

The Society of Christian Ethics Report on the Survey on Contingent Faculty

At the end of the Intersociety Survey on Contingency, those who had self-identified at SCE members were asked a few SCE specific questions. We have provided the most basic takeaways from the SCE data here, but we recommend that readers spend some time with the [full report](#) (password: “Contingency.”)

SCE survey participation

The survey gleaned information about survey respondents who are members of the SCE. The Society itself comprehensively tracks its members’ status when members pay dues and register for conferences. The breakdown of respondents below can help the Board judge the degree to which the sample represents the SCE membership.

Of 454 respondents, 343 described themselves as faculty. Categories of SCE faculty are listed below, both numerically and as percentages. The number of both tenure-track (TT) and non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty as a proportion of respondents was in line with other societies’ results. Of the 11 societies, only SSME recorded more than 50 percent TT respondents, and SSME’s small size may make this difference statistically insignificant. In SCE as in all the larger societies, NTT faculty accounted for between a quarter and a third of respondents.

Category of faculty	Number of SCE respondents	% of SCE faculty respondents	% of all SCE respondents
Tenure-track	200	58%	44%
Non-tenure-track	143	42%	31%
Full-time	42	12%	9%
Part-time	86	25%	19%
Other status	15	4%	3%

Society of Christian Ethics questions

The society-specific questions on the SCE survey were intended to glean information about the situation and needs of SCE NTT faculty but also to gather basic information about TT members’ participation in the Society.

Specifically, we asked whether and why faculty had skipped SCE conferences in favor of other meetings in the five years 2015-2019. 47 percent of all SCE respondents had done so. Of those who skipped, 47 percent bypassed SCE in favor of AAR/SBL, and 12 percent bypassed SCE for CTSA.

The distinction between TT and NTT faculty was not as great as expected: 45 percent of TT faculty skipped SCE in favor of another conference, compared to 50 percent of NTT faculty. Surprisingly, full-time NTT faculty (60 percent) were much more likely to skip SCE in favor of another conference than part-time NTT faculty (44 percent, or about the same as TT faculty).

Respondents were invited to mark all the reasons for skipping. Of these, the top-marked response (besides “other” at 17 percent) was presenting at another conference (31 percent); roughly equal numbers of respondents mentioned geographical convenience, conference-specific funding, and networking opportunities; comparatively cheaper cost was last, at 8 percent.

Because we have not asked this question of our members in the past, we cannot speculate about trends or new drivers. However, the data suggest that faculty in all situations are conserving time

and funds and that PTNTT members may see themselves as especially needing the exposure and exchange that conferences provide.

Still, cost appears to be a greater factor for NTT faculty than for TT faculty. The question allowed respondents to tick more than one box in reply. 149 TT faculty checked the two boxes having to do with cost only 29 times, whereas 94 NTT faculty checked those boxes a total of 26 times: they were about half again as likely as TT faculty to cite funding or cost as a reason for skipping the conference.

We also asked NTT faculty whether they would find SCE conference subsidies helpful for attending the conference (this is separate from the question whether cost has kept them away—NTT faculty may be making sacrifices to attend) as well as whether TT faculty favor SCE subsidies for NTT faculty. 81 percent of NTT faculty said subsidies would be helpful, and 69 percent of TT faculty supported subsidies. Surprisingly, when asked how the SCE should supply assistance, TT faculty were a bit more willing to sacrifice general funds through elimination of registration fees or provision of direct subsidies, whereas NTT faculty were slightly more likely to favor creation of a need-based fund to which all members can donate. Some members also commented that need-based funds ought to be available to members regardless of status. The institutional belt-tightening that COVID has inspired may make this an increasingly appropriate recommendation. Still, in the free comments section many respondents expressed doubt that SCE could afford to offer significant subsidies of any kind.

Finally, we asked whether members would find access to an SCE institutional subscription to databases like ATLA or JSTOR helpful. 64 percent of PTNTT faculty members said that it would be helpful, and a surprising 51 percent of TT faculty agreed. Before making such an investment, it seems important to know how many members of each group have other consistent means of access to such materials and would simply enjoy redundancy.

In conclusion, we reiterate the general suggestions to professional societies that emerged from the larger report. The SCE has already made progress on several of them.

- Creation or reservation of one or more society board seats for NTT faculty
- Creation of a society committee on NTT concerns
- Society provision of competitive research funds for NTT faculty, who are less likely to have access to institutional funds
- Society provision of resources and advice to members advocating for NTT faculty on their own campuses
- Regular society-sponsored education on and study of these interlocking issues: NTT and TT faculty positions, salaries, and benefits; graduate education; and the shape of the profession generally
- Society outreach to NTT faculty who are not currently professional society members
- Society surveys of NTT faculty about their needs and provision of programming and resources that match them
- Steeply graded membership fees
- Steeply graded conference fees, perhaps with the option of remote participation in in-person conferences
- Fully remote conferences
- Society leadership reflection on whether mergers of related societies might make them cheaper to administer, possibly preserving low membership and conference fees for lower-income members without cutting services and resources
- Society licenses that grant society members access to databases like ATLA and/or journal collections like EBSCO and JSTOR.

All respondents who identified themselves as an SCE member were asked the following questions:

1. Which of the following SCE meetings have you attended in the past 5 years? (please check all that apply)

	Total		TT	NTT	FTNTT	PTNTT	Other
2019 - Louisville	19.05%	164	93	49	12	37	22
2018 - Portland	16.4%	142	78	45	17	28	19
2017 - New Orleans	21.02%	182	104	47	18	29	31
2016 - Toronto	17.44%	150	92	38	13	25	20
2015 - Chicago	26.1%	225	132	56	20	36	37
Total		866	499	235	80	155	129

2 - Since 2015, have you chosen to skip an SCE annual meeting in favor of a different conference, due to lack of funds or otherwise?

	Total		TT	NTT	FTNTT	PTNTT	Other
Yes	46.74%	179	84	60	24	36	35
No	53.26%	204	103	61	16	45	39
Total		383	187	121	40	81	74

2a - If you answered that you have skipped the SCE annual meeting in favor of another conference please identify the conference that took priority and the year

	Total	
American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature	39.3%	57
Catholic Theological Society of America	11.0%	16
College Theology Society	4.1%	6
American Society for Bioethics and the Humanities	3.4%	5
Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church	2.8%	4
Total		145

Note: Only societies with more than one response are listed here. For all 145 responses, see complete report

2b - If you answered that you have skipped the SCE annual meeting in favor of another conference, can you identify WHY the other conference took priority? (please check all that apply)

	Total	TT	NTT	FTNTT	PTNTT	Other
I was presenting at the other conference	31.27%	86	50	30	17	13
The other conference is better for networking	15.27%	42	26	10	3	7
The other conference was in a better location (closer to home, easier to get to, etc.)	13.82%	38	20	12	4	8
The other conference was cheaper	8.36%	23	8	11	3	8
I had funding for the other conference	13.82%	38	21	15	6	9
Other (please specify)	17.45%	48	24	16	8	8
Total		275	149	94	41	53

3a (NTT) - Would it be helpful to you if SCE subsidize contingent/adjunct faculty to travel to conferences?

	Total	
Yes	81.0%	85
No, I have other sources of travel funding	10.5%	11
No, even with funding subsidized, I still would not travel to conferences	2.9%	3
No, for some other reason (please specify)	5.7%	6
Total		105

3a (TT) - Should SCE subsidize contingent/adjunct faculty to travel to conferences?

	Total	
Yes	68.9%	186
No	11.5%	31
Other (please specify)	19.6%	53
Total		270

3b - If SCE was to subsidize contingent travel how should it do this?(please check all that apply)

	Total		TT	NTT	FTNTT	PTNTT	Other
By reducing/eliminating contingent membership or registration fees	73.2%	251	129	83	29	54	11
By providing travel assistance on a need based, application basis from the SCE general funds	52.8%	181	98	57	19	38	0
By establishing a contingent travel fund that members can donate to and contingent members can apply for on the basis of need	57.7%	199	93	68	23	45	1
Other (please specify)	7.3%	25	11	7	2	5	0
Total		343	168	112	37	75	12

3c - Would it be helpful to you if the SCE provided its members with access to article databases such as ATLA or Jstor?

	Total		TT	NTT	FTNTT	PTNTT	Other
Yes	57.22%	218	95	75	24	51	47
No	42.78%	163	92	47	16	31	24
Other (please specify)	7.3%	25	11	7	2	5	0
		343	168	112	37	75	12

In addition to the questions above, survey takers were also asked:

3d - In what other ways can the SCE be useful to contingent scholars?

4 - How should the SCE address issues of contingency at institutions where SCE members are employed? What responsibilities does an academic society and a society of ethics bear on the matter of contingency in the academy? What do you expect of the SCE in this regard?

4a - How can the SCE better equip its own members to appreciate the larger structural (and national) issue of contingency and thus, be better allies to their peers in contingent roles?

4b - How do you think the SCE can help tenured/tenure-track faculty who are not SCE members to better appreciate the situation of contingent/adjunct faculty?

Qualitative responses to these questions and all “please specify” responses above can be found in the [full report](#) (password: “Contingency”).