

Academic Administrators Assessment

Faculty Concerns Committee Report 2015-16

Faculty Concerns Committee Members: Ching-Wen Chang, Kenneth Gillam, Shouchuan Hu, Joseph Hulgus, Joshua Lambert (Chair), Hui Liu, Alana Mantie-Kozlowski, Reed Olsen, Stevan Olson, Les Reid, Johnny Washington, Ashlea Cardin, Sarah Williams (Secretary)

Report compiled and written by: Joshua Lambert (Chair), Ashlea Cardin, Alana Mantie-Kozlowski, Reed Olsen

Introduction

The purpose of the Departmental Climate Conditions Survey is to inform respective departments and the general University community of the current working climate at Missouri State University as viewed by faculty. This report describes the overall University climate as revealed through a mixed-methods survey.

Methods

This survey relied on a questionnaire that included 54 closed and open-ended questions. Faculty were asked to respond to each question using a scale that ranged between 1 and 5, where 1 indicated “strongly disagree”; 2 was “disagree”; 3 was “neutral”; 4 was “agree”; and 5 was “strongly agree.” The survey was administered between 11/04/15 and 11/25/15. One hundred seventy eight (178) faculty members responded. A total of 72 males and 69 females responded; 27 preferred not to answer the question, and one self-identified as transgender. Of the respondents, 32 were tenure track, 107 were tenured, and 25 were non-tenure track. A total of 18 respondents were instructors, 35 were assistant professors, 36 were associate professors, and 67 were full professors.

Data Summaries

President

Faculty tended to see the president as a good ambassador for the university and believe he positively raises awareness about things that impact the university. Faculty tended to think the president generally does a good job. President Smart’s ratings this year are generally more positive than ratings from other surveys over the last nine years.

Faculty rated the president the lowest for the questions related to budget and research support. A question related to shared governance was the third lowest rating, and comments provided mentioned that there was a lack of shared governance. Respondents suggested the structure for shared governance is often in place, but feel it is a façade that administrators ignore when they can. Specific examples included student-faculty disputes, lack of adherence to policies and the changing of policies without faculty input, and hiring of faculty.

Another concern that respondents had was related to funding. Faculty saw funding prioritized for sports and non-research based facilities, with little allocated toward research space, classrooms, parking, and faculty salaries. As one respondent wrote, “I feel like a second rate citizen in a purported community of scholars as virtually nothing has been done to support any of my teaching programs. Spending 16 million

dollars on athletic field renovations and then bragging about a 1.8 % faculty raise are at diametric odds.” The president is seen as a good ambassador to the state government, the local community, and to students, but not necessarily to faculty or for research.

Provost

Faculty ratings for the provost clustered between a mean of 3.83 and 3.49. The highest rated items dealt with supporting the long-term interests of MSU and doing “a good job.” The lowest rated items involved budgeting, the strength of graduating students, improving academic programs, and shared governance.

Comments suggested that the provost has brought stability and trust to the provost office but that he has too low of a profile and too little control over colleges. As one commenter said, “The Provost office is accessible to faculty and interactions with the Provost and Associate Provosts are open without fear of negative reactions or retaliation in response to disagreements about policy or procedure. A stronger presence of the Provost office in oversight of deans might help to ensure this same level of integrity is maintained at the college level.”

The quantitative ratings also support one of the qualitative themes from the comments: declining quality of programs and decreased rigor in classes. Faculty believe the administration, and the provost specifically, push for quantity over quality. This manifests itself in larger classes and more per-course instruction.

College and Department

Of 178 respondents, 110 specified which department they were from. Since the committee determined a respondent’s college based off of department, only 110 people could be placed in their appropriate college. There was not enough information to provide definitive conclusions about departments nor to separate the data into distinct tables. From the responses, it is obvious that respondents were quite unhappy in some colleges and departments while others had more satisfied or less vocal faculty.

Ratings for the deans were between a mean of 3.17 and 3.94. That said, the overall data was not particularly useful since the mean was for all colleges combined. The qualitative data showed that there were personnel challenges in some colleges and departments. Descriptors such as retaliatory, harsh, superficial, unpredictable, privacy-violating, bullying, and publicly humiliating were used to describe actions of deans and department heads. Thematic analysis revealed the perception of being “managed” versus “lead.” Triangulating results showed that such problems clustered in certain colleges/departments while others did not describe such problems.

Other Observations

There are some demographic-related patterns worth pointing out as well. Tenured faculty consistently rated the president, provost, deans, and department heads worse than tenure track and non-tenured faculty. For president and provost, assistant professors rated higher than associate professors, who rated higher than full professors. For deans and department heads, this distinction no longer held true. Regarding responses by gender, females generally rated the president and provost higher than males. For deans and department heads, they no longer rated them consistently higher.

Comparing this year’s data (Table 6) with other years’, the president generally rated better than he has in the past and better than past presidents. The provost, on the other hand, is was rated lower than his past years but better than years 2009 and 2007. Looking at longitudinal data, past surveys have not

consistently collected information on colleges and departments. Compared to the one other year of departmental data (2011), scores this year rated lower, and sometimes significantly lower.