

# FACULTY MORALE SURVEY 2012

## A BIENNIAL REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE ON FACULTY CONCERNS

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## ***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

The results of the 2012 Faculty Morale Survey show that the areas of greatest satisfaction relate to quality and congeniality of colleagues, assignment of classes, and the support of Computer Services, the Library, and Classroom Instructional Technologies (formerly the Education Technology Center)

The areas of lowest satisfaction in the 2012 survey are compensation items, such as reimbursements, research support, abolition of cost of living increases, future salary prospects, salary differentials across campus, and the way discretionary monies are used to reward merit/equity, levels of shared governance, and the integration of the Public Affairs Mission into the faculty's workload.

The qualitative results yielded information about sources of dissatisfaction for some faculty, including concerns about performance of administrators, faculty compensation and increases in workload, insufficient resources, and the diversity mission. Some respondents expressed favoring a union because of administration performance concerns. Some faculty expressed hopefulness about the future under the new President. The qualitative data illuminates some details of specific areas in need of improvement.

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 three survey periods (a four year span from 2008 to 2012) are reported within this summary. The Survey can provide useful information to determine successes and improve conditions for university productivity.

## ***MEASURE***

The 2012 Survey contained 73 items. Question items used scale anchors from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree, with (3) being neutral. Faculty members were invited to provide additional comments, which served as a qualitative component. Longitudinal data is also provided for most items on the survey. The survey was administered electronically online via Inquisit. Two hundred and seventy eight (278) of five hundred twenty six (526) ranked faculty responded to the survey, representing a participation rate of 52%. The survey was administered in January 2013 using the list of faculty provided by the Faculty Senate office which acknowledges there may be up to a 10% error in their email distribution lists. 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 areas in the 2012 survey showing the highest mean values (mean values in parentheses) were:

- 1) Services and faculty use of Taylor Health and Wellness Center (4.35)
- 2) Assignment of classes (extent they match your interests and background) seems appropriate (4.23)
- 3) Office of Sponsored Research and Programs (4.22)
- 4) Libraries: facilities and support available to faculty (4.20)
- 5) Missouri State University faculty are of high quality (4.20)
- 6) Computer Services: facilities and computer help desk support available to faculty (4.19)
- 7) Libraries: facilities and support available to students (4.12)
- 8) Computer Services: facilities and computer help desk support available for students (4.09)
- 9) Missouri State University faculty are congenial (4.09)
- 10) Education Technology Center: facilities and support available to faculty (3.75)

Nine of these areas were also in the top ten satisfaction areas from the 2010 faculty survey. The one area new to the top ten list is the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs. The 2010 survey top ten list ranged in means from 3.66 to 3.98 whereas the 2012 survey ranged from 3.75 to 4.35.

The ten satisfaction areas in the 2012 survey showing the lowest mean values (mean values in parentheses) were:

- 1) Future salary prospects (1.76)
- 2) Salary differentials that exist across Missouri State University (2.01)
- 3) Compensation for per-course faculty is appropriate (2.22)
- 4) Abolition of cost of living increases in favor of pay for performance/equity (2.25)
- 5) Current nine month salary (2.38)
- 6) Compensation for overload courses is appropriate (2.38)
- 7) Procedures by which equity adjustment salary decisions are made are justified (2.48)
- 8) Procedures by which performance/merit salary adjustments are made are justified (2.50)
- 9) Rate of pay for summer teaching (2.5% per hour) is adequate (2.54)
- 10) The way discretionary monies are used to reward merit/equity (2.56)

All ten of these satisfaction areas are compensation related and eight of these areas were also in the 2010 survey. The two areas new to the top ten list are compensation for per-course faculty and rate of pay for summer teaching. The 2010 survey top ten list ranged in means from 1.85 to 2.55 whereas the 2012 survey ranged from 1.76 to 2.56.

## ***QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT***

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide additional comments at the end of each section.

### SECTION 1: DIRECTION OF THE UNIVERSITY

There were 71 comments from 278 survey respondents (25.5%) 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 focus on numbers and modalities over quality of learning (21/29.5%)
  - "...too much emphasis on the numbers, the money, the technology. My whole department is afraid of being lost in the clamor to cheaper, more convenience, and less valuable so-called education. We are not a trade school."
- Inadequate workload and compensation (12/16.9%)
  - "The University has made GREAT improvements in moving in the right direction in the past couple of years. Increasing compensation to closer to average levels helps keep valued faculty and staff; this should be an even HIGHER priority..."
- Building projects and athletics take away from the primary mission of academics (12/16.9%).
  - "Because building projects draw so much community attention, it would seem to the casual observer that the university is not focused on academics... Faculty lines are shrinking, making a morale-challenging context for resources being directed to non-academic functions... my job as faculty is getting harder and harder because of limited faculty to help."
- Equal Opportunity Policies (8/11.2%). The comments were divided where three said that the university needed to go further, four saying that these policies have run their course, and one who sat in the middle.
  - "We can create a climate of openness for diversity. We can do everything in our power to provide access to diverse students. But we are powerless to create a larger pool of qualified students, faculty and staff of diverse backgrounds..."
- Praise for the current administration and the direction of the university (8/11.2)
  - "I think that the University is moving in a very positive direction under the current administration."
- Negative perception of upper administration (6/8.4%)
  - "I fear we are continuing to be more of a business than an educational institution, based upon the top heavy number of administrators and the place where most of the finances are invested..."
- The remaining comments expressed frustration with the General Education revision (2), lack of shared governance (1), and a need to do more within the community (1)

## SECTION 2: FACILITIES & PROGRAMS

There were 70 comments from 277 survey respondents (25.2%) from the second section of the survey dealing with university facilities and service programs. Below are some of the common themes extracted from this section:

- Quality of classroom/office space (24/34.2%)
  - “My classroom and office are great but I have many colleagues who are far less fortunate, existing in windowless closets. Is this how we should treat our best and brightest? What message does this send to students about our priorities when they meet with faculty in such settings?”
- Staffing, including clerical staff and graduate assistants (13/18.3%)
  - “We do not have adequate Graduate Assistants to assist with the larger and larger classes. This is unfair to our students taking these larger and larger classes and paying higher tuition. The clerical support has also decreased as class sizes increase.”
- Support for research & creative activities (12/17.1%)
  - “There is little balance between the three components of our professorships (teaching, research, service). At least in my department we regularly have 4/4 loads, serve on numerous committees, and perform tons of department activities, all of which encumbers us from engaging in meaningful research. The university must decide whether we are in fact a "teaching" college or if we are becoming a legit research institution.”
- Improved access to campus services (10/14%)
  - “I teach online a great deal and the hours for the proctored testing center are way, way too limited to offer students! The center needs to be open nights, and seven days a week!”
- Increased visibility to issues of diversity (3/4.2%)
  - “We need to provide information to faculty about religious diversity.”
- The remaining comments (8/11.4%) expressed frustration with Blackboard (2), inadequate library budgets/acquisitions (2), dangers downtown (1), a department housed in three locations (1), a department forced to relocate (1), and too much focus on issues of diversity (1).

### SECTION 3: UNIVERSITY POLICIES

There were 57 comments from 263 survey respondents (21.6%) from the third section of the survey dealing with university policies. Below are some of the common themes extracted from this section:

- Relevance of merit system when it has been absent for years (22/38.5%)
  - “The merit pay system has gone from being a joke to being an insult. Making people fill out paperwork to get a merit rating and then not providing any money for merit-based raises year after year is insulting and counterproductive.”
- Administration is perceived as operating “top down” with shared governance being mostly an illusion or allowed only when convenient (15/26.3%)
  - “Shared governance is an illusion of participation where enough input is requested to give the impression that there is shared decision making.”
- Abolition of cost of living allowances during years when there have also not been merit opportunities has led to some frustration (8/14%)
  - “Unless the university has a surplus of cash, which would provide for both performance/equity pay, along with cost of living increases, it's best to continue providing small cost of living increases for everyone.”
- Newer administrative appointments may lead to improvements in shared governance (4/7.01%)
  - “The new administration is more receptive to share governance. That is a very positive move for the university...”
- The remaining comments (8/14%) expressed policy frustrations with Greenwood (2), sought clarification of promotion & tenure policies (2), thought the General Education revision wasted time (1), perceived inequity between ranked faculty and instructors (1), thought the focus on football wasted resources (1), and wished change was affected more expediently and embraced more fully.

#### SECTION 4: TEACHING LOADS AND POLICIES

There were 59 comments from 273 survey respondents (21.6%) from the fourth section of the survey dealing with teaching loads and policies. Below are some of the common themes extracted from this section:

- Teaching loads across campus and even within departments are inequitable (14/23.7%)
  - “The disparity of workload in my department is unconscionable. We have faculty in this department who spend less than 10 hours a week on campus and others who are lucky to spend time at home. Policy implementation at the departmental and college levels are arbitrary, at best.”
- Salaries are low and inequitable (11/18.6%)
  - “Salaries in [my college] are grossly lower than salaries in other colleges; our full professors are paid less than assistant professors in other colleges. After several equity adjustments and merit pay, I am still paid 15% less than average pay for professors in my field at comparable institutions; we have been going in the right direction for the past few years, but I am still waiting to be paid the average, much less to receive merit pay for performing at a level above average.”
- Faculty are working overloads without additional compensation (9/15.2%)
  - “...I know several colleagues, including myself, who cannot get overload compensation EVER. But, in order to preserve program integrity are teaching overloads regularly. Our department developed and approved a workload policy that outlined the specific ways we should be compensated, backed up with university and college policies. It has never been implemented...”
- The increased reliance on part-time faculty is diminishing educational standards (7/11.8%)
  - “While I fully respect and enjoy our per course faculty, use of so many part-time people dilutes and creates inequities for our students' experiences in our department. Students complain about lack of accessibility and direct 1:1 training that their peers receive from full time faculty. Full time faculty in the meantime, are being given heavier student and client loads as well as being given more teaching assignments, committee work, etc. The hiring of more full time people would go a long way toward evening out work load and developing more cohesive programs.”
- Classes are growing larger to account for lost faculty lines (6/10.1%)
  - “In my department, we are down more than five full-time faculty, and the only answer is for our dean to turn junior-level classes into mass lectures and assign others of us to courses outside our comfort zone, leaving us unable to offer other important, non-college-core courses. Student don't like this any more than we do.”
- The remaining comments (12/20.3%) expressed pressures to inflate grades (3), desire for differential workloads (3), relevance of student evaluations (2), frustration with administration (1), frustration with advisement (1), frustration with Greenwood policies (1), lack of faculty support (1).

## SECTION 5: FRINGE BENEFITS VALUE

There were 51 comments from 273 survey respondents (18.6%) from the fifth section of the survey dealing with the fringe benefits package. Below are some of the common themes extracted from this section:

- Access to recreational facilities, especially new recreational center (19/37.2%)
  - “Faculty and graduate students lost a major health benefit when the workout facilities were moved from the stadium. Underwriting faculty/graduate student use of the new facilities would appropriately underscore the university's commitment to health and wellness.”
- General displeasure with the quality of benefits (7/13.7%)
  - “Our benefits are a joke. Our deductibles are sky-high, and by the time we reach them, a 20% co-pay is killer...”
- General praise for benefits services on campus (5/9.8%)
  - “The University, especially Burnie Snodgrass and his group, have done an excellent, creative job in holding down costs while enhancing health programs. Most MSU employees probably do not recognize how much costs have been shifted to employees in other organizations.”
- Vision Coverage (5/9.8%)
  - “We should have some sort of optical coverage. Who among us does not require glasses?”
- The benefits package does not compare favorably against packages offered by other institutions of higher education (4/7.8%)
  - “Our medical/health and dental benefits could be much better; they do not compare well with benefits at similar institutions.”
- Increased tuition credits for dependents (3/5.8%)
  - “An expansion of the education benefits for classes and for our kids to go to Greenwood/MSU would be very helpful and greatly appreciated...”
- Partner benefits (3/5.8%)
  - “[S]ame gender partner benefits should be taken into account. MSU's current practice is discriminatory in nature... I have been with my partner for six years, we live together, he is helping to raise my children, if we could get married we would have.”
- The remaining comments (5/9.8%) expressed a desire to switch from a 401a to a 401k (1), the intrusiveness of the biometrics program (1), increased life insurance for dependents (1), increased maternity leave time (1), equity in coverage (1).

## SECTION 6: UNIVERSITY SATISFACTION

There were 35 comments from 272 survey respondents (12.8%) from the sixth section of the survey dealing with general satisfaction within the university. Below are some of the common themes extracted from this section:

- Uneven integration of the Public Affairs mission across the university (16/45.7%)
  - “Though the university in general integrates and embraces the Public Affairs Mission, our department neglects it entirely.”
- Looking to leave the university (5/14.2%)
  - I know of very few faculty members who would not leave Missouri State in a heartbeat if they could. There is no loyalty at all to this university, and there should not be. Faculty have for years been treated with disrespect and our professional careers undermined through our association with a university that does not support either teaching or research.”
- General praise for Missouri State University (3/8.5%)
  - “This is a great place. There are many wonderful things happening here and I love my colleagues and even some of the administrators! But we can do better.”
- General satisfaction with administration (3/8.5%)
  - “I have my objections and problems with MSU, but I am at least moderately satisfied with the University -- in good part because I believe that our leadership is moving in the right direction now. “
- The remaining comments (8/22.8%) express frustration with administration (2), displeasure with workload distributions (2), too much focus on athletics (1), the feeling that we are still a regional university (1), frustration with grade inflation (1), and a negative culture on campus amongst colleagues (1).

## ***CONCLUSION***

Based on the survey respondents, faculty members remain particularly concerned about compensation related factors; however, faculty members seem to be content to remain at the university. In general, the means from the 2012 survey are up as compared against the 2010 survey which might indicate improved morale amongst the faculty as expressed by the respondents.

## ***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 future salary, cost of living adjustments, and internal and external equity, with fair pay considerations important in their own right. As noted in previous recommendations, this committee continues to encourage appropriate planning to remedy these imbalances.
- 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.