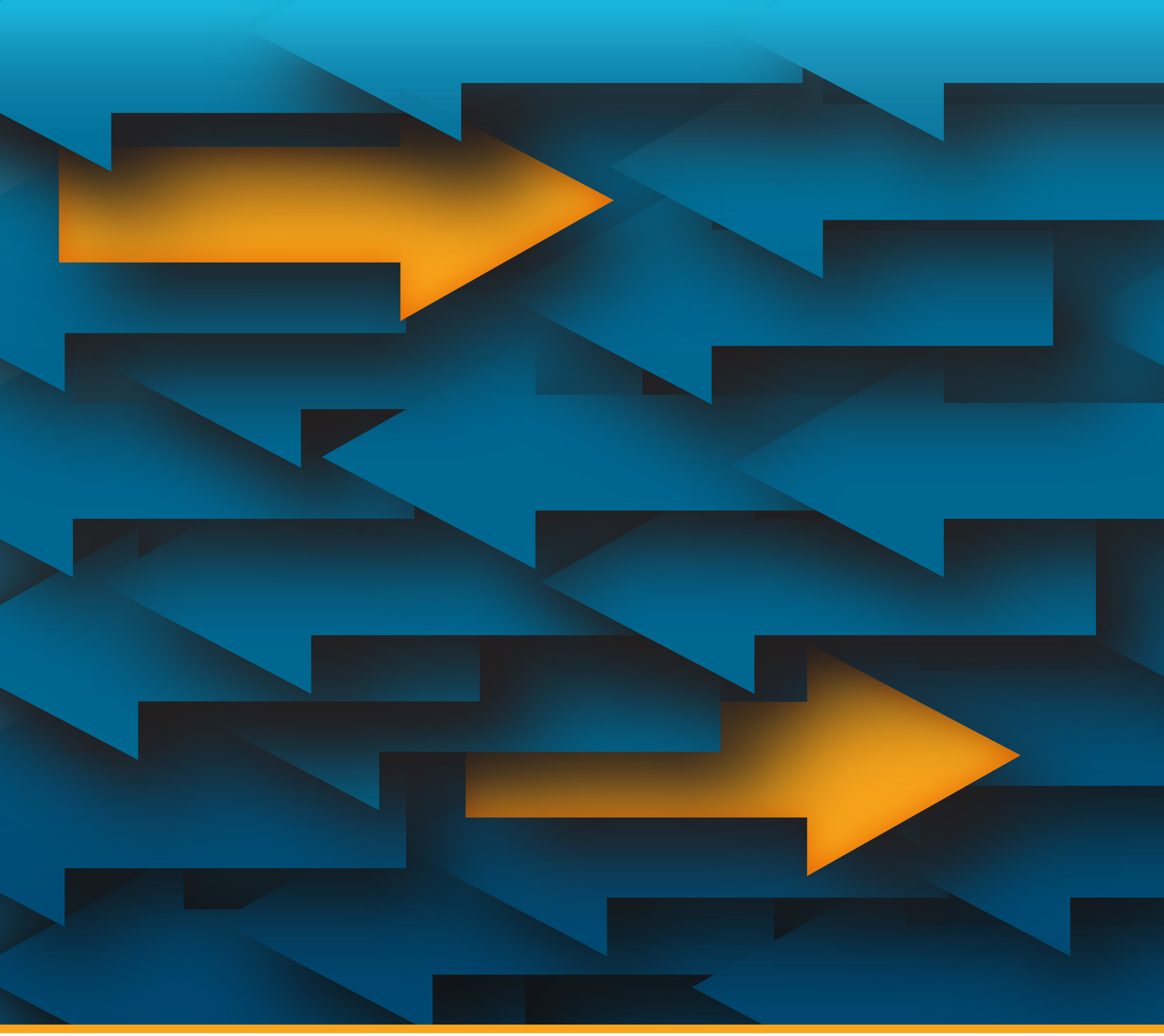

AGING ACADEME

RETIREMENT TRENDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

THE CHRONICLE of Higher Education

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THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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PREFACE

Aging Academe: Retirement Trends in Higher Education was written by Jeffrey J. Selingo, contributing editor to The Chronicle of Higher Education, Inc. and sponsored by TIAA-CREF. The Chronicle is fully responsible for the report's editorial content.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

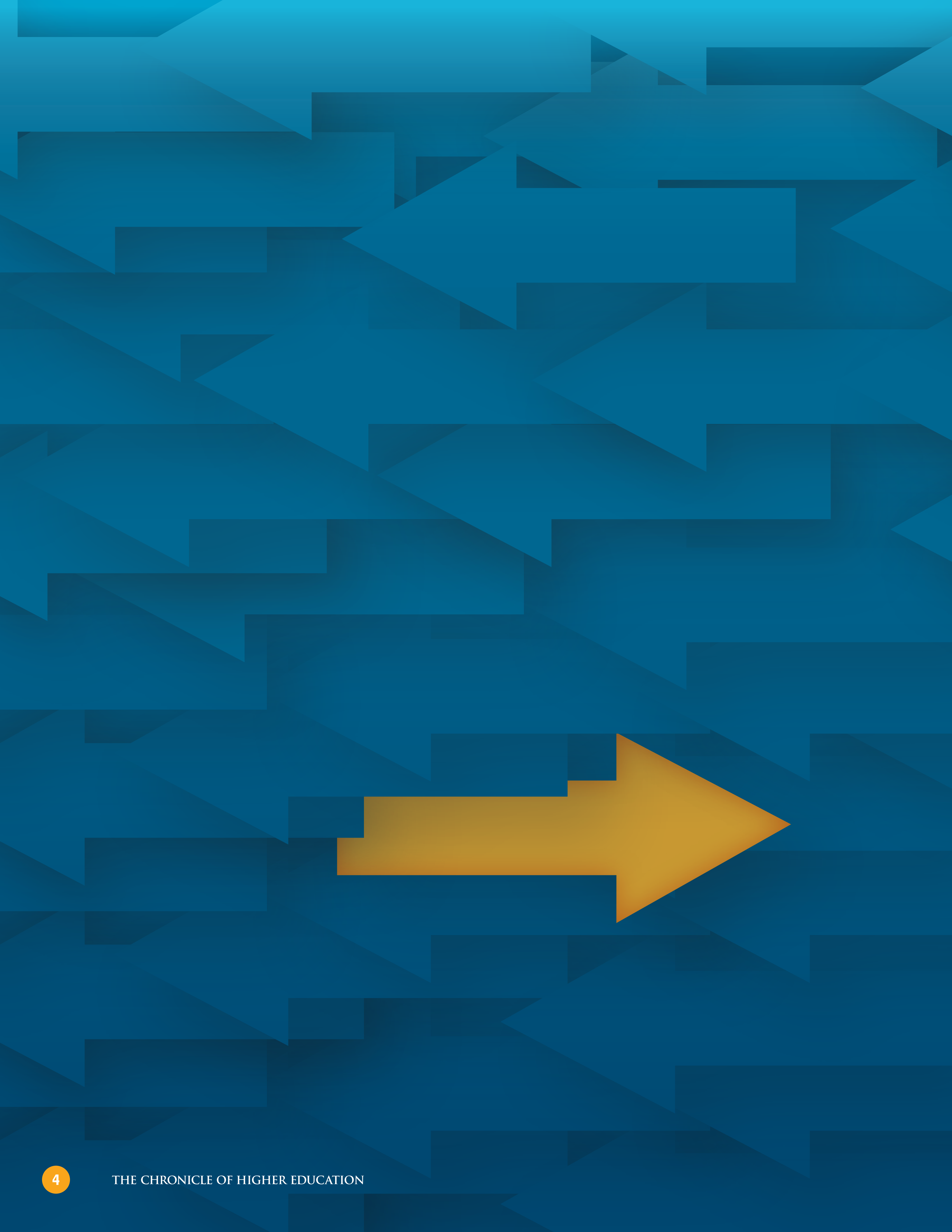
At colleges and universities across the country faculty ranks are graying. According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of professors ages 65 and up more than doubled between 2000 and 2011. Many of the professors who have reached their mid-60s and 70s continue to teach, creating a dilemma for institutional planners and a bottleneck for newly minted Ph.D.'s on the job market.

Because colleges offer essentially lifetime employment to many of their faculty members through tenure and with the end of mandatory retirement in higher education in the 1990s, professors can work as long as they want. In recent years, many colleges and universities have put in place retirement incentives to encourage more faculty members to stop working. Even so, for the most part professors remain reluctant to retire.

Among the trends facing higher education when it comes to faculty retirement:

- At many institutions, at least one in four tenured or tenured-track professors is **now 60 or older.**
- **Academics tend to do a better job at planning and saving for retirement than the general public does.** Over all, those employed in higher education are more confident in their retirement savings than the American workforce in general. A quarter of college and university employees (both administrators and faculty) are "very confident" that they'll have enough money to live comfortably in their retirement, compared to only 13 percent of all U.S. workers.
- Nine in ten faculty members say **they are reluctant to retire because they enjoy their work and feel fulfilled by it.** More than two-thirds say they are still effective as professors and three-quarters would miss their colleagues and campus activities if they retired.
- Among those faculty members eager to retire but who are staying past normal retirement age, nearly three-quarters said **the housing crash of 2008 and the resulting recession played a large role in delaying retirement.** Some 44 percent of them said they would delay retirement by at least five years.
- Faculty members who expect to work longer **do not have a weaker financial profile than traditional retirees in higher education.**
- **Among all potential retirees, paying for health care in retirement is a big worry.** Only one in ten higher-education employees said they have saved "a great deal" to pay for medical expenses not covered by insurance or Medicare, and only 10 percent of colleges sponsor a health savings plan for retirees.

This report on Aging Academe attempts to inform the discussion about this sensitive topic by outlining the major trends, issues, and best practices in the context of surveys and research about retirement in higher education.



INTRODUCTION

Gerry Philipsen plans to retire at the end of 2013, after 35 years of teaching in the department of communications at the University of Washington. The 68-year-old tenured professor decided to take advantage of a special incentive program offered by the university that gives eligible faculty members a lump-sum payment in a health savings account equal to half of their annual salary.

"I just felt it was time," Philipsen said."I love my work, but I wanted to do something different, and I could afford to do it."

But Philipsen's choice was unusual—faculty are often reluctant to retire. At the University of Washington and colleges and universities across the country faculty ranks are graying. And many of the professors who have reached their mid-60s and 70s continue to teach, creating a dilemma for institutional planners and a bottleneck for newly minted Ph.D.'s on the job market.

This is the third time in recent years that the University of Washington has offered the incentive plan. The previous two times, nearly 100 faculty members in total opted for the incentive, only 10 percent of those eligible. So even when offered money to pay for health care—one of the biggest financial worries for retirees—older faculty members at the University of Washington still prefer to work. This is a testament to how differently professors approach retirement compared to almost any other profession.

Tenured faculty members occupy a unique position in the American workplace: they have guaranteed jobs, and they're not required to retire by a certain age. As a result, the topic of retirement is a sensitive subject on campuses where people's lives are inextricably intertwined with their work.

For academics, work is, in many cases, their identity. Their academic discipline and their campus often serve as the center of their life, and retiring would mean leaving a place where they are held in high regard by generations of students and scholars they have educated and mentored. At a time when most Americans jump from employer to employer every few years or switch careers entirely, the majority of professors nearing or at normal retirement age have built a life of the mind on one campus.

"Most people work to enjoy retirement, but to many professors, teaching, research, and scholarship are not work, it's their passion," says a former provost at a large research university. "The subject of retirement makes them think that they can't do their job anymore, not that they should take a break and let a new generation of scholars take over. So this is why I never brought up retirement with older professors, because they thought I just wanted to get rid of them."

Many of the professors who have reached their mid-60s and 70s continue to teach, creating a dilemma for institutional planners and a bottleneck for newly minted Ph.D.'s on the job market.

The University of Pennsylvania "could probably add upward of 40 new assistant professors in the School of Arts and Sciences, without significantly increasing its institutional budget, if everyone over 70 retired," Peter Conn, a professor of English and education at the university, wrote in a controversial op-ed in The Chronicle of Higher Education. About 7 percent of the faculty in the School of Arts and Sciences at Penn are over 70, he reported. Fifteen years ago none were.

Given this aging of the professoriate, in recent years colleges have experimented with various strategies both financial and professional to encourage faculty members to retire at the traditional retirement age, so that the institutions could achieve more financial flexibility and renew the ranks of the faculty.

THE BABY BOOMER CAMPUS

In 2008, the first of the Baby Boomer generation turned 62. This post-World War II group, born between 1946 and 1964, is some 78-million strong. Because the working lives of this generation largely paralleled the growth of college enrollment in the U.S., they make up a large percentage of college faculties.

According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of professors ages 65 and up more than doubled between 2000 and 2011.

According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of professors ages 65 and up more than doubled between 2000 and 2011. At many institutions, at least one in four tenured or tenured-track professors is now 60 or older. At Cornell University, for instance, 35 percent of faculty are 60 or older, up some 21 percent from 2000. And in that time, the percentage of professors in their 70s and older has doubled. A decade ago at George Mason University, only 16 percent of faculty were 60 or older; today, some 27 percent are nearing retirement. (see Figure 1)

The graying of faculties is notable across academe, from small private liberal-arts colleges to large public research universities. "At the most selective liberal-arts colleges and research universities, many faculty members would like to stay on as long as they can," says Ronald G. Ehrenberg, director of the Cornell Higher Education Research Institute.

Last decade, much of the talk about retirement in higher education centered on the recruitment crisis that would result when colleges and universities lost sizable chunks of their senior faculty and administrators as the Baby Boomers began to retire.

But that exodus never happened, at least not on the scale many expected. In part, a sluggish economy put a dent in retirement savings, but most faculty members still want to work in their 60s and 70s. A major study published in 1989, for example, by William G. Bowen, then president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, predicted that colleges could face severe faculty shortages by the end of the 1990's, largely because of retirements. So an improving job market in the arts and sciences never materialized.

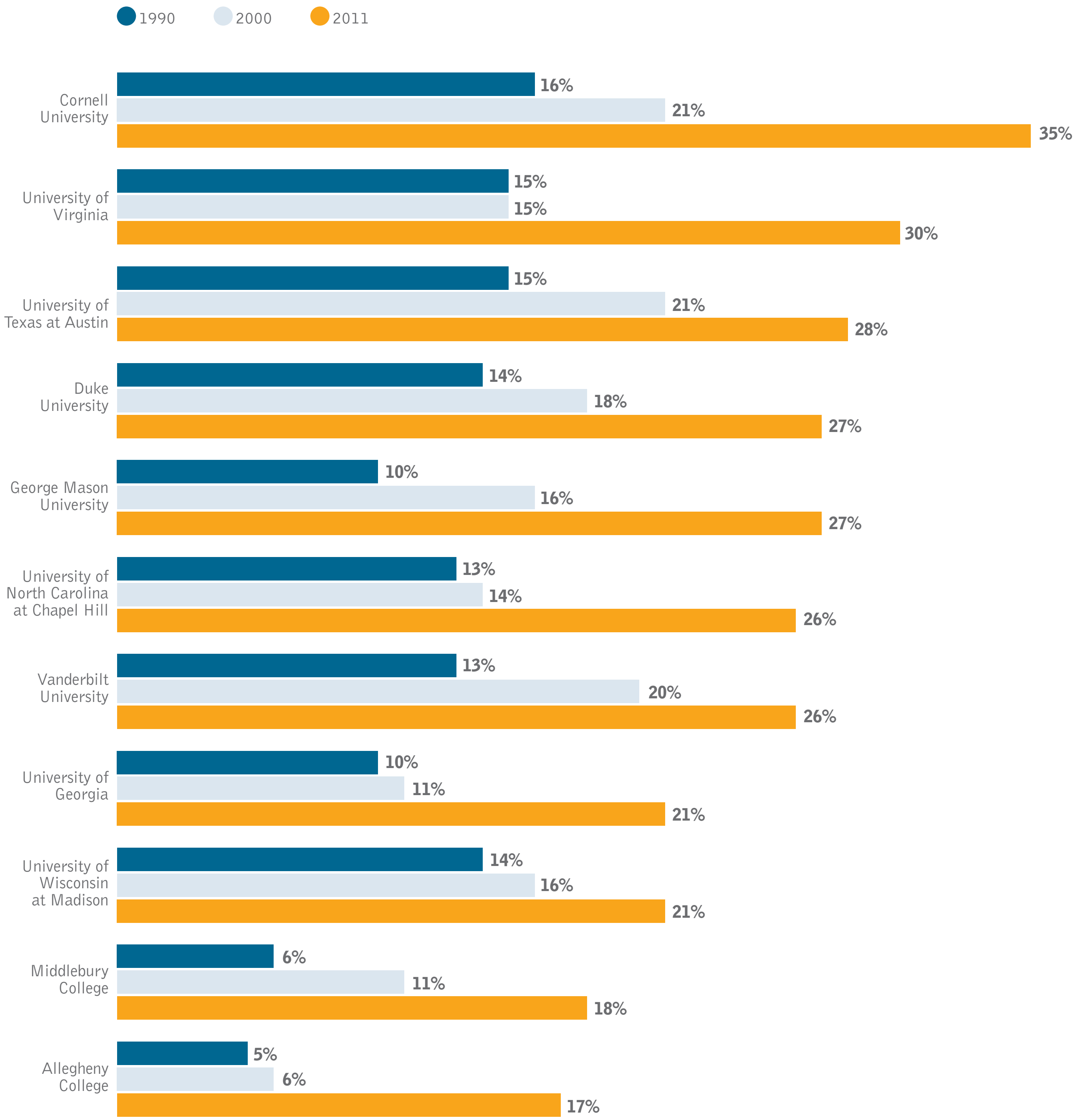
The end of mandatory retirement in higher education in 1994 made it difficult for college leaders to predict staffing in the future because tenured professors may now retire whenever they want. What's more, the meaning of retirement has changed drastically in the last few decades as people live longer and work in less physically demanding jobs.

Normal retirement age is now considered 64 for men and 62 for women, according to the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College.

Normal retirement age is now considered 64 for men and 62 for women, according to the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College. The prevailing wisdom on college campuses is that faculty members and administrators who don't retire at the normal age must need to work for financial reasons. But research by the TIAA-CREF Institute has found that those who expect to work longer do not have a weaker financial profile than traditional retirees in higher education.

FIGURE 1

HIGHER EDUCATION SEES INCREASING NUMBERS OF STAFF APPROACHING RETIREMENT AGE



Source: Chronicle of Higher Education.

Over all, those employed in higher education are more confident in their retirement savings than the American workforce in general, according to TIAA-CREF surveys. A quarter of college and university employees (both administrators and faculty) are "very confident" that they'll have enough money to live comfortably in their retirement, compared to only 13 percent of all U.S. workers (See Figure 2).

Indeed, academics tend to do a better job at planning and saving for retirement than the general public does. (See Figure 3).

FIGURE 2

RETIREMENT CONFIDENCE AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION EMPLOYEES

How confident are you that you will have enough money to live comfortably throughout retirement?

	Very Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Too Confident	Not At All Confident
Higher Education Employees				
2011	25%	50%	15%	9%
Faculty	25%	51%	15%	8%
Administrators	30%	52%	11%	7%
Other Staff	16%	38%	25%	17%
2010	26%	54%	12%	5%
All U.S. Workers				
2011	13%	36%	23%	27%
2010	16%	38%	24%	22%

Source: Higher Education Retirement Confidence Survey (2011), TIAA-CREF Institute, and Retirement Confidence Survey (2011), Employee Benefit Research Institute and Mathew Greenwald & Associates.

FIGURE 3

RETIREMENT PLANNING AND SAVING AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION EMPLOYEES

	Higher Education	Faculty	Administration	Other Staff	U.S. Workers
Percentage that…					
Have personally saved for retirement	94%	94%	97%	89%	68%
Are currently saving for retirement	88%	88%	92%	84%	59%
Have tried to determine how much needs to be saved for a comfortable retirement					
Among those who have saved	59%	60%	69%	46%	53%
Among current savers	60%	60%	69%	47%	57%

Source: Higher Education Retirement Confidence Survey (2011), TIAA-CREF Institute, and Retirement Confidence Survey (2011), Employee Benefit Research Institute and Mathew Greenwald & Associates.

If there is one worry about retirement among faculty it is whether they will have difficulty paying for health care expenses in the future. Only one-fifth of faculty are "very confident" that they will have enough money to take care of medical expenses during retirement (See Figure 4).

Indeed, only one in ten higher-education employees said they have saved "a great deal" to pay for medical expenses not covered by insurance or Medicare, and only 10 percent of colleges sponsor a health savings plan for retirees (See Figure 5).

"By the time you reach retirement age, you have a sense of what you need to live on," says Cheryl Cameron, vice provost for academic personnel at the University of Washington. "But health-care expenses are the big unknown. I think many just continue working while they can for better medical coverage and to avoid those expenses."

FIGURE 4

CONFIDENCE REGARDING MEDICAL EXPENSES DURING RETIREMENT

How confident are you that you will have enough money to take care of medical expenses during retirement?

	Very Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Too Confident	Not At All Confident
Higher Education Employees	20%	48%	18%	10%
Faculty	21%	49%	18%	9%
Administrators	24%	50%	17%	8%
Other Staff	15%	39%	23%	22%
All U.S. Workers	12%	36%	27%	23%

Source: Higher Education Retirement Confidence Survey (2011), TIAA-CREF Institute, and Retirement Confidence Survey (2011), Employee Benefit Research Institute and Mathew Greenwald & Associates.

FIGURE 5

RETIREE HEALTH BENEFITS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Provide Retiree Health Insurance for All New Hires	90%
Premiums Paid By	
Employer pays 100%	13%
Employee pays 100%	38%
Employer and employee share cost	49%
Plan Changes Made Within Past 5 Years	54%
Share of premiums paid by individual increased	57%
Co-payments increased	57%
Deductibles increased	35%
Services covered changed	21%

Source: Survey of Retirement Plans, Policies and Practices in Higher Education, TIAA-CREF Institute and Center for Higher Education at Ohio University.

A HIGHER-EDUCATION PHENOMENON: THE RELUCTANT RETIREE

Faculty members nearing retirement age (those 60 and older) can be classified into three groups:

- Traditional retirees who plan to retire at their normal retirement age.
- Eager retirees who would prefer to stop working at their normal retirement age, but plan to stay on out of necessity.
- Reluctant retirees who plan to keep working past normal retirement age by choice.

Only a quarter of faculty members fall into the traditional retiree category. Another 15 percent are eager retirees who can't retire at the traditional age for various reasons. The remaining 60 percent of faculty members are reluctant retirees by choice.

Given the overall confidence level of faculty members about how much they have saved for retirement, why are so many reluctant to retire?

Nine in ten faculty members surveyed by TIAA-CREF say it is because they enjoy their work and feel fulfilled by it. More than two-thirds say they are still effective as professors and three-quarters would miss their colleagues and campus activities if they retired. (See Figure 6)

These findings tend to contribute to a belief among administrators that little can be done in terms of financial planning and incentives to encourage faculty members to retire. But finances do play a role for retirees who stay past the traditional retirement age, whether they are reluctant by choice or not.

FIGURE 6:

REASONS FOR WORKING PAST A NORMAL RETIREMENT AGE

Why do you expect to work past a normal retirement age?

	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason	No Response
Personal finances necessitate	43%	34%	23%	0%
New employer health insurance benefits	38%	29%	33%	0%
Enjoyment and fulfillment of work	83%	13%	4%	0%
No attractive alternatives for time	17%	28%	54%	1%
Would miss colleagues and campus interactions	27%	48%	25%	1%
Remain effective in faculty responsibilities	68%	20%	11%	1%
No reason to retire	41%	26%	30%	3%
Have not considered possibility of retirement	14%	24%	57%	5%

Source: TIAA-CREF Institute.

Nine in ten faculty members say they plan to delay retirement because they enjoy their work and feel fulfilled by it.

While reluctant faculty retirees love their jobs and tend to be more confident in their retirement savings than most Americans, nearly half of those professors listed personal finances in TIAA-CREF surveys as the major reason they are delaying retirement. When those faculty members were asked if they would retire sooner than they expected if there were better off financially, two-thirds responded, "Yes."

Among those faculty members eager to retire, but who are staying past normal retirement age, nearly three-quarters said the housing crash of 2008 and the resulting recession played a large role in delaying retirement. Some 44 percent of them said they would delay retirement by at least five years. (See Figure 7)

Delayed retirement by those who have reached normal retirement age and are financially able to do so has sparked vigorous conversations within academic departments. The question is whether it is appropriate to continue teaching even if you're productive while a new generation of scholars waits in the wings for jobs or departments look for flexibility to hire in the newest and fastest-growing disciplinary fields.

Among faculty eager to retire but staying past normal retirement age, nearly three-quarters say the recession played a large role in delaying retirement.

The higher-education job market is as tight as it has been in recent memory. It's unclear whether institutions would suddenly open the hiring floodgates if faced with a wave of retirements. Those colleges and universities might replace the retirees with adjuncts, as many have in the past decade. But whatever the motivation, campus leaders are looking for ways to encourage more retirements.

FIGURE 7

ECONOMIC EVENTS AND THE TIMING OF RETIREMENT

	Traditional Retirees	Reluctant Retirees	Eager Retirees
Recession and crash in financial markets delayed expected timing of retirement	37%	33%	72%
Expected Delay			
5 years or more	14%	35%	44%
2 to 4 years	68%	53%	47%
Less than 2 years	12%	6%	4%
Don't know/refused	6%	7%	5%

Source: Faculty Retire/Not Retire Survey,TIAA-CREF Institute (2011).

POPULAR PRACTICES TO ENCOURAGE FACULTY RETIREMENTS

In 2009, only four faculty members at the University of Colorado at Boulder retired. The Boulder campus has some 800 tenured professors, and in most years, about 50 retire. So university leaders had a problem on their hands. The normal course of annual retirements allowed them to hire newly minted PhD's and focus on new areas of scholarship. Without positions opening up, they feared the institution's strategic priorities and momentum would stall.

Working with the faculty, the Boulder campus put in place a retirement incentive to encourage more professors to retire. The program offered to place two years of a professor's final salary into a retirement savings account, making the payments in equal amounts over five years. The thinking was that if the recession had caused professors to delay retirement, a contribution equal to two years of salary would go a long way to making up for their stock-market losses. Thirty-one faculty members accepted the offer.

Nearly 40 percent of colleges have phased-retirement programs and a quarter of them have been put in place just since 2008.

The Boulder campus hasn't repeated the incentive since. But at many campuses, supposed one-time incentives have become regular programs. The health-care payout that Gerry Philipsen took advantage of at the University of Washington has now been offered three times, and each time, fewer professors have signed up. "The question is whether it's really an incentive if we keep offering it," says Cameron, the university's vice provost. It's a issue other campuses are dealing with as well, as potential retirees come to believe if they wait, the same or perhaps an even better deal will be offered.

One incentive that has become popular in recent years is phased retirement programs, which generally allow faculty to continue to work in some capacity as long as they give up tenure and retire by a specific date in the future. Nearly 40 percent of colleges have such programs, and according to TIAA-CREF surveys, a quarter of them have been put in place just since 2008.

Some institutions have multiple incentives to address the varied reasons why reluctant retirees remain reluctant. In addition to the lump-sum health-care payment, the University of Washington, for instance, also offers a phased retirement program that allows retirees to work up to five years in a limited capacity (faculty members give up this right if they take the health-care payment). But even those who elect to take a phased retirement sometimes change their mind. In the last eight years, of the 250 people who did a phased retirement at the University of Washington, a third of them never worked again for the university.

Programs designed to make retirees feel connected to the institution are much cheaper to provide than buyout incentives.

The efficacy of phased retirement programs has also come under question. While these programs might encourage reluctant retirees, they also sometimes attract people who would have retired immediately if there had been no mechanism for staying on for another five years.

Other institutions have found non-financial ways to ease professors into retirement when their fears are less about money and more about separation and isolation.

The University of Southern California established the Emeriti Center in 1978 to provide resources and support to retirees and those about to retire. The center offers courses, research stipends, serves as a speaker's bureau, and holds workshops on health, consumer protection, and other issues of special interest to retirees. It also provides a gold card that allows retirees to continue certain perks, including free parking, bookstore discounts, and a university e-mail account.

Such programs designed to make retirees feel connected to the institution are much cheaper to provide than buyout incentives, and they appeal to those where personal finances are not the major hurdles to making the decision to retire.

SUMMARY ISSUES AND QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Higher education has been grappling with an aging professoriate for more than a decade. Given that faculty members are not retiring in the numbers many administrators had expected, the issue of graying campuses will only intensify in the years ahead.

As college and university leaders consider how to create new pathways to retirement for their faculty ranks, here are issues and questions to consider:

How should retirement incentives be designed and how often should they be offered to meet institutional goals and expectations of retirees?

Incentives stop being incentives if they are offered too frequently and don't nudge reluctant retirees as a result. If incentives are based only on finances, the large group of reluctant retirees who are staying on for other reasons are unlikely to be take such offers. And some financial incentives may have the unintended consequence of encouraging high-performing faculty members to retire and accept jobs elsewhere.

What role does the rising cost of health care play in the decisions of potential retirees?

There is no one type of potential retiree among the faculty ranks on college campuses. But among all the concerns about retirement that professors say they have, one seems to unite every type: the cost of health care. Many colleges continue to cut back on retiree health benefits, if they offer them at all. As a result, incentives designed around helping retirees pay for health care are likely to have high success rates. TIAA-CREF estimates that from age 60 to 90 even someone with health insurance and Medicare will have an average of $220,000 in unreimbursed costs. One review of health-insurance research in all workplaces found that making insurance available for retirees increased the chances of retirement by 30 percent to 80 percent.

How can colleges help retirees plan what to do in retirement?

Being a college faculty member is not just a job, it's a profession that most professors pursue with passion. Many faculty members don't spent much time thinking about retirement, let alone planning what to do with their free time. Providing coaches and resources to help potential retirees think through their options for life after college is critical. If department heads have regular discussions with faculty members about their performance and professional plans, it is natural to bring up retirement. But, "if you start that discussion at 64," says Charles E. Phelps, former provost at the University of Rochester, "you are staring a lawsuit in the face."

Retirees are like alumni and are part of a college's extended family, so how do institutions develop programs for retirees just like they do for alumni?

In most sectors of the economy, employees retire and are never heard from again (and don't expect to remain connected to their old company). But in higher education, faculty members are part of the fabric and lifecycle of the institution. They can be of tremendous help in many functions of the university from admissions to alumni affairs, but they want to feel a part of the campus with access to offices or laboratory space, classes, events, and, of course, parking.

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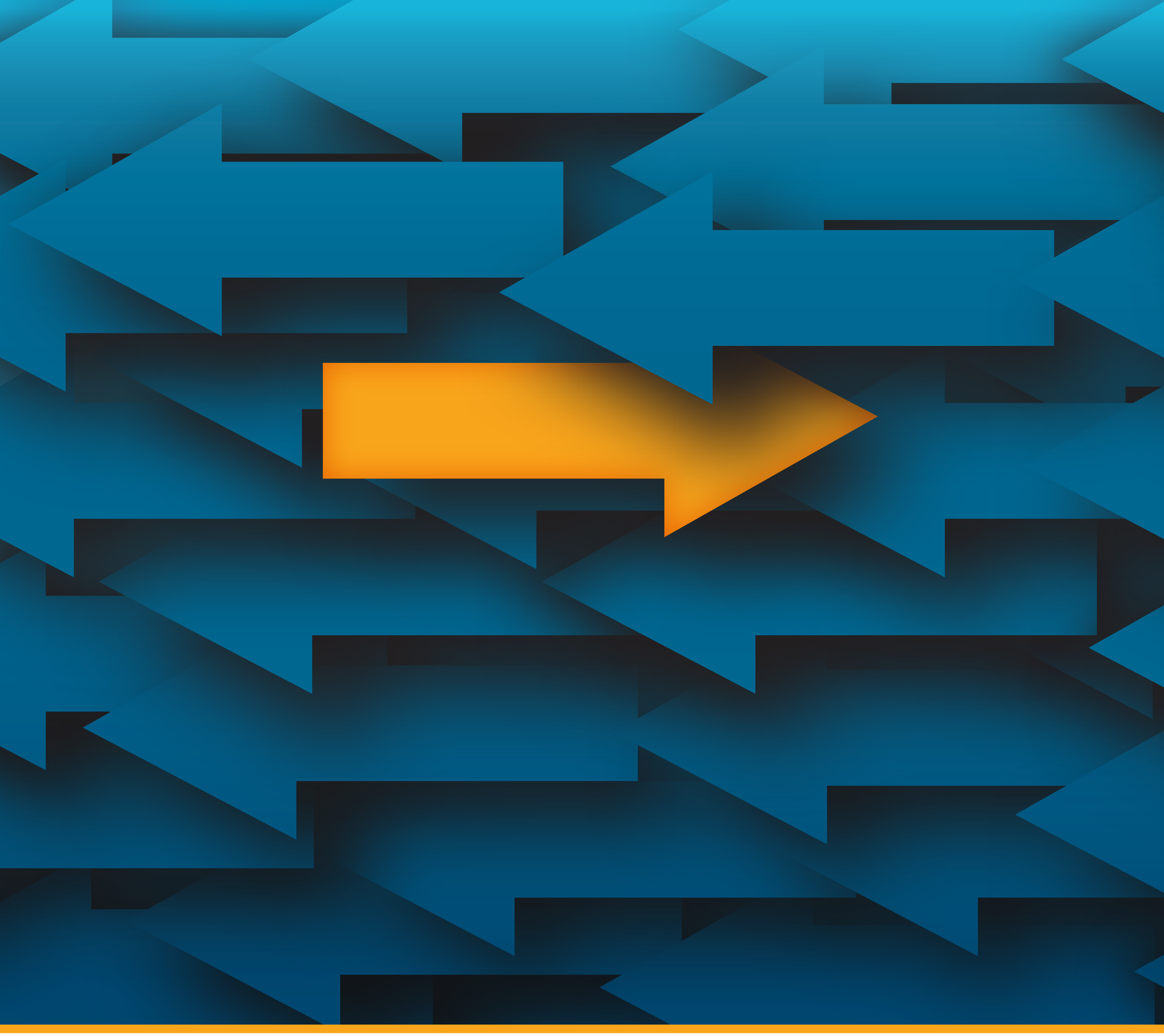
Aging Academe: Retirement Trends in Higher Education was written by Jeffrey J. Selingo, contributing editor to The Chronicle of Higher Education, Inc. and sponsored by TIAA-CREF. The Chronicle is fully responsible for the report's editorial content.



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