

Faculty Concerns Committee 2007-2008 Assessment of the Missouri State University  
Provost and the Office of the Provost, and the President

This online survey was administered between 2/13/08 and 2/27/08 and was completed by 287 Faculty, representing a response rate of 38%, lower than the recent Climate Survey (63%), but comparable to a similar survey conducted in 2005 (301 people or approximately 40%) and adequate to make generalizations about faculty perceptions. A total of 160 males and 114 females responded. Of that number, 43 were tenure track, 204 tenured, and 30 non tenure track. A total of 34 were instructors; 60 assistant professors; 62 associate professors; and, 123 full professors. 280 respondents marked an academic college affiliation: 65 from College of Arts and Letters, 45 from College of Business Administration, 34 from College of Education, 50 from College of Health and Human Services, 27 from College of Humanities and Public Affair, 46 from the College of Natural and Applied Sciences, and 13 from the Department of Library Science. The survey consisted of 9 quantitative questions on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree and a prompt for faculty to qualitatively comment on activities of the Provost that pertain to faculty morale, development, productivity, and support for students. Items were generated by the Faculty Concerns Committee in consultation with the president and provost. Faculty made 388 comments (237 for Provost and Office of Provost; 152 for President\*). This assessment is one component of a group of assessments conducted by the Faculty Concerns Committee in connection with its charge to conduct biennial evaluations of the State of the University Leadership, Assessments of the Department Head and Dean (conducted with the assistance of the IDEA Center at Kansas State), and Departmental Climate Conditions Survey. The results of these assessments can be located at <https://www.ws.missouristate.edu/facultysenate/committees.asp?subtype=Faculty%20Concerns%20Committee> or by following the links under the Faculty Senate webpage.

### **Provost and Office of the Provost**

#### Quantitative Data

The Provost and Office of the Provost was evaluated most strongly on two items, for which mean scores were above 3.5 (close to the “agree” response). Reflected in the responses to these items, a majority of faculty perceived that the Office of the Provost promotes diversity (3.81) and raises awareness of accomplishments, opportunities and activities (3.60) successfully. About two-thirds of faculty (63%) agreed or agreed strongly with the statement on diversity, and slightly fewer (62%) agreed or agreed strongly on the statement concerning raising awareness. All other items had mean scores ranging slightly below (2.80) to slightly above (3.43) the scale midpoint of 3 and showed substantial variability (standard deviations near or above 1.0).

Of the three items for which the mean was below 3.0, the statement with the lowest mean (2.80) was “The Provost has clearly communicated expectations of policies and procedures.” Slightly fewer than four in 10 faculty members (38%) strongly agreed or agreed that the Provost activities were consistent with clearly communicating expectations of policies and procedures and supporting of shared governance. The next-lowest mean (2.93) was for “The strength of academic programs has improved under the Provost’s leadership.” A total of 36% of faculty agreed or agreed strongly. Slightly more faculty (44%) agreed or agreed strongly with the statement “The Provost supports shared governance in seeking, considering, and integrating faculty input to make decisions (2.98). The statement “The Provost supports performance appraisal procedures (e.g., tenure, promotion, compensation) that are fair and conducive to faculty development” had a mean of 3.00, and 44% of faculty agreed or agreed strongly with the statement.

### Qualitative Data

Faculty members were asked to comment on activities of the Provost that pertain to faculty morale, development, productivity, and support for students. The following are major themes found in those responses:

- **Faculty morale** was mentioned by 53 respondents, and all but four of the responses indicated that morale was low or quite low.
- **Compensation/Merit/Pay for Performance (PfP)** was mentioned by 28 faculty members, and all but three of the responses were negative.
- **Change** was mentioned by 20 faculty members, though in different contexts.
  - Nine faculty stated that the speed of change was too fast, and one said the speed of change was satisfactory.
  - Twelve faculty mentioned that the Provost gave “mixed messages, “changed her mind too much”, was inconsistent or “flip flopped.”
  - Four faculty mentioned frequent changes in policy as being a problem.
- **Accessibility or openness** was mentioned by 13 faculty, with five comments being positive and eight negative.
- **Increased paperwork** was mentioned as a negative by nine faculty members.
- **Communication skills** were mentioned by five faculty members, four of them stating that the Provost did a good job communicating her plans and proposals.
- **Workload** issues were mentioned in a negative context by three faculty members.
- **Support for students** was mentioned by three faculty, two of them saying support was good.
- **Administrative style, management ability or execution** was mentioned by five faculty, with one comment being positive and four negative.
- The realization of the **cost centers** idea was mentioned negatively by two faculty members.
- **Focus on global issues** was mentioned by two faculty members, one positively and one negatively.

- **Support for research** was mentioned by two faculty members, one positively and one negatively.
- Thirty other issues were mentioned by one faculty member each.

Faculty members were also asked to comment on activities of the Provost that pertain to formulated policies, planning, support for faculty governance, and communication of future priorities. The following are major themes found in those responses:

- **Changing policies often, reversing stated expectations, or “flip flopping”** were mentioned by 14 faculty members.
- **Communication of policies** was mentioned by 13 faculty members, 11 of them negatively.
- **Openness to input** was mentioned by nine faculty members, six of them negatively.
- **Implementation of plans** was mentioned by eight faculty members, seven of them negatively.
- **Compensation/Merit/Pay for Performance (PfP)** was mentioned by eight faculty members, seven of them negatively.
- **Faculty evaluation or tenure/promotion** issues were mentioned by seven faculty members, all of negatively.
- **Shared governance** was mentioned by seven faculty members, six of them negatively.
- **Planning** was mentioned by seven faculty members, five of them negatively.
- **Change for change’s sake** was mentioned by four faculty members, all negatively.
- **Listening to faculty** was mentioned by three faculty members, two of them negatively.
- **Management style** was mentioned by three faculty members, all negatively.
- **Ignoring the Faculty Handbook** was mentioned by three faculty members, all negatively.
- **Continuing Education** was mentioned by three faculty members, all negatively.
- **Paperwork** was mentioned by three faculty members, all negatively.
- Seventeen other topics were mentioned by one faculty member each.

## **President**

### Quantitative data

Mean responses to seven of the ten quantitative items were above 3.5 (close to the “agree” response). Like with the Provost, the President received his highest rating in promotion of diversity, with a mean score of 4.02. Most faculty members also agreed or strongly agreed that the President had been an effective ambassador to the community in promoting the public affairs mission. A majority of faculty perceived that the President raises awareness of events, opportunities, and relevant legislative decisions. A majority of faculty also reported that the President’s decisions and actions have benefited the quality of education and development of students and the research environment. A majority of faculty perceived that the President supports and promotes the integration of the public

affairs mission into the life of the University. Three additional items had mean scores near the scale midpoint (3) and showed higher variability in faculty perception. Like with the Provost, the President received one of his lowest ratings with the highest variability in the area of supporting shared governance, where in general faculty appeared to have no clear opinion, but more than 1/3 strongly disagreed or disagreed that his actions have been supportive of shared governance. Overall, a majority of faculty perceive that the University has improved under the President's leadership.

#### Qualitative data

Faculty members were asked to comment on the President's activities relevant to promoting the university's interests to external constituencies and the President's activities relevant to the morale, commitment, and productivity of university faculty. Of 152 written comments, the greatest numbers were devoted to the issues of faculty morale (38), the merit and compensation plan (32), and shared governance (15). The comments on faculty morale were mixed, with 19 comments stating that morale had improved under the president, or that he is concerned with improving faculty morale and productivity. There were 17 negative comments that morale is low or lower than in the past. Responses to the merit pay plan were predominantly negative. Twenty-eight statements criticize the new compensation plan for a number of reasons. Among the most frequently mentioned: it reduces morale or is demoralizing (10); the implementation was hasty, ill-planned, or inefficient (9); it is detrimental to collegiality (5); and the forced distribution is a disincentive (5). On shared governance, 11 respondents stated that faculty impact on decision-making has been reduced, while 4 were of the opinion that the president solicits input from faculty and is responsive. In addition, in keeping with the high rating in the quantitative data for the president as ambassador to the community, there were 15 comments noting his effectiveness in advocating for the university at the state level and with donors. Additionally, there were 12 responses indicating that the president has instituted too much change too quickly, and another 12 comments that more support is needed for research, including sabbatical, teaching load reduction, conference travel monies, library budget increases, and teaching/research assistants. There were 10 comments criticizing apparent priority on sports and capital campaigns to the detriment of the core academic mission of teaching. Of 28 terms describing the president's leadership, 18 were positive, indicating that he is effective, and 10 were negative.

#### Conclusion

The assessments of the Provost, Office of the Provost, and President conveyed that a majority of faculty respondents perceived the upper administration as successfully promoting diversity and raising awareness of relevant activities. Faculty opinion was variable on many items. A majority of faculty appeared to have a more favorable view of the performance of the President than the Provost or the Office of the Provost. In terms of a potential weakness, more than one-third of faculty respondents perceived support of shared governance as inadequate at both levels.

The merit compensation system appeared to be among the most frequently cited causes for concern and reduced morale among faculty. Therefore, the implementation and procedures for the evaluation process should be reviewed and revised to resolve problems such as increased paperwork, lack of clarity and consistency across campus, and the forced distribution system, which is perceived as divisive. A second area that requires attention is the related issue of the need for increased research support, including reassigned time, conference travel money, and space and facilities. The assessments also reveal that faculty see a need for improvement by both the President and the Provost and Office of the Provost in seeking and integrating faculty input into decision-making, and both could improve further in the area of perception of clear communication with the faculty.

Notes:

\*The second qualitative question assessing faculty perceptions of the President's performance was initially entered incorrectly as part of the last quantitative question. This was corrected on February 25 at approximately 3:30 p.m. Thirty respondents left comments following this correction.

**Table 1. Provost and Office of Provost quantitative data**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>St.dev</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>No response</u>
The strength of academic programs has improved under the Provost's leadership.	2.93	1.21	45	60	75	81	24	2
The Office of the Provost effectively conducts, supports, and funds activities to improve teaching and learning	3.30	1.24	32	49	53	106	46	1
The Office of the Provost effectively conducts, supports, and funds activities to improve research productivity	3.41	1.17	21	49	53	114	47	3
The Provost has clearly communicated expectations of policies and procedures	2.80	1.44	72	68	36	64	45	2
The Provost supports shared governance in seeking, considering, and integrating faculty input to make decisions	2.98	1.32	55	54	51	94	32	1
The Provost supports performance appraisal procedures (e.g. tenure, promotion, compensation) that are fair and conducive to faculty development	3.00	1.38	58	54	46	85	42	2
The Office of the Provost promotes appreciation of diversity based on cultural, individual, and ideological difference.	3.81	0.98	10	7	88	101	79	2
The Office of the Provost raises awareness of accomplishments, opportunities, and activities across campus.	3.60	1.15	20	31	56	113	65	2
The Office of the Provost supports and promotes the integration of the University's public affairs mission into the work of the faculty	3.43	1.08	14	43	82	98	47	3

**Table 2. President quantitative data**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>St. dev</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>No response</u>
The University has improved under the President's leadership	3.64	1.33	33	30	31	101	89	3
The President's decisions and actions benefit the quality of education, civic mindedness and well-being of Missouri State students.	3.54	1.30	33	34	35	110	71	4
The President's decisions and actions have strengthened the research environment at Missouri State University	3.62	1.18	20	34	51	107	71	4
The President supports shared governance in seeking, considering, and integrating faculty input to make decisions	2.98	1.31	51	56	63	77	37	3
The President has clearly communicated rationale pertinent to budget and policy decisions	3.23	1.33	41	49	55	83	56	3
The President has been an effective ambassador to the local and state communities in promoting the public affairs mission	3.98	1.15	15	17	50	79	122	4
The President supports and promotes the integration of the public affairs mission into the life of the University community	3.67	1.12	14	31	63	100	75	4
The President promotes appreciation of diversity based on cultural, individual, and ideological difference.	4.02	0.99	8	9	60	96	107	7
The President raises awareness of events, opportunities, and legislative decisions that impact the university	3.89	1.13	12	27	43	98	101	6
The President's long-range plans, initiatives, and priorities support the long-term interests of the University * (only 69 respondents due to error in the electronic version of the survey)	3.41	1.33	11	4	14	24	15	1