

Response from the President and Provost to the Faculty Senate Committee on Faculty Concerns Report

We would like to thank the Faculty Senate Committee on Faculty Concerns for the time and effort devoted to launching the *Faculty Survey of Administrators, Success, and Engagement* and preparing the report. We appreciate both the candor reflected in the report and the Committee's identifying of opportunities to strengthen university operations.

As we reviewed the report, we heard the consistent message that faculty want to see their input translated into visible action, stronger advocacy for academic priorities, greater leadership visibility, and clearer communication regarding institutional decisions. Because the survey was conducted in the middle of the president's second year and the provost's first year, the survey results provide an important baseline upon which we can build. We both remain committed to building relationships, listening to faculty and staff across the university, and understanding both the opportunities and challenges facing Missouri State.

The report highlights several recurring themes that provide valuable opportunities to strengthen our university and our partnership with the faculty.

Communication

The report makes clear that faculty desire more frequent, transparent, and contextual communication. We agree that communication should not consist solely of announcing decisions after they have been made. Rather, it should include explaining the rationale behind decisions and providing opportunities for faculty to ask questions, offer perspectives, and help shape solutions.

To strengthen this two-way communication, the President and Provost are committed to continuing annual meetings with each academic college and holding at least one university town hall meeting each semester. These conversations are intended to complement, not replace, the many interactions that occur through University Council, Academic Leadership Council, Faculty Senate, other academic leadership meetings, and individual conversations. Our goal is to create multiple avenues for meaningful dialogue so faculty can both receive information and provide feedback that informs university decision-making.

Shared Governance, Leadership Accountability, and Faculty Voice

The report reflects concerns about whether faculty input influences institutional decisions and whether existing governance structures consistently result in visible action. Shared governance remains fundamental to the success of Missouri State University, and we remain committed to

strengthening our partnership with the Faculty Senate and faculty leadership. Faculty expertise should continue to shape curriculum, strategic priorities, academic policies, and institutional planning.

As we continue implementing our university strategic plan, *Igniting Opportunity*, the role of faculty has never been more important. The ambitious goals outlined in the plan—including advancing student learning and success, strengthening research and creative activity, expanding community partnerships, and fostering an engaged and inclusive campus community—cannot be achieved through administrative leadership alone. They require the creativity, expertise, and commitment of our faculty. Shared governance provides the framework through which faculty help shape the decisions, priorities, and innovations that will move the university forward. We view faculty not simply as stakeholders in the strategic plan, but as essential partners in accomplishing its goals. That is one of the reasons why we have intentionally included faculty in oversight of the strategic plan implementation efforts and across various strategic planning working groups.

One important step toward strengthening accountability has been the implementation of 360-degree leadership reviews for vice presidents and deans. Unlike traditional supervisory evaluations, these reviews provide faculty, staff, and other stakeholders with structured, confidential opportunities to evaluate senior leaders on communication, collaboration, leadership effectiveness, support for shared governance, and organizational culture.

This year, Deans Meinert, Smith, and Wahl participated in the 360-degree review process. Each 360 review achieved a faculty response rate that was slightly higher than the response rate for the *Faculty Survey of Administrators, Success, and Engagement*. Each dean received the results of the review and developed specific action plans and leadership goals in response to the feedback. Additionally, Vice Presidents Bodenhausen, Dunn, Morris and Siscoe underwent a 360-degree evaluation. Each vice President received their results and developed specific goals and action plans in response to their review. It is our intent to continue that process next year with another group of deans and cabinet members.

We view this process not as an evaluative endpoint, but as a continuous improvement tool that encourages reflection, accountability, and measurable leadership development. Over time, this process will become an important mechanism for ensuring that faculty perspectives directly inform the growth and effectiveness of university leaders.

Faculty Success and Student Success

The concerns expressed regarding workload, professional support, morale, facilities, and instructional resources reinforce an important principle: student success and faculty success are

inseparable. Faculty are the university's greatest academic asset, and we cannot fulfill our mission of student success without creating an environment in which faculty thrive. Accordingly, Academic Affairs will continue to examine opportunities to reduce unnecessary administrative burden, improve clarity regarding academic processes, strengthen support for faculty development, and advocate for investments that directly enhance teaching, scholarship, and service.

Faculty Compensation

We recognize that faculty compensation emerged as the highest institutional priority identified by survey respondents and received the lowest overall ratings in the survey. Faculty expressed concerns regarding competitive salaries, equity, transparency, merit recognition, and the impact of inflation. These concerns are well understood and will continue to receive attention.

Improving faculty compensation requires both sound data and thoughtful planning. Missouri State currently uses CUPA-HR salary data to benchmark faculty compensation against appropriate peer institutions. As we continue this work, we intend to refine our analyses by disaggregating faculty salary comparisons using Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes. This will allow for more discipline-specific benchmarking that better reflects differences among academic fields. The enhanced approach will provide more meaningful information as we evaluate salary competitiveness and identify opportunities to address compression, inversion, and equity concerns as institutional resources permit.

While compensation decisions ultimately depend upon available financial resources, we remain committed to using the best available data to inform those discussions and to advocating for investments in faculty whenever possible.

Building Trust

The report also reminds us that many faculty continue to choose Missouri State because of the meaningful work they do with students and the strong relationships they have with colleagues. Those findings reflect one of the university's greatest strengths: a faculty deeply committed to student learning, scholarship, and service.

We recognize that trust is built through consistent communication, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and follow-through. These principles are also central to Missouri State University's Public Affairs Mission, which calls upon all members of our university community to demonstrate ethical leadership, cultural competence, and community engagement. The way we work together as colleagues should reflect the same values we seek to instill in our students. By engaging one another with respect and a shared commitment to the common good, we strengthen

not only our internal culture but also our ability to prepare graduates to lead lives of purpose and service.

We are committed to demonstrating those values through our actions by remaining visible across the university, engaging faculty before significant academic decisions are made, communicating openly about both opportunities and challenges, and working collaboratively with faculty, academic unit leaders, deans, and the Faculty Senate to advance Missouri State University's mission and the aspirations outlined in *Igniting Opportunity*.

We appreciate the Faculty Senate Committee on Faculty Concerns for providing this informative report. While some of the issues identified represent long-standing institutional challenges that will require sustained effort, they also present an opportunity for us to strengthen our university, deepen trust, and continue building an academic community where faculty feel heard and are empowered to do their best work. Together, we can continue advancing Missouri State University as a university where faculty flourish, students succeed, and our Public Affairs Mission is reflected not only in what we teach, but in how we lead and serve together.

Submitted by: Richard B. Williams, President
Clarenda M. Phillips, Provost