

The Role of Emeriti: Results of a quick Survey

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Abstract

A questionnaire has been addressed to a few university colleagues (50+) with the objective to get from their replies an overall perception of the role of emeriti within the academic community.

Both active and retired colleagues were consulted. Three different sets of questions were formulated, depending on the status of the recipients:

- The questions addressed to colleagues in activity aimed at getting their opinion about the contribution of emeriti still frequenting their own university or department.
- The colleagues keeping an academic activity after retirement were asked to describe their current contribution, explain their motivation to exert it, and comment about their interaction with younger colleagues, researchers and students.
- Finally, a third set questions was addressed to retired colleagues who made the choice to stop any academic activity.

Eighty percent of the 31 replies gathered emanate from colleagues in Engineering. The conclusions that have been drawn from them can be summarized as follows:

- The contribution of emeriti is generally well accepted by younger university colleagues, and their role clearly identified by them.
- A significant proportion of retired professors choose to stop all academic activity for personal reasons (e.g., health, devotion to family, undertaking new activities).
- Emeriti still in activity are generally not motivated by financial considerations. Their involvement results essentially from personal motivation.
- They participate only exceptionally to teaching, but generally enjoy remaining active in research.
- They still contribute to a wide range of other academic activities in which their experience and their contacts are deeply appreciated.

Seven reasons for emeriti to remain active have been identified: exchange with former colleagues, interaction with younger generation, pleasure to “stay in”, satisfaction of being useful, emotion of discovery through research, moral incentive.