

PENNSSTATE



**FACULTY EXIT STUDY
2011/2012 THROUGH 2012/2013
VICE PROVOST FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
AND
OFFICE OF PLANNING AND INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT
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INTRODUCTION

Since 1998, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs has led an effort to offer every tenured and tenure-track faculty member leaving the University the opportunity to participate in an exit survey and an exit interview. This is done in conjunction with, and with the help of, each dean at Penn State. Faculty turnover is an area of critical concern for all universities. While turnover has some positive aspects, such as allowing opportunities for professional growth and bringing fresh ideas and approaches into academic communities, it also has significant costs. “The costs of turnover; such as subsequent recruiting expenses, disruptions of course offerings, discontinuities in departmental and student planning, and loss of graduate student advisors, *are borne at the individual, departmental and institutional levels*” (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004, emphasis added). Further, in extreme cases, unusual levels of turnover may reflect serious problems at the program, college, or even institutional level. The goal of this study is to better understand the experiences of tenure-track faculty members at Penn State so that we may respond to faculty concerns. The 2012/2013 academic year marked the sixteenth year of this effort. This report summarizes the responses over the last two fiscal years (2011/12 and 2012/13) for the Faculty Exit Study surveys and interviews.

POSSIBLE IMPACT OF THE SANDUSKY SCANDAL

Outside the scope of this long-term faculty exit study are anomalous and unique events related to Jerry Sandusky’s indictment. While that is not the focus of this report, a separate assessment to gauge possible impacts of the Sandusky scandal on faculty recruitment and retention was carried out in spring 2013. That assessment had two components: quantitative and qualitative.

First, the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment (OPIA) examined longitudinal data on faculty hiring and departures over a 10-year period. Those data involve fairly small numbers of faculty and show some year-to-year fluctuation, but they did not point to any obvious effects in the year and a half after the scandal broke. In addition, the budget director in the provost’s office examined the patterns of central funds distributed to the colleges to support faculty hiring. Comparing 2012-13 to 2011-12, matching funds increased by 46%; start-up funds increased by 16%; and President’s Opportunity Funds remained relatively stable. Again, the figures are not suggestive of a downward hiring trend.

Second, OPIA queried Penn State’s deans for their impressionistic sense on the question, and every dean responded. One dean did report losing a faculty member for whom the Sandusky scandal made a difference but said that even for that college (Health and Human Development), overall, “This year is going well. The scandal has not figured prominently in discussions with prospective faculty.” Most deans observed that they were seeing exceptionally well-qualified candidates, and that 2012-13 was a strong hiring year.

In short, based on both quantitative and qualitative information, there was little evidence of any widespread, systematic impact of the Sandusky scandal on faculty recruitment or retention at Penn State.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature on academic work applies a variety of theoretical frameworks to the exploration of the influences on faculty careers including demographic characteristics, resources, job satisfaction, work-life balance, work environment, and compensation. Across these studies, one thing remains consistent – that the interplay between these many influences is complex and often difficult to interpret. Following is a brief overview of some of the major work in this area.

Reasons for Departure. While the literature is not robust in the area of faculty departure, there have been a number of rigorous explorations of this issue in the past decades. The factors that influence departure are diverse and numerous, but a number of studies attempt to explore their breadth in order to identify the most salient. In 1992, Moore and Gardner surveyed the faculty at Michigan State University and found that the top five reasons for leaving were: availability of research funds, research opportunities, reputation of the department, departmental leadership, and salary. These reasons differed from Schuster and Wheeler's (1990) findings, which suggested that eight developments seem to be behind the pressure for faculty members to exit. In order, these were: deteriorating working conditions; compensation; weak labor markets; conflicting expectations; aging, tenured faculty members; shifting values; compressed career ladders; and faculty morale.

Satisfaction. The research literature suggests that the significance of faculty job satisfaction should not be underestimated (Daly & Dee, 2006; Smart, 1990). Low job satisfaction can imply that a faculty member has not been able to meet institutional expectations and is in the process of disaffiliating from the institution (Moore & Gardner, 1992). There are many factors that contribute to the latent concept of satisfaction, and one could argue that almost every aspect of faculty departure in the following paragraphs contributes directly or indirectly to a faculty member's feeling of "satisfaction." In two separate national studies, Zhou and Volkwein (2004) and Rosser (2004) explored multiple aspects of faculty satisfaction and concluded that it was an important predictor of faculty intention to depart. Caplow and McGee (1958), in their seminal piece on faculty mobility, contended that faculty members are more likely to seek out and respond to outside offers because of dissatisfaction with their present employment situation than they are to be enticed to leave simply by better situations. This finding is similar to those of Toombs and Marlier (1981) and Gartshore, Hibbard, and Stockard (1983).

Work Environment. Both Matier (1990) and Moore and Gardner (1992) posited that work environment is an important issue for faculty members and a critical dimension in a faculty member's final decision to leave. Metrics for "work environment" vary from study to study, but the construct is generally divided into the internal and external environment, where the internal focuses on working conditions and intangible and tangible benefits of the job, and the external is related to the labor market, quality of life, and family issues. Aspects of work environment found to be related to departure include lack of faculty autonomy (Daly & Dee, 2006; Smart, 1990) and lack of communication (Daly & Dee, 2006).

Workload and Support. A number of aspects of workload, including the human and financial resources to support professional work, are related to faculty departure. Daly and Dee (2006) found that the feelings of not having enough time to get everything done, having to work very fast, and that workload is too heavy are negatively correlated with intent to stay. Further, they found that feelings of role conflict such as between

teaching and research were also negatively related to intention to stay. Rosser (2004) explored faculty perceptions of support for their work and concluded that technical support, administrative support, and support for professional development were important in faculty retention.

Compensation and Reward. A number of studies (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004 and Gill, 1992, for example) have found that in addition to working conditions, salary is also important to faculty members. Daly & Dee (2006) argued that distributive justice, the belief that rewards and salary are equitable, was positively related to intent to stay, but some research suggests that the importance of compensation may vary by faculty rank (Ehrenberg, Kasper, & Rees, 1989).

The Influence of Rank and Seniority. Seniority and academic rank can mediate the influence of many factors on faculty satisfaction and intention to depart (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). Moore and Gardner (1992), found that the most dissatisfaction over support services was expressed by associate professors. They also found that assistant and associate professors were more interested in leaving than professors and that assistant professors who held administrative positions expressed dissatisfaction with most aspects of their careers. Perhaps most interestingly, Moore and Gardner (1992) reported that satisfaction ebbs and flows numerous times over the span of a faculty career.

Other differences by faculty rank are noteworthy. Ehrenberg et al. (1989) found that higher compensation levels did increase the retention of assistant and associate professors, but had no effect on retaining professors. Matier (1990) found that assistant professors and professors, generally males, that were involved in research were the most likely to seek outside employment offers.

Gender. A literature on differences between male and female college faculty members has been emerging for several decades. In short, the findings are mixed. There exist gender-related differences but the similarities are greater than the differences and over-simplifications are risky. This is illustrated by several thorough and rigorous studies, using complex theoretical frameworks and multivariate analytic methods, and nationally representative data. For example, a 2008 analysis found that multiple and diverse characteristics of faculty members (such as discipline, race, gender, and disability status) affected job satisfaction. In general, that analysis suggested that female faculty members were less satisfied with most dimensions of their jobs than were their male peers (Siefert & Umbach, 2008). However, those researchers also emphasized that their results were complex (noting, for example, that women in disciplines where faculty members produce a large number of articles were more satisfied with all of the dimensions of work examined in the study). Another 2008 study examined gender disparities in attrition and turnover intentions for faculty members in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines (Xu, 2008). Women faculty members in these fields were significantly more likely to change positions within academia and their turnover intentions were more highly correlated (than those of men) with dissatisfaction with research support and perceived advancement opportunities. However, women and men did not differ in their intentions to depart from academia, and both genders were equally committed to their academic careers in STEM fields.

Other studies have been more focused on particular aspects of the faculty experience. A study of 320 faculty members at 10 business schools found that the determinants of faculty perceptions of rewards for research productivity were largely similar across demographic groups and that the differences were mostly

related to seniority (tenure status and rank), but that there were some gender-related differences as well. In that study, female faculty members placed somewhat greater emphasis than their male colleagues on what the authors termed intrinsic rewards, such as peer recognition and respect, than on extrinsic rewards, such as receiving tenure, promotion, or salary raises (Chen, Gupta, & Hoshower, 2004). A study on determinants of job satisfaction among faculty members at one private research university suggested that the factors are more similar than different for men and women—but that women’s job satisfaction derived more from their perceptions of relational support, while men’s job satisfaction resulted about equally from perceived relational support and the perceived availability of academic resources (Billmoria, et al., 2006). In a related finding, Moore and Gardner (1992) reported that female faculty members were more dissatisfied than men with work load, assignment mix, support services, and time available to conduct research, and that women, at all ranks, were more likely to be interested in leaving.

In regards to departure, Tamada and Inman (1997) found that male and female faculty members have the same rates of retention. Likewise, Brown and Woodbury (1995) found that tenure-track women separate at the same rate as tenure-track men. In contrast, Honeyman and Summers (1994) reported that women left their faculty positions in disproportionately high numbers in comparison to their male counterparts.

Of course, there are potentially many explanations for the differences in career experiences between male and female faculty members. Moore and Gardner (1992) offered one in reporting that female faculty members are more likely to be in a dual career relationship (86% of women compared to 69% of the men). And the literature is bringing more attention to issues around the intersection of gender, family responsibilities, and academic careers. Articles in *Academe* on “Do Babies Matter?” (Mason & Goulden, 2002; Mason & Goulden, 2004) and the “Bias Against Caregiving” (Drago, Colbeck, Stauffer, Pirretti, Burkum, Fazioli, Lazzaro, & Habasevich, 2005) are finding evidence that babies and caregiving do matter and appear to have negative impacts on career progress for younger faculty members. As reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Wilson, 2006), there is also evidence of a possible tenure-rate gap affecting female faculty members in particular, as well as (to a lesser extent) minority faculty members (Dooris & Guidos, 2006).

METHOD

We use two mechanisms of data collection for the Faculty Exit Study: surveys and personal interviews. For the interviews, each college or tenure-granting unit within the University appoints an individual to serve as that unit’s Exit Interview Officer. This role is commonly filled by a recently retired faculty member from the unit. Appendix 1 is a listing of the Exit Interview Officers for 2011-2013. The Exit Interview Officer is responsible for contacting the exiting faculty member to arrange for the interview, conducting the interview, and submitting a written report of the individual interview—with the exiting faculty member’s permission—both to the appropriate dean and to the Office of the Provost.

Interview responses were closely read by an analyst in the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment. Forty-eight codes were developed from the interview notes, with categories such as “generally satisfied,” “level of assignments” and “mentoring.” The coding reflected both initial conceptions of key topics, and a more inductive, dynamic development of codes throughout the process, following a well-established inductive methodology for qualitative data analysis (for example, Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In addition to the interview, exiting faculty members are offered an opportunity to complete the Faculty Exit Survey. Two modes of the instrument are available: a paper version and a Web-based version. The survey questionnaire lists 45 items reflecting various facets of the faculty work environment. Respondents are asked to indicate their degree of satisfaction and also the level of importance they place on each item (detailed results for these items are included in Appendices 2 and 3). Each item is rated on a five-point, ordinal scale. The survey questionnaire also includes a series of multiple choice and short answer questions addressing the faculty member's experience at Penn State. Completed surveys are returned to the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment where they are analyzed.

We believe that having two feedback mechanisms is valuable. The interview provides an opportunity for the exiting faculty member to communicate their opinions—at least indirectly—to their dean. The interview summaries provide for a rich source of detailed qualitative data from which to gain insight. The survey provides the exiting faculty member with a convenient and anonymous mechanism by which to express their opinion. The survey also provides a consistent, quantitative data source, which allows us to make cross-group comparisons.

Our data set for this analysis consists of 44 responses to the Faculty Exit Survey and 53 responses to the Faculty Exit Interview spanning two fiscal years, 2011-2013. We identified from University human resources data a total of 256 tenured or tenure-track faculty members who exited from the University over those years.

In any given year, some faculty members explicitly decline to participate in the survey while agreeing to be interviewed, and vice versa. Also, in a typical year some faculty members cannot be contacted and others simply state that they do not wish to participate in any way. The overall response rate is impossible to determine as a faculty member may participate in either the interview or the survey or both. Confidentiality among the survey responses and interview respondents further complicates the ability to develop a distinct count of responses. However, given these numbers we can estimate about a 20% response rate for the survey and also for the interviews.

The combined interview and survey responses for 2011-2013 include 39 responses (40%) that we could identify as leaving due to retirement, 46 responses (47%) identified as leaving for another position or other reason, 5 responses (5%) identified as being counseled out, 4 responses (4%) identified as leaving due to a tenure denial and 3 responses were indeterminate. Among those individuals leaving for other positions or for a reason other than tenure denial, being counseled out, or retirement, we were able to identify 18 interview respondents who indicated whether they had sought the position or they had been approached. Slightly more respondents indicated having sought the position (10 respondents) than reported having been approached (8 respondents).

The limited ability to clearly differentiate survey and interview results between, say, retirees and tenure denials has been, and remains, a frustrating aspect of this project. The problem is similar for both interview and survey respondents, but it is easiest to see in the survey results. Of the 443 survey records for the sixteen years in aggregate, 198 faculty members report leaving for retirement, 147 for a more attractive position elsewhere, and only 22 because they were denied tenure or were counseled out. On the other hand, it is reliably known from other studies (based on human resources databases) that about 59% of entrants to the

tenure process at Penn State will ultimately receive tenure—so about 41% of the entrants to the tenure track leave, on average, without tenure (Penn State, 2013), suggesting substantial non-response bias in the survey and interview data. This may also indicate that a number of respondents who indicated leaving for a more attractive position were not anticipating a positive tenure outcome.

The Faculty Exit Study is a University-wide initiative and faculty members at all Penn State campuses are eligible to participate. University Park is Penn State's largest campus and also the administrative hub of the University. Nearly 60% of the entire tenured and tenure-track faculty are located at the University Park campus (Penn State, 2012a). The variation in sizes among Penn State's other campuses combined with the variation in response rates among those campuses makes individual campus comparisons difficult if not impossible. However, the 2011-2013 responses do seem to be consistent with the proportion of faculty members between the University Park campus and all of Penn State's other campuses combined. We were able to identify 48 survey and interview respondents from Penn State's University Park campus—22 interview respondents and 26 survey respondents—and 17 interview respondents and 14 survey respondents from Penn State's 22 other campuses.

Males made up the majority of responses with 28 interview responses and 25 survey responses. Females provided 14 interviews and 15 survey responses (gender was not provided in all surveys and interview notes). The ratio of males to females among the interview respondents appears fairly representative compared to the ratio among Penn State faculty overall, where males make up approximately 68% of the full-time, tenured and tenure-track faculty (Penn State, 2012b).

RESULTS

Generally satisfied. Generally speaking, faculty members leaving Penn State appear to be satisfied with their experience at the University. Individuals leaving for other positions or for reasons other than retirement, tenure denial, or being counseled out were asked explicitly during their interview if they “were generally satisfied with [their] experience at Penn State?” and other individuals offered comments that reflected their opinion of their experience at Penn State even if not explicitly asked this question. Typical comments included statements such as, “I have always been satisfied.” We identified 29 interview respondents who indicated that they were generally satisfied and four interview respondents who were not generally satisfied.

The survey responses reflect similar opinions. Seventy percent of survey respondents indicated that they felt they were treated fairly by the University, their college, and/or their department. Those who indicated that they did not feel they were treated fairly commented on issues related to poor treatment/lack of collegiality, promotion, salary increases, and the evaluation of teaching. Among the 45 items rated for satisfaction, there were 32 items for which the most frequent response was the highest or next to the highest rating. The table in Appendix 2 shows the distribution of satisfaction ratings for each of the 45 rated items on the survey questionnaire.

There were 19 items for which more than one-half of the respondents indicated the highest or next to the highest rating for satisfaction. Based on this measure, the items with which the faculty appears to be most satisfied are:

- Quality of library facilities;
- Professional autonomy (courses, research projects, service...);
- Employee benefits;
- Health care;
- Your course teaching assignments;
- An academically strong department (re: disciplinary peers);
- Quality of computing facilities;
- Your advising assignments;
- Opportunities to communicate with department leadership;
- Your internal service assignments;
- Recreational opportunities;
- Quality of the local school system;
- Informal recognition by colleagues for good work;
- Opportunities to participate in departmental governance;
- Healthy social climate within the department;
- Formal recognition (such as University and College awards);
- Availability of cultural events;
- Social opportunities in the local community; and
- University services to support instructional development.

Demonstrating this general satisfaction, the vast majority of retirees (20 of 23) interviewed expressed their intention to maintain their relationship with the University. In general, retirees noted their desire to finish up various projects (e.g., books, student advising), to continue to take advantage of University resources such as email and the library, to attend University events, and to maintain connections with colleagues. Typical comments included statements like, “I do expect to remain connected to the college. I plan to attend college events, remain in contact with my colleagues, make use of the library (and interlibrary loan) and the gym.” and “I expect to keep myself connected for several years ahead.”

Room for improvement. Not every item among those rated for satisfaction was rated highly. Several items in particular stand out as not exhibiting the positively-skewed distribution of responses seen with most of the survey items. In general, however, the distribution of ratings across the scale from low to high was more even than the previous report, which covered fiscal years 2008/2009 through 2010/2011.

A diverse population. The item with which the faculty in this analysis seems to be least satisfied is “a diverse population.” Approximately 40% of survey respondents indicated the lowest or next to lowest rating, while only 26% indicated the highest two ratings. This issue did not come up in the interviews.

Spousal employment opportunities. The item with the lowest average satisfaction rating by proportion was spousal employment opportunities. Although the most frequent rating for this item was the mid-point, more than twice as many respondents (23%) gave it the lowest rating as the highest (9%), and fewer respondents (21%) gave it the two highest ratings than any other item.

Rewards for teaching at the University. Faculty were dissatisfied with “rewards for teaching at the University.” Approximately 37% of survey respondents indicated the lowest or next to the lowest rating for satisfaction with rewards for teaching. This was substantially higher than the percentage of respondents who indicated the highest ratings (28%). As one faculty member put it, “On my teaching, I have done very well. In fact, I scored very high, often the highest in the Department, among those who taught upper-level undergraduate courses. But, I now realize, teaching and service do not really matter much, though we are told otherwise.”

Rewards for outreach at the University. As in the previous report, one of the items with which the faculty seems to be least satisfied is “rewards for outreach at the University.” Rewards for outreach was very close in average score to rewards for teaching. Although approximately half of the respondents (51%) rated this item at the mid-point, one in five (21%) indicated the lowest or next to lowest rating for their satisfaction with rewards for outreach.

Sufficient support for high quality graduate students. Faculty members’ satisfaction with the level of support to attract and retain high quality graduate students was split with 37% giving this item the lowest two ratings and 33% giving it the highest two.

Mentoring of junior faculty. Satisfaction with “mentoring of junior faculty” has been a concern in the past. In the most recent past version of this report (2008/2009 through 2010/2011) this metric had the highest proportion of respondents indicating the lowest rating for satisfaction. In this analysis, about 37% of survey respondents indicated the highest or next to the highest rating for satisfaction with “mentoring of junior faculty” while about 30% of survey respondents indicated the lowest or next to the lowest rating.

When the 2011-2013 interviewees touched on mentoring, the context was most often negative. Eleven interview respondents described negative or non-existent mentoring, while only five made positive statements. Interview respondents often commented on a lack of mentoring or a poor mentoring experience. As one faculty member noted, “...there is very little mentoring. I was very much left on my own.” Some of these experiences were formal, with assigned mentors, but many respondents noted the need to be “proactive” and seek their own mentors, probably reflecting the variation in mentoring models across the University. The positive comments regarding mentoring at Penn State often focused on informal mentors.

Faculty Work Environment. As discussed earlier, the research literature indicates that the faculty work environment can play a significant role in a faculty member’s decision to exit from the institution. We explore some aspects of this environment here.

Salary and salary increases. As reflected in the literature, there does not appear to be a consensus around issues of salary. Faculty members’ satisfaction with the fairness of salary increases relative to performance were fairly evenly distributed across the satisfaction scale, with one third (33%) giving it the lowest two ratings and one third (35%) giving it the highest two. Salary issues did not occur frequently among the interview responses. We only identified six interview responses offering comments related to salary; four were negative and two were positive in nature. The four respondents who commented on salary and were not retirees were all leaving for a more attractive position elsewhere and three of these four sought out those positions.

Level of assignments. Respondents had mixed opinions concerning their level of assignments compared to their peers. We identified 14 interview respondents who expressed positive statements compared to 12 who expressed negative statements. The survey responses provide a slightly more positive perspective on the three related questions concerning teaching, advising, and service assignments. The percentage of respondents indicating the highest or next to highest rating for satisfaction was 63% for “your internal service assignments,” 67% for “your course teaching assignments” and 65% for “your advising assignments” – all slightly higher than in the previous report. Interviewees expressed frustration with issues of high teaching loads and tenure expectations for research, teaching, and service. Two female respondents noted service expectations as being untenable.

Level of support. Respondents also had mixed opinions concerning the level of support they received compared to their peers. We identified 20 interview respondents who expressed positive statements concerning the level of support they received and 17 interview respondents who expressed negative statements concerning the level of support. Among the areas in which faculty noted feeling unsupported were mentoring and meeting the high expectations for early career faculty. As one respondent noted, she felt “overworked and overwrought” in trying to meet the many expectations.

The survey responses were similarly mixed. The four questions on the survey most closely related to level of support are:

- Professional development support (such as funds for conferences);
- University services to support instructional development;
- University services to support grants and contracts; and
- Adequate time for research.

About half of survey respondents indicated the highest or next to the highest rating for satisfaction on these questions, with percentages ranging from 44% for “University services to support grants and contracts” to 51% for “University services to support instructional development.”

University direction. Retirees were asked in their interview whether they felt “Penn State is moving in the right direction.” The responses seem to be split. We identified 28 interview respondents who expressed statements indicating that they felt Penn State *was not* moving in the right direction and 27 interview respondents who expressed statements indicating that they felt Penn State *was* moving in the right direction.

Comments from those respondents who felt Penn State was not moving in the right direction mentioned concerns about the budget, the academic preparedness of Penn State students (“Students are not as well prepared as they were several decades ago.”), enrollment growth (“I worry about the increase in enrollment and the college administration's stated goals to grow even bigger.”), and the “top-down” nature of decision-making at Penn State. There was also some concern about the affordability of Penn State tuition. The Sandusky indictment was not mentioned directly by any of the respondents, but three interviews noted the negative impact of “scandals” on the University.

Many respondents who indicated that they believed the University was moving in the right direction expressed opinions that the University had improved, particularly in academic prestige, during their time. In

speaking to this, one interviewee stated, “We are becoming increasingly more visible, nationwide and abroad, as an academic institution.” Other respondents mentioned improvements in facilities and an improved caliber of the faculty. Many also noted the increasing importance of technology and the changing nature of faculty work in relation to it.

In addition, numerous interview comments were related to “Leadership,” a new theme developed with this year’s analysis. Interviewees commented on leadership at all levels, including department, college, and University leadership. Twenty-seven interviewees commented negatively on some aspect of leadership at the University, while only eight commented positively. Some interviewees focused on leadership turnover, either in reference to its frequency or its unsatisfactory results, within their departments. Many commented on the “top-down” nature and lack of transparency of decision-making at the University.

Tenure expectations. It was unclear in many of the interviews whether interviewees had negative expectations for tenure. Only five could be clearly categorized as leaving due to a tenure denial (1) or being “counseled out” (4). We identified a total of six interview respondents who made negative statements about their tenure process, however, and these focused primarily on their research productivity. Typical comments alluded to competition between research and other duties. For example, “I admit I was behind in research. Still, I remember I have always been envious of others with less teaching to do, only two or three courses a year, compared with my unabated four-course deal in my first two years.” Several interviewees felt that they did not receive feedback early enough in the tenure process and made comments indicating a desire for a “more effective early warning.”

The two items on the survey questionnaire that are most related to the issue of tenure expectations are “validity of Penn State’s faculty performance evaluation methods” and “clarity of performance review processes (for P&T, salary).” Survey responses on these items were mixed with 35% of respondents indicating a high degree of satisfaction with the “validity of Penn State faculty performance evaluation methods” and an equal proportion indicating a low degree of satisfaction. Perceptions of the “clarity of performance review processes” were more positive with 47% giving this a high rating and 30% giving it a low one.

What matters: faculty ratings of importance. Nearly every item on the survey is important to the faculty. Of the 45 items on the questionnaire, there were 36 items for which the most frequent response was the highest rating of importance. There were another five items for which the most frequent response was the second highest rating. Appendix 3 provides the distribution of importance ratings for each of the items on the questionnaire. There were 19 items which more than 75% of faculty gave the highest or second highest importance rating. Based on this measure, those items that seem to be of greatest importance to the faculty are:

- Professional autonomy (courses, research projects, service...);
- Employee benefits;
- Clarity of performance review processes (for P&T, salary);
- Opportunities to communicate with department leadership;
- Your course teaching assignments;
- The University's commitment to your field of study;

- An academically strong department (re: disciplinary peers);
- Level of annual salary;
- Quality of library facilities;
- Balanced overall workload assignments in the department;
- Validity of Penn State's faculty performance evaluation methods;
- Rewards for teaching at the University;
- Adequate time for research;
- Salary increases that relate fairly to performance;
- Adequate performance feedback;
- Healthy social climate within the department;
- Rewards for research at the University;
- Health care; and
- Quality of computing facilities.

Professional autonomy. Not surprisingly given faculty culture, professional autonomy was the most important item rated by faculty, with 72% giving it the highest rating and 21% giving it the second highest rating. This is consistent with Daly and Dee's (2006) finding that a lack of faculty autonomy is related to departure. Fortunately, this was also an area of high satisfaction at Penn State with 77% of faculty giving it one of the two highest ratings.

Employee benefits. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of survey respondents gave "employee benefits" the highest rating of importance and 91% of respondents gave this item the highest or next to the highest rating. Fortunately, the University appears to be performing well in this area as "employee benefits" was among the items rated highly for satisfaction with more than 77% of respondents rating their satisfaction with "employee benefits" as the highest rating or next to the highest rating.

Not everything matters equally. Of the 45 items on the survey, "flexibility to engage in consulting" and "availability of child care" were the two items that had a greater proportion of low ratings than high ratings for importance. While the small numbers of survey respondents make college-level and rank-based comparisons unreliable, it may be that these items are more important for faculty in particular disciplines or at particular life stages.

Gender related issues: Penn State results. As summarized in the brief literature review earlier, there is a considerable body of research on gender issues among faculty, but those findings are mixed. In general, there appear to be gender-related differences, but the similarities mostly outweigh the differences. Also, the literature suggests that overly simplistic interpretations can be misleading, especially because gender interacts with other factors (discipline, rank, age, and so forth) that affect faculty members' experience and satisfaction in significant and substantive ways.

Likewise, it is risky to reach strong conclusions about gender related similarities or differences based upon the Penn State data. In addition to interaction of gender with other variables, the Penn State data for women in particular are extremely limited in terms of sample size and response rates. As stated earlier, there were 28 male interview respondents and 25 male survey respondents, 14 female interview respondents, and 15 female survey respondents. In prior years, we have focused primarily on the qualitative data for gender comparisons because of the more robust representation of women faculty in the interviews than in the survey

data. However, for 2011-2013, the number of women participants was low in both modes, making interpretation of the data even more tenuous. In short, caution is required.

In keeping with broader research findings already noted above, in many respects the findings were fairly similar for males and females. For instance, males and females tended to both report generally high overall satisfaction; typical comments included, “My entire career has been an extremely positive experience” (male), and “I have enjoyed my employment [at Penn State] and have been treated well by my colleagues and by administrators” (female) and the mean satisfaction ratings for men and women on the University and College Practices survey items were similar (3.0 for women and 3.1 for men). Broadly speaking, males and females were also similar in having few complaints about salary; in not having very positive mentoring experiences and believing that mentoring could be better facilitated and implemented at the University.

Perhaps more to the point are the dimensions on which male and females’ responses diverged. Although as noted, both males and females reported high overall satisfaction (with 29 offering broadly positive statements), four interviews were coded as indicating general dissatisfaction—and three of those were from exiting female faculty members. Only one, however, noted her gender in relation to her dissatisfaction.

Female faculty were more likely to comment negatively on level and equity of assignments, on personnel experiences, and on tenure expectations. Although these were again not widespread, it was more common for females than males to offer comments about feeling split in too many directions, carrying an excessive service load, and feeling a lack of support.

Again, it is difficult to offer meaningful, conclusive generalizations about gender differences based on the Penn State data reviewed here. But it does seem fair to note that—with some, but relatively few, exceptions—while there may be gender equity issues embedded in the male-female differences, for the most part they are not especially explicit or apparent in the exit interview notes.

CONCLUSIONS

The responses to the Faculty Exit Survey and Interviews over the 2011-2013 span indicate that most faculty members leaving the University are generally satisfied with their experience at Penn State. However, there are areas in which the University has room for improvement. The faculty does not see much reward for outreach or teaching and some are unconvinced that the workload is equitable among their colleagues. Mentoring also appears to be an issue. There are some very good experiences with mentoring, but mentoring experiences do not seem to be consistent among the faculty. Areas for improvement that are directly or indirectly related to the geography and demographics around many Penn State campuses include diversity of the community and spousal employment opportunities. While these issues are such that the University cannot directly control them, they are areas in which long-term recruiting efforts, creative thinking and support can make an impact.

The pressures of academic work may be affecting the social environment and collegiality among the faculty. In today’s competitive academic environment, faculty members seem to focus on their own career objectives. The faculty appears to be cognizant of this situation and would welcome advice that would enable them to better handle the pressures of day-to-day faculty work, which might provide for a more balanced

academic work life. Ironically, an insular focus on personal career goals may be preventing the faculty member from establishing the social relationships with mentors and colleagues that could provide the advice they seek and present opportunities for professional collaborations.

Among the issues that are of greatest importance to the faculty, the University appears to be faring well. On employee benefits—the item of greatest importance to the University faculty—and health care, respondents appear to be satisfied, although with recent changes to University benefits these are items to watch in the coming years given the importance that faculty members place on these items. The faculty also seems to be reasonably satisfied with most aspects of their work environment. Faculty members also seem to feel that the expectations for promotion and tenure are clear, even if they do not feel that their teaching and outreach efforts are given sufficient weight in the decision.

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APPENDIX 1: FACULTY EXIT INTERVIEW OFFICERS

Abington

Melvin C. Seesholtz
G. Steven McMillan
(Alternate)

Agricultural Sciences

Herbert Cole, Jr.

Altoona

Harold Hayford

Arts and Architecture

Donald Leslie

Beaver

Neelam Dwivedi

Berks

David Sanford

Brandywine

Cynthia Lightfoot

Business

Paul H. Rigby

Communications

Robert D. Richards

Dickinson School of Law

Lance Cole

DuBois

John A. Johnson

Earth and Mineral Sciences

Michael A. Arthur

Education

Pamela S. Wolfe

Engineering

Lynn A. Carpenter

Erie

Richard Hart

Fayette

Charles "Gib" Prettyman

Great Valley

John C. Cameron

Greater Allegheny

Jay Breckenridge

Harrisburg

Linda Null

Girish Subramanian

Hazleton

Michael Polgar

Health and Human Development

Ingrid Blood

Hershey Medical Center

John P. Richie, Jr.

Information Sciences and Technology

Lisa F. Lenze

Lehigh Valley

Peter J. Behrens

Liberal Arts

James Rambeau
John H. Riew

Minority Faculty

Grace Hampton

Mont Alto

Kevin Boon

New Kensington

Javier Gomez-Calderon

Nursing

Mona M. Counts

Schuylkill

Rod M. Heisey

Science

Peter C. Jurs

Shenango

Charles Bursey

University Libraries

Ann Copeland
Robert Freeborn

Wilkes-Barre

Christyne Berzsenyi

Worthington Scranton

Paul J. Perrone, Sr.

York

Lawrence Newcomer

APPENDIX 2: DISTRIBUTION OF RATINGS FOR SATISFACTION

	Low			High		No response
1. UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE PRACTICES						
Opportunities to participate in University governance.	9%	16%	28%	26%	14%	5%
Opportunities to participate in college governance.	16%	7%	23%	21%	26%	5%
Validity of Penn State's faculty performance evaluation methods.	19%	16%	28%	19%	16%	2%
Clarity of performance review processes (for P&T, salary).	19%	12%	21%	21%	26%	2%
Rewards for research at the University.	16%	9%	19%	26%	21%	7%
Rewards for teaching at the University.	21%	16%	33%	19%	9%	2%
Rewards for outreach at the University.	14%	7%	51%	16%	7%	2%
The University's commitment to your field of study.	16%	12%	21%	23%	26%	2%
Formal recognition (such as University and college awards).	9%	9%	26%	37%	16%	2%
2. DEPARTMENTAL LIFE						
Opportunities to participate in departmental governance.	12%	7%	21%	28%	28%	5%
Balanced overall workload assignments in the department.	14%	12%	19%	30%	19%	7%
Mentoring of junior faculty.	14%	16%	28%	19%	19%	5%
An academically strong department (re: disciplinary peers).	7%	7%	12%	40%	28%	7%
Sufficient support for high quality graduate students.	19%	19%	16%	12%	21%	12%

	Low		High		No response	
Adequate performance feedback.	12%	12%	23%	23%	26%	5%
Opportunities to communicate with department leadership.	12%	5%	16%	26%	37%	5%
Healthy social climate within the department.	19%	14%	7%	30%	26%	5%
Informal recognition by colleagues for good work.	12%	14%	12%	21%	37%	5%
3. INDIVIDUAL CONSIDERATIONS						
Your course teaching assignments.	5%	2%	19%	21%	47%	5%
Your advising assignments.	5%	5%	19%	37%	28%	7%
Your internal service assignments.	2%	7%	21%	35%	28%	5%
Professional autonomy (courses, research projects, service...).	7%	7%	5%	26%	51%	5%
Internal money to initiate research activities.	16%	12%	21%	19%	23%	9%
Flexibility to engage in consulting.	7%	0%	30%	12%	35%	16%
Salary increases that relate fairly to performance.	19%	14%	21%	21%	14%	9%
Level of annual salary.	9%	19%	33%	16%	21%	2%
Employee benefits.	0%	2%	19%	40%	37%	2%
Equity (ethnic, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation...)	14%	12%	23%	23%	23%	2%
4. SUPPORT SERVICES AND RESOURCES						
Professional development support (such as funds for conferences)	9%	5%	35%	14%	35%	2%

	Low		High		No response	
University services to support instructional development.	5%	9%	30%	30%	21%	2%
University services to support grants and contracts.	7%	14%	23%	16%	28%	12%
Adequate time for research.	14%	23%	14%	30%	16%	2%
Quality of library facilities.	2%	0%	5%	37%	53%	2%
Quality of laboratory facilities.	7%	14%	21%	9%	19%	26%
Quality of computing facilities.	7%	5%	16%	30%	35%	7%
Quality of other facilities (parking, offices, classrooms...).	7%	16%	26%	21%	28%	2%
5. LOCAL COMMUNITY LIFE						
Social opportunities in the local community.	7%	2%	33%	30%	21%	7%
Availability of cultural events.	9%	14%	21%	26%	26%	5%
Quality of the local school system.	7%	2%	23%	16%	42%	7%
Recreational opportunities.	2%	2%	28%	30%	30%	7%
Availability of child care.	5%	5%	37%	19%	19%	12%
Health care.	5%	0%	12%	42%	33%	9%
A diverse population.	21%	19%	21%	14%	12%	14%
Tolerance of ethnic and cultural diversity.	16%	9%	19%	23%	21%	9%
Spousal employment opportunities.	23%	9%	35%	12%	9%	9%

APPENDIX 3: DISTRIBUTION OF RATINGS FOR IMPORTANCE

	Low		High		No response	
1. UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE PRACTICES						
Opportunities to participate in University governance.	14%	14%	28%	30%	12%	2%
Opportunities to participate in college governance.	9%	14%	30%	23%	21%	2%
Validity of Penn State's faculty performance evaluation methods.	2%	5%	5%	30%	56%	2%
Clarity of performance review processes (for P&T, salary).	2%	2%	2%	28%	63%	2%
Rewards for research at the University.	5%	2%	7%	23%	56%	7%
Rewards for teaching at the University.	7%	2%	2%	26%	60%	2%
Rewards for outreach at the University.	9%	9%	37%	16%	23%	2%
The University's commitment to your field of study.	2%	0%	9%	21%	65%	2%
Formal recognition (such as University and college awards).	7%	12%	30%	19%	30%	2%
2. DEPARTMENTAL LIFE						
Opportunities to participate in departmental governance.	5%	2%	19%	35%	35%	5%
Balanced overall workload assignments in the department.	2%	0%	7%	33%	53%	5%
Mentoring of junior faculty.	12%	5%	9%	16%	53%	5%
An academically strong department (re: disciplinary peers).	0%	2%	2%	19%	67%	9%
Sufficient support for high quality graduate students.	5%	5%	7%	9%	60%	12%

	Low		High		No response	
Adequate performance feedback.	2%	0%	9%	30%	53%	5%
Opportunities to communicate with department leadership.	0%	2%	2%	30%	60%	5%
Healthy social climate within the department.	0%	2%	12%	30%	51%	5%
Informal recognition by colleagues for good work.	5%	2%	19%	30%	40%	5%
3. INDIVIDUAL CONSIDERATIONS						
Your course teaching assignments.	5%	0%	2%	26%	63%	5%
Your advising assignments.	5%	2%	12%	33%	42%	7%
Your internal service assignments.	0%	2%	21%	37%	33%	5%
Professional autonomy (courses, research projects, service...).	2%	0%	0%	21%	72%	5%
Internal money to initiate research activities.	2%	5%	28%	19%	37%	9%
Flexibility to engage in consulting.	26%	14%	16%	7%	23%	14%
Salary increases that relate fairly to performance.	0%	0%	9%	23%	60%	5%
Level of annual salary.	0%	2%	7%	26%	60%	5%
Employee benefits.	0%	2%	5%	26%	65%	2%
Equity (ethnic, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation...)	2%	2%	14%	23%	51%	5%
4. SUPPORT SERVICES AND RESOURCES						
Professional development support (such as funds for conferences)	2%	2%	19%	14%	60%	2%
University services to support instructional development.	7%	5%	19%	35%	30%	2%

	Low			High		No response
University services to support grants and contracts.	5%	7%	9%	26%	40%	14%
Adequate time for research.	5%	0%	7%	19%	65%	5%
Quality of library facilities.	0%	5%	7%	23%	63%	2%
Quality of laboratory facilities.	21%	5%	5%	14%	30%	21%
Quality of computing facilities.	2%	2%	12%	28%	49%	7%
Quality of other facilities (parking, offices, classrooms...).	0%	7%	23%	26%	42%	2%
5. LOCAL COMMUNITY LIFE						
Social opportunities in the local community.	12%	9%	26%	33%	16%	5%
Availability of cultural events.	2%	0%	33%	26%	35%	5%
Quality of the local school system.	14%	0%	23%	5%	49%	7%
Recreational opportunities.	0%	2%	28%	26%	40%	5%
Availability of child care.	33%	5%	16%	9%	23%	9%
Health care.	0%	0%	14%	14%	63%	9%
A diverse population.	0%	5%	19%	28%	40%	9%
Tolerance of ethnic and cultural diversity.	0%	2%	14%	12%	63%	9%
Spousal employment opportunities.	9%	5%	19%	16%	40%	9%