number of full-time vacancies and large decline in part-time vacancies can be accounted for by the reported loss of thirty-nine positions in 2002-03. But while thirty-nine positions were reported lost in the 2002-03 survey, the 2002-03 survey of dental educators reported an increase of 357 faculty over that reported in 2001-02. Rather than a perceived pending shortage of faculty, it may be more of an endemic number of vacancies due to the amount of time needed to fill a vacancy. Based on the average of the number of faculty vacancies considered to be usual (3.6 as reported by this year's respondents), it can be estimated that 194 or almost two-thirds of the vacant positions could be considered usual and that it can routinely take over six months to fill a position. While the education of students must continue while there are faculty vacancies, assessing the Likert scale responses to the significance of vacancies on the missions of the school indicated that significance could relate more to the considered significance and importance of any one vacant position rather than to the number of vacant positions.

Forty-six percent of the reported faculty separations in 2002-03 were due to leaving academia to enter private practice. This continues, by far, to be the primary reason for leaving academia. And the primary factors noted for influencing the ability to fill a vacant position continue to be budget limitations that affect the ability to offer competitive salaries and lack of response to position announcements. Which comes first? Noncompetitive salaries, which lead to a lack of responses, or a lack of responses, due to expected noncompetitive salaries. Whichever, the real or perceived financial rewards of private practice over academia do influence the ability to attract and retain dental school faculty, and that situation remains and is currently exacerbated by the ongoing and projected reductions in public funding of higher education. Still, as identified by the new question added to the ADEA survey of dental educators, 51 percent of the new faculty, reported by source of new faculty, came from private practice, in a full-time to part-time ratio similar to that of faculty separations.

In addition, as previously mentioned, 4 percent of the reported new faculty came upon graduation from dental school or a first-degree program, 18 percent upon completion of advanced education, and 3 percent from the uniformed services. Despite thoughts of financial reward disparities between careers in private practice and academia, academia does attract individuals to it.

In response to what appears to have recently become an endemic number of vacancies, including a rather large number of vacancies considered usual to have vacant, and along with the anticipated increase in the number of vacancies due to an aging/aged dental school faculty, dental schools must continue their efforts, at both the pre- and postdoctoral levels, in presenting and promoting academia as career options; identifying and mentoring students that have interest in academia; and providing an environment of curricular, instructional, and research opportunities that can stimulate interest, and prepare those so interested, in pursuing academic careers in dentistry. (Previous association reports¹⁻³ provide recommendations and strategies regarding formal and informal efforts to prepare, recruit, and retain dental school faculty.)

While there is no indication expressed in the survey of vacant faculty positions that current vacancies are adversely affecting the quality of dental education, foresight, planning, and necessary steps need to continue to ensure the preparation and continuity of a dental faculty workforce sufficient in size and expertise to meet the teaching, research, patient care, and administrative needs of the dental education community.

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