

2009 President and Provost Biennial Assessment Faculty Concerns Committee Report

The Faculty Concerns Committee is charged by the Faculty Senate to conduct an Administrative Assessment. The assessment consists of three parts: 1) the President and Provost Assessment, 2) the Department Head and Dean Assessment (the IDEA assessment), and the Department Conditions Evaluation. Over the past 5 years, the Faculty Senate, President, and Provost Office have worked together to create assessment instruments that can produce quality data to improve university leadership and conditions that support faculty morale and productivity.

This current report only describes the assessment of the President and Provost Office. The President and Provost Assessment, conducted online, was made available from December 7 to 21, 2009. Completing on-line surveys were 311 faculty. The majority of questions pertaining to President and Provost Office leadership were identical to the questions appearing in the 2007 report, which allowed for comparisons across time. Qualitative questions posed to the President and Provost focused faculty on leadership actions pertinent to faculty morale, productivity, and shared governance. In addition, faculty was provided the opportunity to comment about the President's and Provost's activities related to the current and impending budget crises.

President and Provost Findings

Responses to quantitative items appear in Tables 1 and 2. Generally, faculty evaluations of the President and Provost in 2009 were similar to those observed in 2007. For the Provost, mean evaluations of leadership activities fell at or slightly above the scale midpoint of 3 (neutral) on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The strongest evaluation appeared for supporting diversity (3.61) and supporting the integration of the public affairs mission into the work of faculty (3.63). The lowest evaluation of the Provost Office was in relation to supporting shared governance and participative leadership (2.80). Mean evaluations of the President ranged from the scale midpoint of 3 (neutral) to almost 4 (agree). The strongest evaluations appeared for serving effectively as an ambassador to the local and state communities in promoting the public affairs mission (3.97). Similar to results for the Provost, the President's lowest evaluation (3.04) occurred for activities supporting shared governance and faculty participation in decision-making.

Content analyses, conducted on qualitative responses, were used to group faculty responses into common themes. Identified themes revealed University leadership strengths and areas of faculty dissatisfaction. For instance, several comments commended the President's effectiveness in representing the university well and working well with external constituencies. The complete analyses of qualitative responses appear in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 reports the classification of all faculty comments, while Table 4 elaborates on themes revealed in the qualitative analyses.

From both the qualitative and quantitative analyses, the following themes were selected to summarize the data most pertinent to faculty concerns.

1. **General evaluations of university-level leadership have remained consistent from 2007 to 2009.** The mean responses to quantitative questions from 2007 to 2009 remained similar enough to conclude that faculty perceptions have not substantially changed. For the Provost Office, mean evaluations fell at the middle range of the scale, while on average the President's mean evaluation was slightly above the scale midpoint.
2. **Faculty did not strongly evaluate university-level leadership's support for faculty governance.** For both the President and Provost Office, the question about *support for shared governance* received the poorest faculty appraisal. The 'governance' theme has been evident in most prior assessment reports produced by the FCC on university leadership and climate over the past decade. A large proportion of qualitative comments also centered on a general concern for shared governance in the formation of policy and in the formation and implementation of merit policy.
3. **Faculty most commonly reported through qualitative comments that the current compensation/evaluation system, especially in times of budgetary crisis, lowers morale.** This concern emerged primarily in the qualitative comments not the quantitative data. However, the perspectives of commenting faculty are consistent with the results

of a recent Faculty Senate poll and a recently passed Faculty Senate resolution.

- 4. In November of 2009, when this evaluation was administered, faculty generally approved of the President's handling of the budget crisis; however, some faculty members were unclear, or in disagreement, about how the Provost Office had strategically approached the budget situation.** While faculty evaluations seemed to reflect more support of the President's handling of the budget situation than the Provost's, it is important to note that the impending budgetary shortfall was in the phase of general discussion at the time this assessment was administered, and that the general discussion was led by the President. There is concern about what the future might bring budget-wise, but there was also concern about the priorities of the office of the Provost and President. While most agreed that raising money had been a positive for the President, the new centers, the sports arena, and the focus on "non-academic" programs left some faculty with questions.

Recommendations:

1. Pertaining to Shared Governance:

Organizations that desire a highly committed workforce often train leaders to engender employee involvement and participation. Similarly, in a healthy university setting, shared governance promotes collaborative and creative problem solving, the wise utilization of faculty expertise to address pressing university issues, and high levels of faculty morale and commitment. As such, governance is not something *granted* to faculty; instead, it is an effective and necessary strategy that creates an energized workforce, a productive university, and a healthy and collegial climate. For this reason, the FCC recommends that the Faculty Senate and Provost Office appoint a commission to evaluate the status of shared governance at Missouri State University. Such an evaluation might reasonably lead to ways to strengthen the "shared governance culture" at all levels of university. Governance issues may be evident in leadership philosophy/practices, faculty's interest to be involved in core University issues, communication between faculty and administration, pockets of the university feeling disengaged or disenfranchised, clarity and consistency in communication (see item #4 in Table 1), how "critical events" are handled, and more.

2. Pertaining to the effect of the compensation/evaluation system on morale.

Given that the qualitative data connect the merit compensation system to reduced morale, and that current budget constraints eliminate raises as one motivational element of the compensation system, maintaining morale should be a priority for administrators. Should the University budget situation become worse, as projected, faculty and staff will be expected to maintain high standards for performance with fewer resources, while teaching larger classes, and facing diminished *real* wages. For these reasons, we recommend that the President, Office of the Provost, and the University Compensation Committee attend to the following issues:

- Prioritize faculty morale, faculty commitment, and department cohesion in merit system policies and decisions during lean economic years.
- Communicate practices adopted by departments in which the system is favorably viewed by faculty.
- Identify departments in which the merit system is not working well and provide support for those units.
- Consider how faculty and staff will be rewarded when called to maintain university quality with fewer resources and in the absence of pay raises

3. Pertaining to the budget crisis.

Given that the university is in the idea-generation phase of budget management, we recommend that the President, Provost, Deans, and Department Heads read the individual comments faculty reported to the budget questions in this assessment. The confidential protocol employed in this assessment has generated reflections, concerns, and reactions to the fiscal situation the university faces that likely add to the information exchanged during open town hall style meetings. To build a sense of community and shared commitment in the upcoming budget situation, the Provost

Office and Cost Centers should solicit faculty input, communicate priorities, and provide rationale for decisions made.

4. **Pertaining to variation in President and Provost evaluations.**

While data reported here did not provide detail about the nature of who did and did not evaluate university leadership highly. It is likely that variation in responses differ from department to department and possibly even from college to college. For most climate survey results, local conditions *and* leadership decisions/actions combine to produce ratings of leadership. We recommend that the Provost and President thoroughly review the Departmental Conditions Evaluation to learn more about how local conditions differ across departments and colleges.

Table 1.			
Responses about the Provost Office Activities			
Questions	2009 Mean	2009 Std. Dev	2007 Mean
1. The strength of academic programs has improved under the Provost's leadership	2.91	1.119	2.93
2. The Office of the Provost effectively conducts, supports, and funds activities to improve teaching and learning.	3.28	1.115	3.30
3. The Office of the Provost effectively conducts, supports, and funds activities to improve research productivity.	3.22	1.114	3.41
4. The Office of the Provost clearly communicates policies and procedures to faculty.	2.90	1.279	2.80
5. The Provost supports shared governance in seeking, considering and integrating faculty input to make decisions	2.80	1.214	2.98
6. The Provost supports performance appraisal (e.g., tenure, promotion, compensation) procedures that are fair and conducive to faculty development.	3.02	1.243	3.00
7. The Office of the Provost promotes appreciation of diversity based on cultural, individual, and ideological differences	3.61	1.048	3.81
8. The Office of the Provost raises awareness of accomplishments, opportunities, and activities across campus.	3.46	1.104	3.60
9. The Office of the Provost supports and promotes the integration of the University's public affairs mission into the work of the faculty	3.63	1.043	3.60
10. Overall, the MSU Provost does a good job.	3.06	1.257	
11. Overall, I agree with how the Provost is handling the current budget situation	2.93	1.183	
Scale:			
1 (strongly disagree); 2 (disagree); 3 (neutral); 4 (agree); 5 (strongly agree) .			

Table 2
Responses about The University President's Activities

Questions	2009 Mean	2009 St dev	2007 Mean
1. The University has improved under the President's leadership	3.72	1.244	3.64
2. The President's decisions and actions benefit the quality of education, civic-mindedness and well-being of Missouri State students.	3.55	1.233	3.54
3. The President's decisions and actions have strengthened the research environment at Missouri State University.	3.46	1.156	3.62
4. The President supports shared governance in seeking, considering and integrating faculty input to make decisions.	3.04	1.290	2.98
5. The President has clearly communicated a rationale pertinent to budget and policy decisions	3.68	1.157	3.23
6. The President has been an effective ambassador to the local and state communities in promoting the public affairs mission.	3.97	1.013	3.98
7. The President supports and promotes the integration of the public affairs mission into the life of the University community.	3.82	.959	3.67
8. The President promotes appreciation of diversity based on cultural, individual, and ideological differences.	3.76	.996	4.02
9. The President raises awareness of events, opportunities, and legislative decisions that impact the University	3.90	.988	3.89
10. The President's long-range plans, initiatives, and priorities support the long-term interests of the University.	3.43	1.288	3.41
11. Overall, the MSU President does a good job.	3.63	1.264	
12. Overall, I agree with how the President is handling the current budget situation.	3.32	1.328	

Scale:

1 (strongly disagree); 2 (disagree); 3 (neutral); 4 (agree); 5 (strongly agree) .

Table 3.**Qualitative Data: Frequency of Themes Appearing in Qualitative Comments****Provost (General)**

THEME	COMMENTS # (%)	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Morale* (neg)	20 (15%)	The provost somehow contributes to lower morale of the faculty	Provost is not concerned with faculty morale. She is interested only with "feathering her own nest."
Inconsistent*	19 (14%)	Policies are inconsistent or change frequently	The Provost has been inconsistent and seemingly arbitrary in changing various policies on her website. This has caused a considerable amount of anxiety and extra work for faculty.
Merit* (neg)	17 (13%)	Merit is bad	The merit system is demoralizing. Faculty do not rate each other on their merits, but rather on personalities & who is liked/disliked.
Faculty Governance*	15 (11%)	There is not support for faculty governance	The administration at MSU really does not want faculty input, including many Deans so faculty governance is hard to evaluate since faculty get pushed around a lot.
Positive	14 (10%)	All positive comments	I have confidence in the Provost, let the President tend to his personal matters at the time and let the Provost lead.

Provost (Budget)

THEME	COMMENTS # (%)	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
I don't know	30 (50%)	N/A; No answer	I don't know.
Ineffective	11 (18%)	Provost is ineffective on budget	In the zeal to make changes too quickly, they have turned this place upside down and inside out.
Effective	8 (13%)	Effective on budget	Doing her best to protect the academic side from cuts.
Too much bureaucracy	5 (8%)	Too much bureaucracy	The Provost has contributed much to the current state of affairs regarding the dire budget situation by creating a bureaucratic juggernaut in her office.

President (General)

THEME	COMMENTS	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Represents well	44 (24%)	Outside communities see the university positively	He seems to be an excellent ambassador for the university.
Commitment (neg)*	21 (12%)	Commitment to faculty/students	I frankly believe he has long stopped caring what the faculty thinks about anything.
Merit (neg)	17 (9%)	Merit is demoralizing	In the on-going controversy regarding the implementation of the merit evaluation plan in the so-called lean years, the President has steadfastly chosen to ignore the wishes of the majority of the faculty. This is a mistake; it lowers the already low faculty morale and makes the concept of faculty governance irrelevant.
Faculty Gov (neg)	15 (8%)	Does not respect faculty governance	If over 70% of the Faculty think that doing a Merit Evaluation is meaningless this year because of the lack of money, it clearly shows that he has little interest in faculty governance and has clearly communicated his future priorities of supporting his agenda first and us last.
Positive Comments	24 (13%)	Leadership, governance, commitment to university	Those who take time to listen to the President appreciate his candor and difficult decisions understand his reasoning and appreciate his commitment to the University.

President (Budget)

THEME	COMMENTS	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Good job	31 (35%)	Handling budget well	I believe he is doing the best anyone could do and his proactive efforts will serve MSU well.
Ineffective	13 (15%)	Overall ineffective (inc. budget)	He needs help! Should be relieved of these duties asap.
Effective	10 (11%)	Overall effective	He has done MUCH better than previous presidents, all around.

NOTE: Tally of Responses:

	<u>Provost</u>	<u>Provost-budget</u>	<u>President</u>	<u>President-budget</u>
Total responses	145	71	161	93
Total units classified	135	60	182	89

Table 4

Common Qualitative Data Themes

1. *Faculty morale is directly tied to merit.*

Rationale: Several responses actually tied morale to merit and called the merit system “detrimental” to morale. When responding to the President specifically, participants provided 41 units that were comments on morale in general, only 7 of those were positive, 34 were negative, and 17 specifically mentioned the link between merit and morale. In response to the Provost, participants said that the office negatively affected morale and most responses were tied to this theme. In addition, 13% of the responses about the Provost were actually about the merit system and sometimes these respondents would tie merit to morale in their answers. Therefore, dissatisfaction with the Provost appears to be tied to the merit system to some extent.

2. *The Provost is not involved with the budget and the President is doing a good job with the budget.*

Rationale: When asked about the budget directly, respondents did not know how the Provost handled the budget. Half of the comments about the budget for the Provost were in the theme of “I don’t know;” this did *not* include “no answer/no comment/N/A” as responses. There was a clear indication that faculty do not see the Provost as responsible for the budget or as effectual or ineffectual in the management of the budget. However, when asked about the President’s response to budget issues, 35% of the responses were themed as “doing a good job overall,” and 11% of the themes focused on the President’s effectiveness with the budget.

3. *The President represents the university well to outside communities.*

Rationale: Out of 182 units, 44 (24%) were dedicated to the theme that the President represents the university well. While some suggested that the President is hyper-focused on sports or other issues than academics, they still believed that he performed well in increasing the image of the university overall and raising money and community involvement (10%).

4. *Faculty Governance is seen as a low priority for both the President and Provost.*

Rationale: Faculty governance was a major theme for respondents in response to the President and Provost. Most responses were negative. Of the total responses about the Provost, 11% were negative comments concerning faculty governance, and of the total responses about the President, 8% were negative comments concerning faculty governance. These negative responses were also linked by faculty to responses that the Provost is inconsistent with policies (14%) and that the President’s commitment to faculty is low (12%).

5. *The main concerns for the faculty are morale, faculty governance and leadership.*

Rationale: Main themes emerged from the respondents for the President and for the Provost. First, the comments about the Provost focused on morale and the relation of morale to merit. These themes account for 37 responses (27%). Faculty governance was tied to themes of inconsistency and communication and accounted for 45 units (33%). Leadership, as it is tied to policies, accounted for 23 units (17%). For the President, morale was tied to merit more closely and accounted for 34 negative units (18%). Faculty governance was tied to the theme of commitment to faculty and accounts for 36 units (19%). Finally, leadership as it is tied to fundraising and representation to the outside communities accounts for 26 units (14%) and is mixed both good and bad for the President.