

**Does Current or Prior Work Experience Cause Professional School Faculty to
Have Higher Job Satisfaction?**

Initially Submitted as:

**If They Had It to do Over Again, Would Faculty in Professional Schools Still
Choose an Academic Career?**

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Abstract

Academic faculty members teaching in professional schools are uniquely distinguished from other faculty in several respects. One of the most obvious distinguishing characteristics is the fact that the majority of professional school faculty have prior industry (or non-academic) experience in a field germane to their academic area(s) of expertise. For example, many accounting professors have worked as professional auditors, many law professors were partners in law firms and many pharmacists practiced community and/or hospital pharmacy prior to embarking on academic careers. In many cases, professional schools' accrediting agencies actually place emphasis on hiring faculty with prior "real-world" experience, and also expect faculty to (or at least look favorably upon faculty whom) maintain their professional credentials.

This "real world" experience gives professional school faculty unique insights into their opportunity costs of embarking on an academic career. At the very least, these faculty have first-hand experience about differences in corporate culture, work schedule flexibility and functional independence one gains in academics (*viz-a-viz* non-academics), often that the expense of a lower monetary salary. These differences are generally thought to impact job satisfaction levels both across academic setting and within different academic settings. For example, Bender and Heywood (2006) find that female academic scientists and non-academic scientists have greater job satisfaction scores than their academic, male counterparts. Stevens (2005) similarly finds that the determinants of jobs satisfaction among English academics is complex, and varies based on the type of job one has, as well as how one defines job satisfaction.

One issue that has not yet been addressed in the literature is whether prior non-academic experience leads to greater or reduced job satisfaction, especially among professional school faculty, whose prior experience (if any) is usually closely associated with their current areas of expertise. This paper uses the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) to explore this issue (NCES, 2004; Eagan, 2007; Dongbin, Twombly and Wolf-Wendel, 2008). More specifically, we use Bayesian discrete choice modeling to empirically investigate whether professional school faculty with current and/or prior non-academic experience have greater job satisfaction than their counterparts. The NSOPF data are particularly useful to examine this issue, since the data contain a large cross section of faculty working in both professional and liberal arts settings (Porter, 2007; Hubbard and Stage, 2009). It also asks respondents to identify a wide array of job satisfaction metrics, although for the sake of brevity, this analysis merely examines overall job satisfaction. Our principal finding is that prior work experience does make professional faculty more likely to value their current academic position(s) more favorably than their professional school counterparts without such experience. However, the extent to which these positive values exceed their counterparts' valuation depends on numerous socio-economic and environmental characteristics.

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