

FACULTY MORALE SURVEY 2014

A BIENNIAL REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE ON FACULTY CONCERNS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The results of the 2014 Faculty Morale Survey show that the areas of greatest satisfaction (rated on average 4.34 or higher) are facilities and support available to students from the Educational Technology Center, Computer Services, the Library. Sick leave benefits, Taylor Health & Wellness, and the Bear CLAW tutoring center round out the top six.

Among the lowest areas of satisfaction (rated on average 3.28 or below) in the 2014 survey are support for research including reimbursement for conference travel; a host of issues regarding compensation: including the issues with pay raises; shared governance; and physical plant.

Statements from the survey that the faculty most agreed with (rated on average 3.77 or higher) include that teaching assignments match interests and background, MSU faculty are of high quality and congenial, Equal Opportunity policies are observed in hiring, and satisfaction with being a faculty member.

Statements from the survey that the faculty least agreed with (rated on average 2.01 or lower) include that they are planning to leave the university, that they feel pressure to deflate grades, that salary prospects look good, that they are actively looking for other employment, and that salary differentials across campus are justified.

Because in large part priorities are reflected in the way the university uses its financial resources, four new questions regarding university budgeting were added to the 2014 survey. The results indicate that faculty strongly agree that too little money is being spent on instruction (4.05) while moderately agreeing that too much is spent on administration (2.04) and peripheral services (2.42).

The qualitative results yielded information about sources of dissatisfaction for some faculty, including concerns about poor quality of some academic buildings including their maintenance, lack of pay for teaching overloads, too much money spent on athletics and administration, and the fact that faculty must pay to use the Foster Recreation facility. The qualitative results, with 38 individual comments, showed confusion among the faculty in the area of pay increases. While many were positive about the cost of living increases over the past few years, many were still concerned, wary, and critical of the merit and equity system, which hasn't seemed to be in effect over the past few years. Finally, across a number of the sections of the survey some faculty were concerned about diversity across campus, specifically noting the incident at the Homecoming game and university's response to it.

The report concludes with recommendations from the Faculty Concerns Committee to help improve conditions associated with work productivity and morale.

PURPOSE

The Faculty Morale Survey reports faculty perceptions of university conditions that support faculty morale and university productivity. This survey is administered biennially, and is one way of meeting the Faculty Concerns Committee's mission to serve as a board for continuous review of faculty rights and responsibilities, invite items of concern, and initiate and advocate for faculty and administrative

discussions. Data collected over four survey periods (a six year span from 2008 to 2014) are reported within this summary (see Table 1 in the appendix). The Survey can provide useful information to determine successes and improve conditions for university productivity.

MEASURE

The 2014 Survey contained 77 items. There are two types of questions contained in the survey. Satisfaction questions (44 total questions) scale answers from (1) strongly dissatisfied to (5) extremely satisfied with (3) being neutral. Agreement questions (33 total questions) scale anchors from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree, with (3) being neutral. Longitudinal data is also provided for most items on the survey. The survey was administered electronically online. Two hundred fifty one (251) of seven hundred thirty three (733) faculty members (full-time instructors, all level of professor, and clinical faculty) responded to the survey, representing a participation rate of 34.2%. The survey was administered in November and December using the list of faculty provided by the Faculty Senate office. It should be noted that the completed surveys do not comprise a random or representative sample of the faculty and as such results may be interpreted with caution. However, the committee believes that these results provide at least some level of insight into the perceptions of our university faculty.

OVERALL RESULTS

The ten satisfaction questions in the 2014 survey showing the highest mean values (mean values in parentheses) were (Please see Tables 2 through 4 in the appendix for the full sorted list):

1. Educational Technology Center: facilities and support available to students (4.51)
2. Computer Services: facilities and computer help desk support available to students (4.45)
3. Libraries: facilities and support for students (4.41)
4. Sick leave benefits (4.4)
5. Services and faculty use of Taylor Health & Wellness Center (4.36)
6. Bear Claw Tutoring Center (4.34)
7. Educational benefits for employees and families Greenwood/MSU (4.26)
8. Distance Learning and Instructional Technology: facilities and support available to faculty (4.26)
9. Libraries: facilities and support available to faculty (4.25)
10. Education Technology Center: facilities and support available to faculty (4.25)

Six of these areas were also in the top ten satisfaction areas from the 2012 faculty survey. The four areas new to the top ten list include the sick leave benefits, Bear Claw Tutoring Center, educational benefits for Greenwood, and Distance Learning/IT. The 2014 survey top ten list ranged in means from 4.25 to 4.51 whereas the 2012 survey ranged from 3.97 to 4.35.

The ten satisfaction areas in the 2014 survey showing the lowest mean values (mean values in parentheses) were:

1. Abolition of cost of living increases in favor of replacement pay for performance/equity (2.67)
2. The way discretionary monies are used to reward merit/equity (2.91)
3. Support for research and creative activity (time, finances, space, etc.) (3.00)

4. Reimbursement for attending conventions, conferences, workshops, etc. (3.03)
5. Level of shared governance (3.28)
6. Physical plant (heat, air, maintenance, renovations, etc.) (3.38)
7. Procedures by which policies are made for your school or college (3.41)
8. Classroom facilities (3.42)
9. Availability of research opportunities (3.45)
10. Procedures by which general University policies are made (3.49)

Seven of these areas were also ranked lowest in satisfaction in the 2012 survey. In fact, the bottom 5 areas (1 through 5 above) were in the same order in both years of the survey. The major themes in this list are dissatisfaction with pay and reimbursement (items 1 – 4) and with shared governance (items 5, 7 and 10). The three areas new to the top ten list are the physical plant, classroom facilities, and availability of research opportunities. The 2014 survey bottom ten satisfaction list ranged in means from 2.67 to 3.49 whereas the 2012 survey ranged from 2.25 to 3.4.

The ten agreement questions 2014 survey showing the highest mean values (mean values in parentheses) were (Please see Tables 2 through 4 in the appendix for the full sorted list). Please note that higher numbers indicate more agreement with the statement listed:

1. Assignment of classes (extent they match your interests and background) seems appropriate (4.21)
2. Missouri State University faculty are of high quality (4.12).
3. The extent to which Equal Opportunity policies are observed in hiring of faculty and staff is adequate (4.11).
4. The extent to which the Equal Opportunity policies are observed in hiring administrative personnel is appropriate (4.10)
5. Missouri State University faculty are congenial (4.08).
6. Missouri State University spends too small a percent of its budget upon instruction of students (4.05).
7. Overall, I am satisfied being a Missouri State University faculty member (4.0).
8. Missouri State University spends too small a percent of its budget upon its core mission (instruction, research, and public affairs) (3.82).
9. Academic advisement load and duties are reasonable (3.65).
10. Allocation of summer teaching is adequate (3.56).

Seven of these 10 questions were in the top 10 agreement areas in 2012. It's important to note that the 4 new questions added to the survey were agreement questions and 2 of the 4 are in these top 10 (the other two questions are in the bottom 10 discussed below). In general, faculty agree that too small a portion of its budget is spent on its core mission (instruction, research, and public affairs) and upon the instruction of students. Unlike the satisfaction areas where higher numbers mean more satisfied here higher numbers may mean less satisfied, as is apparently the case with all 4 of the new questions.

The ten agreement questions 2014 survey showing the lowest mean values (mean values in parentheses) were (Please see Tables 2 through 4 in the appendix for the full sorted list). Please note that lower numbers indicate more disagreement with the statement listed:

1. I plan on leaving Missouri State within the next year (1.83).
2. I feel pressured to deflate grades (1.94).
3. I am actively looking for other academic positions elsewhere (1.96).
4. Missouri State University spends too small a percent of its budget upon Administration (2.04).
5. Future salary prospects look good (2.11).
6. Missouri State University spends too small a percent of its budget upon peripheral services (e.g., academic support, student services, athletics, etc.) (2.42).
7. Salary differentials that exist across Missouri State University are justified (2.5).
8. I plan to retire from Missouri State within the next five years (2.5).
9. I feel pressured to inflate grades (2.57).
10. Current nine month salary is appropriate (2.66).

Eight of these 10 questions were in the bottom 10 agreement (or disagreement) areas in 2012. The two additional questions that are listed above are 2 of the 4 that are new to the survey (4 and 6). In these new areas, again generally, faculty disagree that too small a percent of the budget is spent on administration (4) and peripheral services (6). Combined the 4 new questions provide evidence that MSU faculty believe that MSU spending priorities are misplaced either too low (core mission and instruction) or too high (administration and peripherals). In addition, notice that salary concerns continue to be raised in this area (5 and 10) just as in the satisfaction areas discussed above.

Tables 2 through 5 also provide evidence on the longitudinal direction of faculty morale over time. For example, for the satisfaction questions average responses increased from 2012 to 2014 by .16, which is not statistically significant (see Tables 2 and 4). A larger increase is noted in the agreement questions where the mean response increased by .23 from 2012 to 2014, which is also not statistically significant (see Tables 3 and 5).

QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide additional comments at the end of each section. In parentheses, the first number indicates how many responses within the theme; the second is the percentage the first number represents when divided against all the responses within the section.

SECTION 1: DIRECTION OF THE UNIVERSITY

There were 83 comments from 250 survey respondents (33%) from the first section of the survey dealing with the direction of the university. Below are some of the common themes extracted from this section:

Too much money spent on athletics (16/19%). “The university spends way too much on team athletics, but not nearly enough on getting individual students (non-athletes) involved in exercise and sport.”

Too much money is spent on administration (14/16.8%). “Faculty salaries still fall below the national average for similar institutions (CUPA), yet we continue the trend of hiring more and more administrators at well above the national average salaries.”

Not enough money goes to staff and faculty salaries (10/12%). “Too little money is being directed towards the educational mission of the university. Funds for higher pay for faculty and staff as well as increasing the number of faculty is desperately needed to avoid becoming a low quality degree mill with huge class sizes.”

Concern about lowering academic standards (9/10.8%). “The university needs to focus its attention on recruiting quality students versus the pure quantity of students. Despite the statistics quoted by Admissions, it seems as though our students are coming in further and further behind/weaker than ever before. There are too many remedial courses and not enough rigor built into the programs we offer on campus.”

Concerns about Equity and Diversity (8/9.6%). “[After Homecoming Blackout] there have been the ‘obligatory discussions’ but no genuine attempts have been facilitated by the university for concrete positive changes to eradicate feelings of marginalization among students or to close gaps in inclusionary practices, to ensure all students are treated with equity and have a sense of belonging on the MSU campus.”

Concerns about overusing contingent and non-tenure track faculty (7/8.4%). “I have grave concerns about the direction the university is moving. For example, failing to hire tenure track faculty in order to hire instructors and adjunct that are cheaper. Good teaching is not the focus.”

SECTION 2: FACILITIES & PROGRAMS

There were 62 comments from 250 survey respondents (24.8%) from the second section dealing with university facilities and service programs. Below are some of the common themes extracted from this section:

Concerns, criticism, and confusion about pay raises (38/61.2%). “Some disciplines are known to be paid below national averages and below competing colleges and university levels. Those should be given an across the board increase. Equity should be used for isolated individuals who have slipped through the cracks. We have not had merit pay for years yet we have to develop a portfolio, then a committee evaluates the portfolios.” And, “Are you joking? When did we abolish COLA’s? What merit pay? The last pay increase was not large enough to be a true COLA nor was it merit pay. We don’t really have a compensation policy.”

Faculty / Department input, shared governance (12/19.3%). “Shared governance is better than it was before the Smart-Einhellig era. There are still some pockets within the university where deans seem to be abusing power.” And, “We do not share governance on this campus. Administration allows the faculty to pretend but when the faculty disagree with the Administration, faculty are wrong and ignored.”

Full Professor Incentive Program (5/8%). “The new professor incentive program provides a disincentive for full professors to participate in department/university service and does not appear to value quality teaching. Several full professors in my department have been discouraged by the way the new program has been applied.”

SECTION 3: UNIVERSITY POLICIES

There were 68 comments from 250 survey respondents (27.2%) from the third section dealing with university policies. Below are some of the common themes extracted from this section:

Poor condition of academic building and their maintenance (17/25%). “The facilities in the Professional Building on the 4th floor are disgusting and embarrassing.” And, “Coger desperately needs to be updated. The educational experience is compromised by an old and semi-functional building, the public’s experience is compromised by a venue that looks tired and isn’t always working.”

Funding for conferences and travel (12/17.6%). “Travel reimbursement to conferences, which faculty are required to attend, if they wish to qualify for promotion, has been stagnant while air fares have doubled over the past ten years.”

Lagging support for research (9/13.2%). “Research support is lacking at best.”

Concerns about clerical support (9/13.2%). “Satisfied with the clerical support we have, but we could use more, as they are overworked.” And, “If MSU’s paygrade is below market (for janitors, accountants, secretaries, etc.) how could it be expected that good people would take these jobs?”

Concerns about advisement (6/8.8%). “Student advisement ought not to be so restricted or motivated by careerist models of education. Lots of majors can actually help students ‘follow their passion,’ but I have students complain that they were pushed into majors because of someone’s idea of what would get them a job.”

Concerns about Equity and Diversity (6/8.8%). “The administration has continued for years to claim a desire to increase diversity at MSU, but the climate here is not minority-friendly. That is a fixable problem.”

SECTION 4: TEACHING LOADS AND POLICIES

There were 62 comments from 250 survey respondents (24.8%) from the fourth section dealing with university policies. Below are some of the common themes extracted from this section:

Overload pay unavailable / policies confusing (17/27.4%). “I haven’t heard anyone receiving overload pay for actual overloads for quite a few years. We developed a policy within our department for various overload teaching roles and had no funding with which to implement it.” And, “Occasionally I can teach an overload course, but I cannot count on it.”

Contingent faculty, overused and underpaid (14/22.5%). “I feel there is an overuse of per-course faculty. Our department would be better served by additional full-time faculty who can become an integrated part of the college and the university.” And, “Adjunct faculty are grossly underpaid and disrespected. Why not hire some of these talented people fulltime to provide their families with a living wage? This is the McDonaldization of the university.” And, “Poverty-wage compensation for per course faculty.”

Merit/Equity/COLA pay criticism and confusion (10/16.1%). “What performance/merit salary? We do not have this in our college. Do others? I assume the question wouldn’t be on the questionnaire. If it is available to some, it should be available to all.”

SECTION 5: FRINGE BENEFITS VALUE

There were 53 comments from 250 survey respondents (21.2%) from the fifth section dealing with university policies. Below are some of the common themes extracted from this section:

The use of Foster Recreation Center (17/32%). “The Foster center should be a benefit. Faculty should not have to pay for use of the center if wellness is actually a goal of the university for faculty.” And, “Isn’t there some irony that with all of the emphasis on wanting faculty to be healthier, the free exercise areas for faculty were shut down and faculty now have to pay to use the recreational center?”

Concerns about health plan (8/15%). “Deductibles/copays on medical insurance are way too high (certainly not competitive).” And, “There is no choice of health plans.”

Concerns about retirement benefits (7/13.2%). “The pension fund is not exactly generous.”

Concerns about the dental plan (6/11.3%). “Dental benefits unchanged amount since 1996?” And, “[...] avoid health services because of how much Med Pay will not cover—especially dental.”

Taylor Health & Wellness Center (6/11.3%). “Taylor clinic and staff are amazing!” And, “A problem with Taylor Health—students work there which is wrong. There are privacy issues.”

SECTION 6: UNIVERSITY SATISFACTION

There were 48 comments from 250 survey respondents (21.6%) from the sixth section dealing with university policies. Below are some of the common themes extracted from this section:

Impressions of MSU: Positive (10/20.8%), Negative (5/10.4%). “I love working at MSU and I would love more opportunities to use my talents here.” And, “The collegiality I’ve experienced at MSU since coming here is wonderful.” Also, “MSU has immense potential, but its parochialism makes hiring eternal leaders difficult-to-unthinkable. The consequences of so many failed searches (and hand-picked insiders) are significant.”

The Public Affairs mission: Positive (4/8.3%), Negative (9/18.7%). “Our mission is a higher calling and I am very proud of it.” Also, “The Public Affairs mission is a hindrance since no one really knows what it means.” And, “the public affairs mission should reside completely within social and human services and not be a burden where it isn’t appropriate.”

Concerns about salary (10/20.8%). “It’s demoralizing to watch grandiose building projects outside my office window while trying to live on a stagnating salary.”

Concerns about diversity (5/10.4%). “The university is not diverse and the administration pays lip service to the idea. The campus has a history and tradition of white Christian culture and that is not conducive to inclusion.”

CONCLUSION

Based on the survey respondents, faculty members remain particularly concerned about compensation related factors and the level of shared governance; however, faculty members seem to be content to remain at the university. The Faculty Concerns Committee added 4 new questions to the survey in 2014 about University budget priorities. All four questions indicate that faculty are concerned about the level of spending in particular areas specifically agreeing that spending is too small on MSU’s core mission and instruction of students and too high on administration and peripheral services. In general, the means from the 2014 survey are up as compared against the 2010 and 2012 surveys, which might indicate improved morale among the faculty as expressed by the respondents. Note, however, that the increase in means over time are not statistically significant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee on Faculty Concerns makes the following recommendations:

- 1) The survey continues to indicate that the members of the faculty are concerned about fiscal matters especially as it relates to current and future salary as well as University spending priorities. Further, the survey shows confusion about policies related to compensation. As noted in previous recommendations, this committee continues to encourage appropriate planning to remedy imbalances and the dissemination of policy information regarding compensation.
- 2) The Faculty Concerns Committee recommends that the Faculty Senate Executive Committee distribute an email with a link to this report and its appendixes of tables on the Faculty Senate Website to all administrators, the Board of Governors, the faculty, and representatives from the

Staff Senate and Student Government. In this way, people may be informed, discuss, and draw their own conclusions as to the meanings and potential course of actions that might follow.