

# A Snapshot of the Staff Workforce in Community and Technical Colleges

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**College and University Professional  
Association for Human Resources**



## College and University Professional Association for Human Resources

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## Introduction

Community and technical colleges (collectively referred to as associate's institutions throughout this brief) serve an important role in the U.S. higher education system. They are often an option for students who: a) need skills development, an associate's degree, or training for specific jobs in their community; b) need a more affordable college option; c) want to test the waters of a college education before committing to a four-year institution; or d) want to take one-off courses for personal or professional development. Community and technical colleges serve as an important training pipeline for jobs in their local region, and — as their name implies — they provide an opportunity for their community to participate in a collective learning effort tailored to the region's needs.

Associate's institutions have faced specific challenges in recent years, including the following:<sup>1,2</sup>

- **Managing budget cuts.** The recession led states to drastically cut funding to public institutions, some of which have not yet recovered this funding to match pre-recession dollars.
- **Managing shifting enrollments.** As the recession led to layoffs and terminations, students sought additional education to prepare them for other local jobs. Low unemployment and economic recovery then resulted in lower enrollments. Managing dramatic shifts in student enrollments also means managing shifts in the workforce.
- **Maintaining their identity and mission.** Associate's institutions have traditionally served non-traditional students who are older, who have more work experience, who are more diverse on various dimensions, or who are underserved at other institutions. As a result, they strive to attract staff and faculty who are more diverse and more representative of their region.

Associate's institutions' attempts to meet these challenges have led to some important differences from other institutions in the composition of their staff, the benefits they offer them, and the representation and pay of women and minorities. This brief provides data taken on these differences for the administrators, professionals, and non-exempt staff at community and technical colleges.

1 American Association of Community Colleges (2012, April). *Reclaiming the American Dream: A Report From the 21<sup>st</sup> -Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges* (Report). Author: Washington, DC.

2 Hussak, L. (2017, October). *We Asked, You Answered: Here Are the Top 5 Challenges at Community Colleges* (Article). EAB: Washington, DC.

# Staffing Ratios

Staffing ratios at associate’s institutions appear to reflect their need to balance a commitment to serving students with relatively fewer resources than other institutions.<sup>3</sup> Associate’s institutions have a greater part-time/full-time staff ratio than do other institutions and a considerably greater non-exempt/exempt staff ratio (Figure 1).<sup>4</sup> These differences may exist because: (a) associate’s institutions have fewer resources to devote to compensation and benefits, and/or (b) managing changes to staff numbers in response to shifts in enrollment is easier to do with part-time and non-exempt staff.

SURVEYS OF HIGHER EDUCATION 2018

## Prevalence of Part-Time and Non-Exempt Staff at Associate’s Institutions

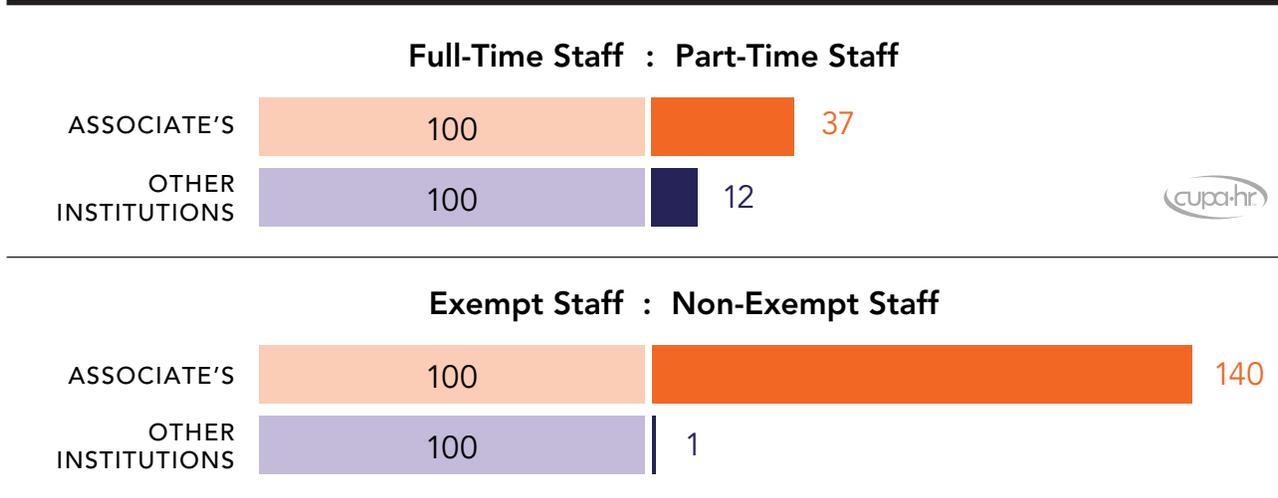


Figure 1

3 “Other institutions” consist of those generally classified as baccalaureate, master’s, or doctoral institutions and exclude special focus and for-profit institutions.

4 Part-time employees are defined by each institution; variations in what is considered “part-time” may exist.

Associate’s institutions have a lower ratio of staff to students (Figure 2). However, they also have a proportionally greater number of HR staff compared to other institutions. Per 100 total staff, associate’s institutions have 2.2 HR staff, compared to 1.5 staff at other institutions.<sup>5</sup>

SURVEYS OF HIGHER EDUCATION 2018

## Staffing Ratios at Associate’s Institutions

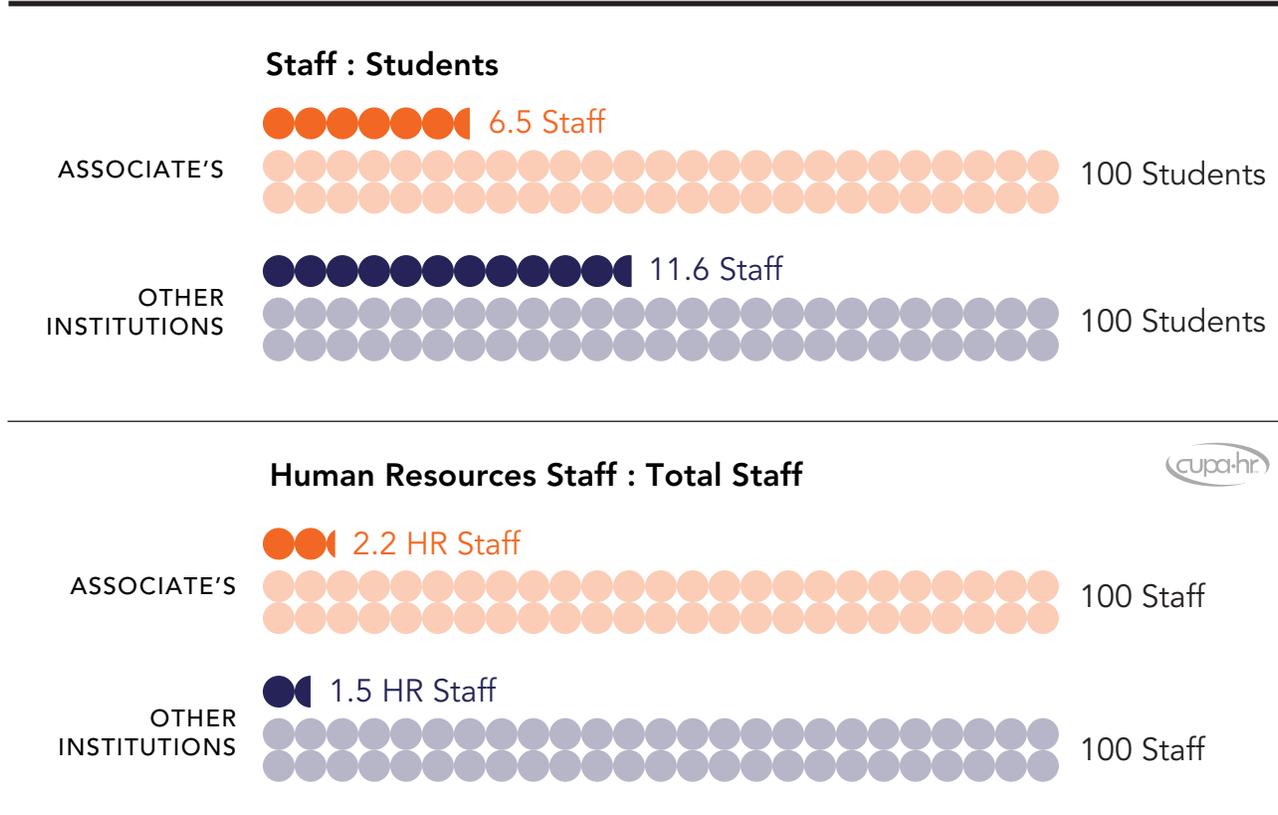


Figure 2

5 All data in Figures 1 and 2 were collected in the Institutional Basics section of CUPA-HR’s *2018 Surveys of Higher Education*. Specific questions for this section can be found in any *Survey Participation and Information Template* at the preceding link. Data were analyzed using the Benchmarking Report in [DataOnDemand](#).

# Basic Benchmarking Statistics

**Turnover Rates** — Despite the fact that they have relatively fewer full-time and exempt staff, median turnover rates are generally lower at associate’s institutions than at other institutions (Figure 3).<sup>6</sup>

**Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) Reporting Relationship** — Chief HR Officers at associate’s institutions may have a more prominent leadership role when it comes to strategic decision-making: 2 out of 3 CHROs at associate’s institutions report to the president compared to only 1 in 5 CHROs at other institutions.

**Collective Bargaining** — More associate’s institutions have collective bargaining for their full-time staff than do other institutions.

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## Basic Benchmarking Statistics at Associate’s Institutions

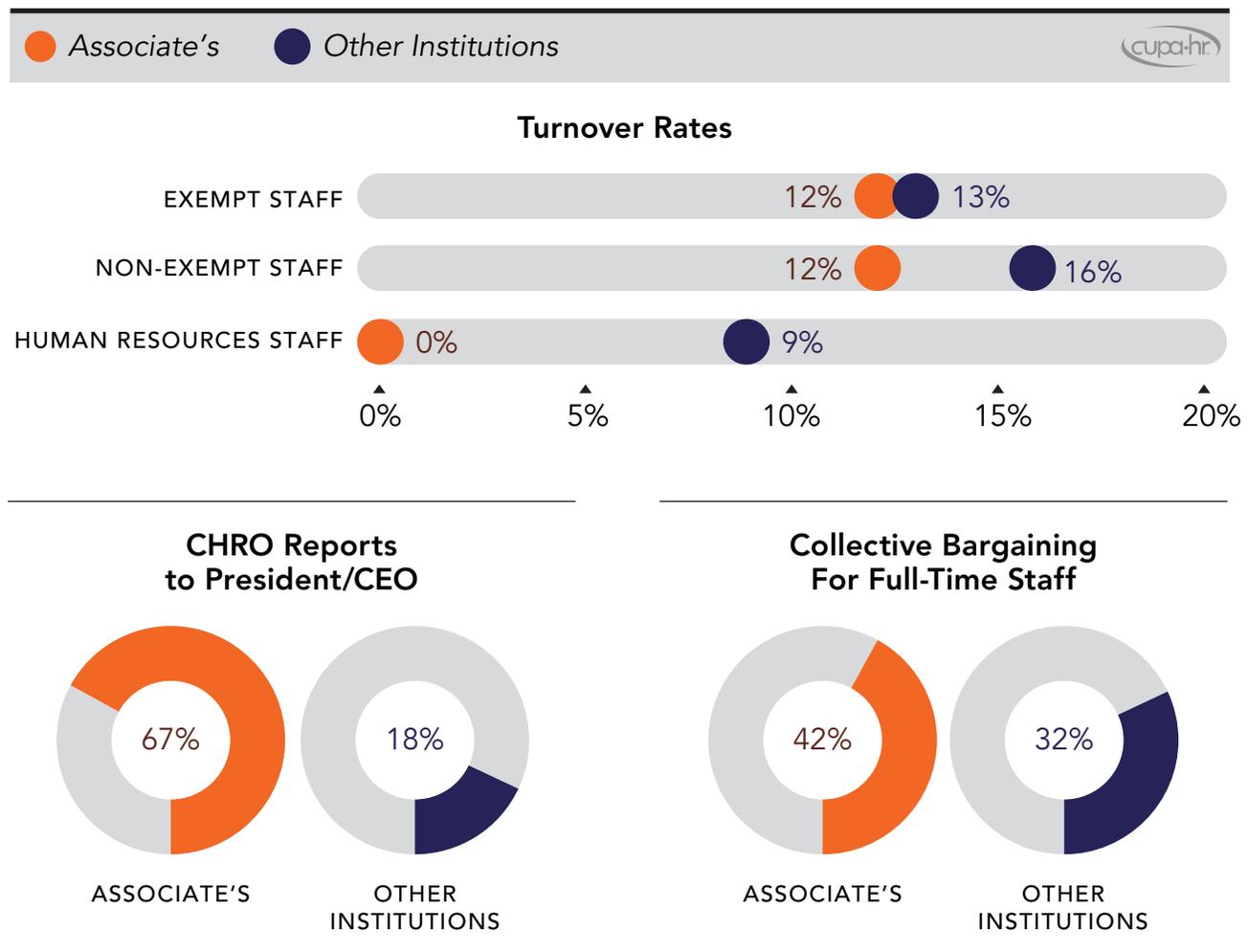


Figure 3

<sup>6</sup> The turnover rate of 0% for HR staff is anomalous for this year (and all turnover rates should be viewed in context). For example, for the year prior (2017), associate’s institutions had an HR staff turnover rate of 11%. All data in Figure 3 were collected in the Institutional Basics section of CUPA-HR’s *2018 Surveys of Higher Education*. Specific questions for this section can be found in any *Survey Participation and Information Template* at the preceding link. Data were analyzed using the Benchmarking Report in [DataOnDemand](#).

# Benefits

Associate’s institutions are less likely than other institutions to offer healthcare benefits to part-time staff (Figure 4), even though their part-time staff make up a greater proportion of their workforce (Figure 1).<sup>7</sup>

More associate’s institutions have a formal employee wellness program in place than do other institutions. In addition, associate’s institutions are more likely to have a separate budget dedicated to wellness and to have dedicated staff for wellness.

In addition, 3 out of 4 associate’s institutions are part of a state employee retirement plan, compared to only 1 in 4 non-associate’s institutions. Associate’s institutions are also much more likely than other institutions to offer a defined benefits plan, either in a traditional or cash balance form.

BENEFITS IN HIGHER EDUCATION SURVEY 2018

## Benefits at Associate’s Institutions

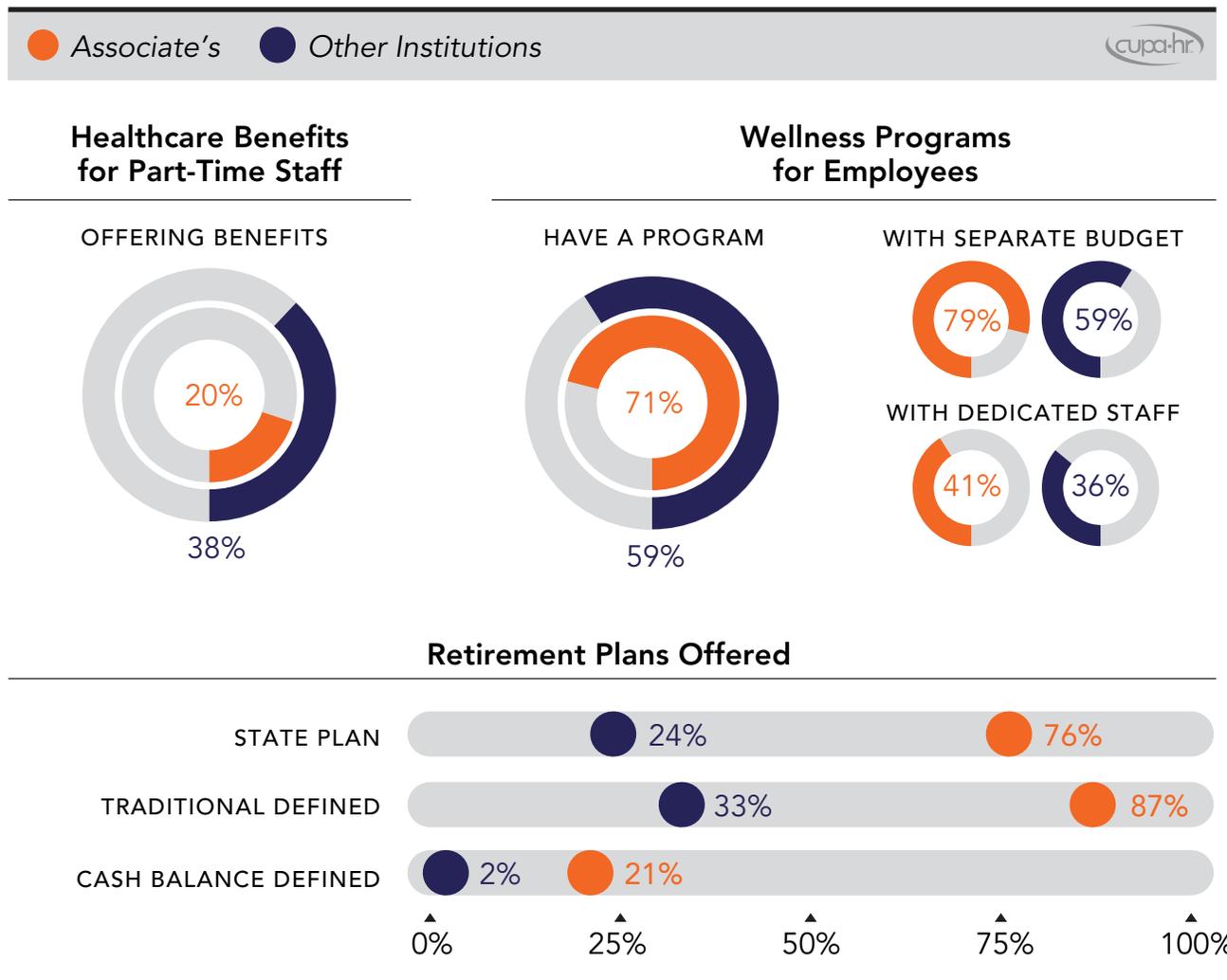


Figure 4

<sup>7</sup> All data in Figure 4 were collected in CUPA-HR’s 2018 *Benefits in Higher Education Survey*. Data were analyzed using the Benefits Reports in [DataOnDemand](#).

# Representation and Pay of Women and Minorities

In nearly every category, associate’s institutions do a better job than other institution types in representing and paying women and racial/ethnic minorities in various staff roles (administrators, professionals, and non-exempt staff). Associate’s institutions have better representation of women in administrative and professional positions and better representation of minorities across all positions (Figure 5).<sup>8</sup>

SURVEYS OF HIGHER EDUCATION 2018

## Representation of Women and Minorities at Associate’s Institutions

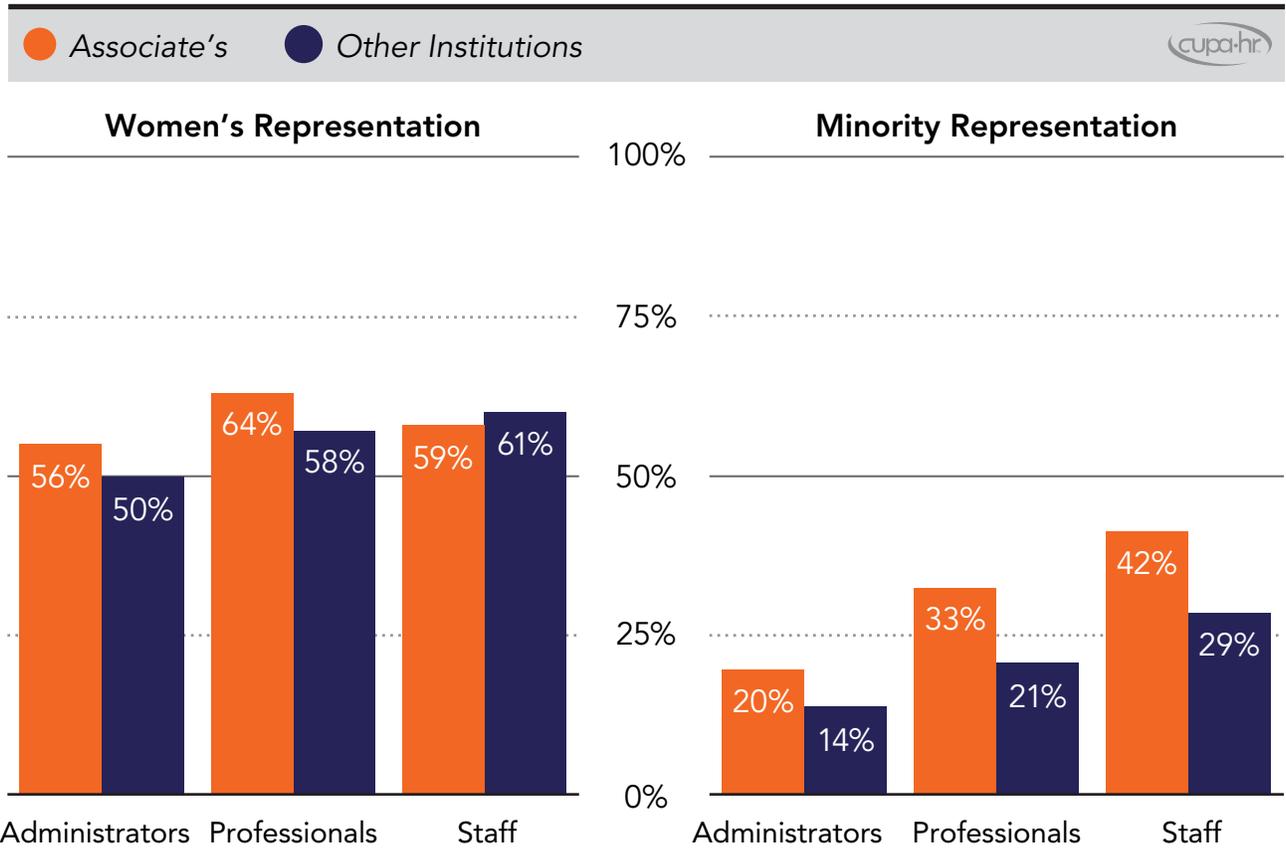


Figure 5

8 All data in Figure 5 were collected in CUPA-HR's *2018 Surveys of Higher Education* for administrators, professionals, and staff. Specific questions and position descriptions for these surveys can be found in the *Survey Participation and Information Templates* at the preceding link. Data were analyzed using the Demographic Reports in [DataOnDemand](#).

All institutions need progress in women’s pay equity for nearly all positions. However, pay for women at associate’s institutions is more consistent across similar positions and more equitable for administrators and professionals (Figure 6). For minority pay equity, all institutions pay minority administrators more than equitably. Associate’s institutions outperform other institutions in minority pay equity for professionals and staff.

SURVEYS OF HIGHER EDUCATION 2018

### Pay Equity of Women and Minorities at Associate’s Institutions

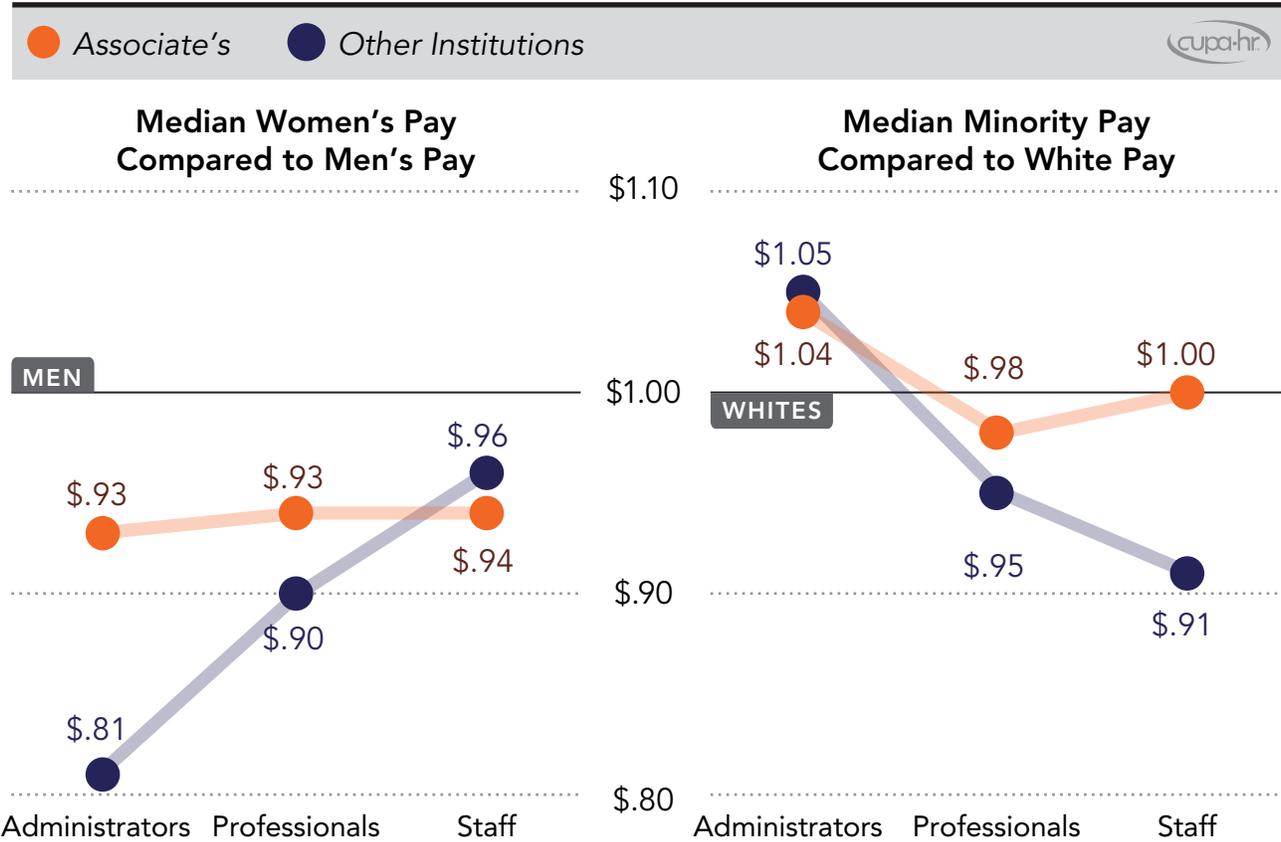


Figure 6

## Conclusions

Data on the workforce of community and technical colleges reflects their need to: (a) manage with fewer resources, (b) manage changes in staffing that are required to align with shifts in enrollment, and (c) maintain their mission of supporting and representing the community. In order to meet these needs and challenges, associate's institutions:

- Hire a greater proportion of part-time and non-exempt staff
- Offer benefits options that align with their lower budgets
- Generally do a better job in representing and paying women and racial/ethnic minorities

Associate's institutions — with a mission to serve their communities — have regional benchmarking needs that differ from other institutions. To balance a need to serve students with fewer resources and sometimes dramatic shifts in enrollment, associate's institutions should ensure that the composition of their staff and the benefits they offer will meet projected needs for hiring and retention. Rather than reacting to enrollment and demographic shifts after they occur, regular benchmarking comparisons with regional institutions and with other associate's institutions can help with planning for the workforce needs of the future.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> This report contains summary information comparing associate's institutions to other institutions. To get more specific benchmarking (including regional comparisons) on salaries, benefits, and demographic information using custom comparison groups, institutions can subscribe to [DataOnDemand](#).