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## Part-time growth

Job opportunities within academia have increased rapidly over the past 20 years — at least, for people willing to work part-time. According to the American Council on Education, which recently analysed data from the US Department of Education, the number of part-time faculty members in the United States rose by 79% between 1981 and 1999, to more than 400,000 out of a total of one million instructors. The biggest rise occurred between 1987 and 1992, when both the economy and the college-age population were growing. During that period, 82% of the 120,000 new faculty members who were hired took up part-time positions.

The analysis of that analysis? For science and medicine, the situation could have been worse. The proportion of part-time positions in health-sciences faculties grew from 42.8% in 1992 to 46.6% in 1998, with the balance of tenure and tenure-track positions shifting from 36% in 1992 to 32.7% in 1998. In natural sciences, the percentage of part-time positions fell during the same period, from 33% in 1992 to 32.2% in 1998. But the proportion of full-time, non-tenure-track positions almost doubled, from 3.7% to 7.3%.

The story is similarly mixed when looking at different kinds of institution. Private research universities reduced their dependence on part-timers, from 46% of faculty members in 1992 to 40% in 1998. The opposite was true for public research institutions, where the percentage of part-time positions rose from 26% to 30%.

So how can you improve your odds of securing full-time work? One way is to mirror the part-timers who have several jobs and publish almost as much as their full-time colleagues in hope of getting on the tenure track. Another is to increase the odds, but reduce long-term security, by considering full-time, non-tenure-track positions, which may be a growth area.

**Paul Smaglik**  
*Naturejobs* editor



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