



# Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty Exit Survey 2018/19- 2019/20

## Executive Summary

Penn State has conducted the Faculty Exit Survey every two years since 1998. Every departing tenured and tenure line faculty member is given the opportunity to participate in an exit interview and/or take the exit survey. This report analyzes and summarizes data from the academic years of 2018/19 and 2019/20 to better understand the experiences of tenure-track faculty members and help the University respond to faculty concerns. Highlights for this cycle include the following:

- The survey items having the greatest alignment of importance and satisfaction occurred with the freedom to choose the course of research/creative activity and with the University’s library facilities.
- The survey items having the greatest disconnect between importance and satisfaction occurred with the amount of time for research/creative activity and the sense of equity and inclusion.
- Growth of the University in terms of physical plant, national rankings, and enrollment, is associated with both positive and negative responses.
- A possibility exists that the Covid-19 pandemic affected how respondents answered some of the questions.

## Contents

Executive Summary..... 1

Introduction ..... 2

Caveats..... 3

Exit Survey..... 5

    Participant Characteristics ..... 5

    Survey Responses..... 7

        Importance and Satisfaction Question Banks ..... 8

        Additional Questions..... 18

Thoughts from the Exit Interviews..... 22

Conclusion..... 24

    Where interviews and survey questions intersect ..... 24

    Recommendations ..... 25

## Introduction

Since 1998, the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs<sup>1</sup> has coordinated with deans and chancellors to offer every departing tenured and tenure-track faculty member the opportunity to participate in an exit survey and/or an exit interview.

Although this report occurs every two years, 2017/18 was skipped due to circumstances associated with a change in the human resources system, a change in survey instrument, and almost complete turnovers in the Faculty Affairs and Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research offices.

Table 1 shows the response rates for the last three cycles. While the 2018/19-2019/20 interview response rate is similar to the previous response rate, the survey response rate is more than double that of the 2015/16-2016/17 survey. This higher rate is likely due to a series of reminders that went out from the Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs in early spring 2020 and continued through June.

**Table 1: Comparison of Response Rates from the Past Three Cycles**

	Total Departing	Interview	Interview %	Survey	Survey %
<b>2013/14-2014/15<sup>2</sup></b>	287	29	10%	28	10%
<b>2015/16-2016/17<sup>3</sup></b>	374	84	22%	61	16%
<b>2018/19-2019/20<sup>4</sup></b>	187	48	26%	62 <sup>5</sup>	33%

These reminders also coincided with the March state shutdown due to Covid-19. Although the post-remote period only covered three and a half months and only one of the four major retirement dates included in this report, it accounted for nearly one third of the responses (61 out of 187).

As seen in Table 2, 36 out of 93 individuals, which comprised 39% of all retiring faculty members, retired after the remote classes began.

**Table 2: All Retirements and Resignations as Percentages between Time Periods**

	Pre-Remote (Includes 12/31/2018, 6/30/2019, & 12/31/2019)		Post-Remote (Includes 6/30/2020)		All	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Total	Total Percent
<b>Resigned</b>	69	73%	25	27%	94	100%
<b>Retired</b>	57	61%	36	39%	93	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>		<b>61</b>		<b>187</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Prior to summer 2017, this position was the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty Exit Study: 2013/14-2014/15

<sup>3</sup> Source: Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty Exit Study: 2015/16-2016/17

<sup>4</sup> The 2017/18 year was skipped due to changes in systems and practices.

<sup>5</sup> Although there were 161 responses, only 62 clicked past 50% of the survey.

The larger number of retirees in 6/30/2020 is likely due to a natural recovery after the Voluntary Retirement Program (VRP) of 2017 rather than Covid-19. Those considering retirement during 2016/17 took advantage of the incentive and left in 2017. Those retiring in 2020 were probably not ready to leave in 2017. As it typically takes three months for a retirement to be processed, there was very little time to make a decision for a June 30, 2020 retirement before the start of April 2020.

As for resignations, 27% happened after the switch to a remote environment while 73% happened during time periods containing 12/31/2018, 6/30/2019, and 12/31/2019. The number of resignations during the post-remote period falls within expectations.

A similar analysis was done for survey respondents, and no differences were found except that a greater proportion of individuals chose to fill out the survey during March – June period (after the reminder was sent out).

### Caveats

This study has two major caveats. First, the results of the 2018/19-2019/20 survey cannot be directly related to the previous surveys because the survey instrument was changed at the end of the 2015/16-2016/17 cycle based upon recommendations from a University committee convened for this purpose. The two sets of questions have different wording, order, and sometimes context, so straight comparison between surveys is impossible. Some underlying issues undoubtedly do continue across survey periods, even if they are described differently.

Secondly, the Covid-19 outbreak in Spring 2020 may have affected some of the survey responses, particularly in terms of importance and satisfaction. T-Tests on each importance/satisfaction question indicated that the post-remote responses were likely to differ for the following questions:

**Table 3: Pre- and Post-Remote Means and t-Test Results, Equal Variances Not Assumed**

Question Bank	Question	Pre-Remote N	Pre-Remote Avg	Post-Remote N	Post-Remote Avg	Post-Remote Direction	t	df	Sig 2-Tailed
University, College, and Campus-Importance	Rewards for research or creative activity at the University	20	4.55	13	3.62	↓	2.3	15.0	0.037
	Rewards for teaching at the University	19	4.32	13	3.23	↓	2.4	22.3	0.026
	Rewards for service at the University	21	3.86	13	2.92	↓	2.2	21.5	0.043
Support Services-Importance	Instructional development support	19	4.47	12	3.75	↓	2.3	18.2	0.037
Support Services-Satisfaction	Quality of computing facilities	17	4.29	11	3.36	↓	2.6	21.4	0.016

There were between 17 and 21 pre-remote respondents and between 11 and 13 post-remote respondents. T-tests where equal variances were not assumed suggest that post-remote respondents held different opinions for only 5 out of 66 importance/satisfaction questions. Pre-remote respondents tended to have a higher importance attached to rewards for research (a mean 4.55 versus a mean of

3.62,  $p=.037$ ), teaching (a mean 4.32 versus a mean of 3.23,  $p=.026$ ), service (a mean 3.86 versus a mean of 2.92,  $p=.043$ ), and instructional development support (a mean 4.47 versus a mean of 3.75,  $p=.037$ ). Pre-remote respondents also tended to have higher satisfaction related to computing facilities (a mean of 4.29 versus 3.36,  $p=.016$ )

One explanation for the post-remote differences may be that traditionally important items such as rewards for teaching and service may have become less important during a time when everyone was struggling to adapt to the remote environment. If this remote environment continues, time will tell whether the decrease disappears or how importance may rebalance itself to a new normal.

Unexpectedly, the importance of instructional development support declined from 4.47 pre-remote to 3.75 post-remote. This direction is counter to what might have been expected with a move to a fully remote environment, especially if the question were interpreted as support for translating a course to a remote format. Unfortunately, the survey question itself did not provide any examples of “instructional design” so it is difficult to interpret these responses.

Lower satisfaction with the quality of computing facilities may or may not have had to do with the widescale adoption of Zoom. If classes continue to be taught predominantly remotely, more inquiry into the importance and satisfaction regarding aspects of remote teaching should be investigated for all faculty members.

In order to understand whether the lower averages were due to more lower numbers, fewer high numbers, or a combination of both, an inspection of the frequency distributions for pre- and post-remote responses was performed (not shown). For each question, there were proportionally fewer high scores and more middle and lower scores from the post-remote group. Furthermore, none of the interviewees mentioned the remote environment in their comments.

Would the averages for the five questions have been different had the remote work not occurred? Likely not, but we have no way to tell. Because post-remote respondents were significantly likely to have a different mean for only five out of 66 questions, questions are reported in a combined format and the five differences are highlighted and discussed as they occur.

## Exit Survey

Each departing tenured and tenure line faculty member received an email inviting them to participate in the exit survey. Although 161 out of 187 individuals clicked on the survey link, only 106 individuals clicked past the second question. Out of these, only 62 reached the 50% demarcation of the survey.

### Participant Characteristics

Demographic questions were placed at the end and only had around 33 responses per question. All demographic tables include the number of unknowns based on a total of 62 (the number clicking through at least half the survey). The percentages in each category are likely not a true picture of who completed the survey, as half or fewer answered each question.

In all cases but faculty rank, there were no discernable differences between pre- and post-remote demographics.

### *Birth Sex / Gender Identity*

Respondents answering gender questions were nearly even in terms of birth sex and gender identity.

**Table 4: Respondent Birth Sex**

<b>Birth Sex</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>		<b>Gender Identity</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Female	14	22.6%		Female	13	21.0%
Male	14	22.6%		Male	14	22.6%
Prefer not to answer	1	1.6%		Prefer not to answer	1	1.6%
No Response	33	53.2%		No Response	34	54.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>46.8%</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>45.2%</b>

### *Race/Ethnicity*

Only 34 faculty members responded to the Race/Ethnicity questions. Table 5 shows their breakdown.

**Table 5: Respondent Race/Ethnicity**

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Hispanic	0	0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0%
Asian	2	3.2%
Black or African American	1	1.6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0%
White	24	38.7%
Other	1	1.6%
No Response	34	54.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>45.2%</b>

### *Campus*

Respondents came from various Penn State locations.

**Table 6: Respondent Campus Grouping**

<b>Campus Grouping</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
UP	13	21.0%
Campus Colleges	9	14.5%
Commonwealth Campuses	11	17.7%
Other Locations	1	1.6%
No Response	28	45.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>54.8%</b>

### Rank

Respondents, especially those responding after March 2020, mostly came from the assistant and professor ranks. No respondents identifying themselves at the associate rank completed the survey after the University switched to remote learning. Due to these differences, the pre- and post-remote periods are shown.

**Table 7: Respondents by Rank**

	Pre-Remote		Post-Remote	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
<b>Professor</b>	5	12.2%	5	23.8%
<b>Associate</b>	7	17.1%	0	0.0%
<b>Assistant</b>	8	19.5%	5	23.8%
<b>No Response</b>	21	51.2%	11	52.4%
<b>Total</b>	41	48.8%	21	47.6%

### Age

The frequency distribution for age was similar to the rank distribution. Both were bimodal with the majority at the younger and older ages.

**Table 8: Respondents by Age**

Age Range	Count	Percent
30-39	7	11.3%
40-49	2	3.2%
50-59	3	4.8%
60-69	9	14.5%
70+	4	6.5%
No Response	37	59.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>40.3%</b>

### Survey Responses

The 2018/19-2019/20 version of the survey contained initial questions followed by four major question banks: Department Life; University, College, and Campus Practices; Individual Considerations; and Support Services. Additional questions followed regarding thoughts on merit increases, reasons for leaving, inequity, and finally, demographics.

The first question asked whether the respondent was a tenured or tenure-line faculty member. If they answered no, they were directed out of the survey. A total of 147 individuals indicated yes and were sent to the second question.

### *Treatment by the University*

The second question asked how the respondent felt they were treated. A majority either strongly agreed or agreed that they had been treated fairly by the University. Only seven indicated they disagreed, while nine neither agreed nor disagreed. A total of 106 individuals either answered or clicked past this question.

**Table 9: Treatment by the University**

<b>Overall, I feel that I was treated fairly by the University.</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly Agree	18	26.9%
Agree	19	28.4%
Somewhat Agree	14	20.9%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	9	13.4%
Somewhat Disagree	7	10.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### *Importance and Satisfaction Question Banks*

This section consisted of four question banks containing possible responses arranged in a five-point Likert scale with 1 being Low Importance/Satisfaction and 5 being High Importance/Satisfaction. A separate selection was available for “NA/Don’t Know.” The “NA/Don’t Know” values were set to blanks and not factored into the averages or counts in the following tables.

Items with the highest levels of importance tended to reflect items that supported individual and/or professional success. These included research direction/autonomy (“Flexibility in choosing the nature and direction of your research or creative activity”), “Quality of library facilities,” and “Fairness of the performance review process at the department level.” “An academically strong department” reflects on positively on all members. Table 10 lists the four items with the highest averages for importance within the survey.

**Table 10: Items of Greatest Importance**

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Avg</b>
Flexibility in choosing the nature and direction of your research or creative activity	34	4.88
Quality of library facilities	33	4.64
Fairness of the performance review process at the department level	34	4.62
An academically strong department	34	4.50

Respondents rated flexibility in research direction as having the highest importance, and they also were the most satisfied with it (Table 11). They were also satisfied with the library and computing facilities,



despite post-remote respondents tending to rate their satisfaction with computing facilities as lower. The overall satisfaction with computing facilities was still high enough to place it in the top four.

**Table 11: Items of Greatest Satisfaction**

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Avg</b>
Flexibility in choosing the nature and direction of your research or creative activity	34	4.56
Quality of library facilities	32	4.44
Quality of computing facilities	28	3.93
Flexibility to engage in consulting	16	3.88
Flexibility in choosing your internal service assignments	33	3.88

Respondents attached the least importance to “Support for entrepreneurial activities,” although the number responding was less than half of those responding to other questions (Table 12). The other three areas of least importance included those unrelated to professional success or personal flexibility, such as opportunities for governance outside the department and “Rewards for outreach at the University.”

**Table 12: Items of Least Importance**

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Avg</b>
Support for entrepreneurial activities	12	2.83
Opportunities to contribute to University governance	34	3.12
Rewards for outreach at the University	26	3.19
Opportunities to contribute to college governance	33	3.27

Although it was deemed less important than most other factors (Table 12), rewards for outreach also rated at the low end of respondent satisfaction (Table 13). Respondents were, on average, also least satisfied with rewards for teaching and service. Lastly, they were least satisfied with the grievance process, even though only 18 responded to this question.

**Table 13: Items of Lowest Satisfaction**

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Avg</b>
Rewards for teaching at the University	30	2.93
Rewards for service at the University	32	2.84
Faculty grievance process	18	2.83
Rewards for outreach at the University	23	2.83

### Department Life

The instructions for this question bank read “How **important** have the following aspects of **department life** been to you as a faculty member? How **satisfied** have you been with each of these?”

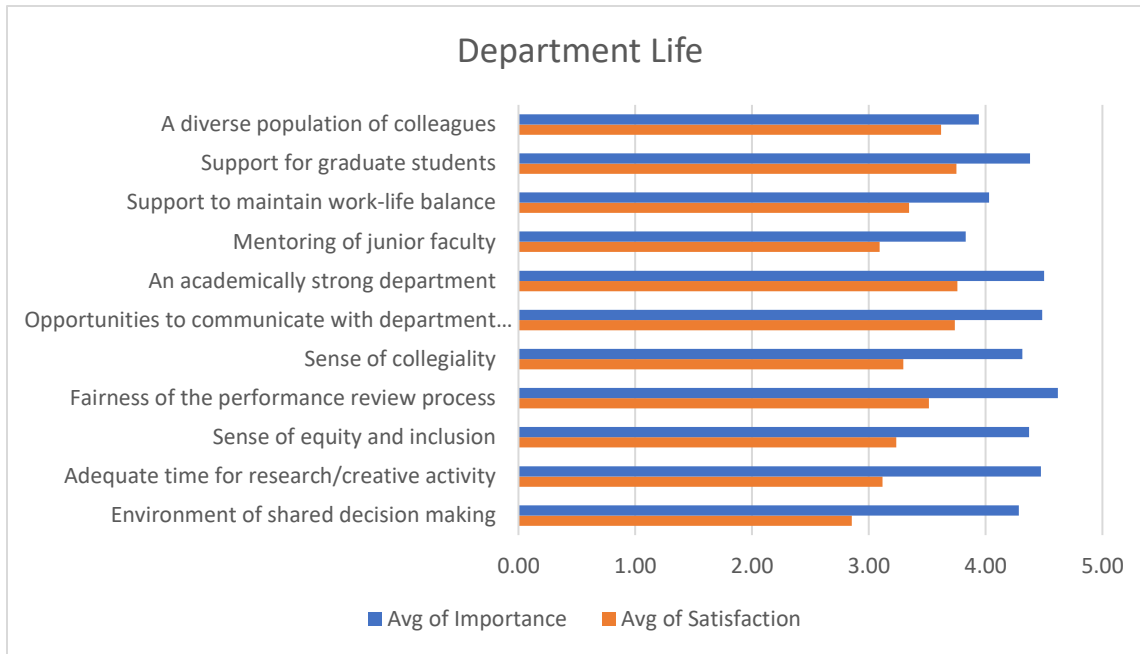
Two items from department life appeared in the importance and satisfaction tables above (“Fairness of the performance review process at the department level” and “An academically strong department”). While the others did not make the top four, department life was important for respondents, with all but two items having an average importance score of over 4.00. One of the questions below 4.00, “Mentoring of junior faculty” (3.83), would likely be of more importance to newer faculty members and of less importance to those who are about to retire. The median for these averages is 4.37, the highest out of all four question banks.

This importance is not a surprise considering that the department usually constitutes the daily work environment where respondents spent the most of their time.

**Table 14: Department Life**

Question	Count of Importance	Avg of Importance	Count of Satisfaction	Avg of Satisfaction	Difference
Environment of shared decision making	35	4.29	34	2.85	1.43
Adequate time for research/creative activity	36	4.47	34	3.12	1.35
Sense of equity and inclusion	35	4.37	34	3.24	1.14
Fairness of the performance review process	34	4.62	33	3.52	1.10
Sense of collegiality	35	4.31	34	3.29	1.02
Opportunities to communicate with department leadership	35	4.49	34	3.74	0.75
An academically strong department	34	4.50	33	3.76	0.74
Mentoring of junior faculty	35	3.83	32	3.09	0.73
Support to maintain work-life balance	35	4.03	32	3.34	0.68
Support for graduate students	21	4.38	20	3.75	0.63
A diverse population of colleagues	35	3.94	34	3.62	0.33
<b>Median for Importance</b>		<b>4.37</b>			
<b>Median for Satisfaction</b>				<b>3.34</b>	

**Figure 1: Importance and Satisfaction with Surveyed Aspects of Departmental Life**



When looking at importance and satisfaction together in Figure 1, we see that some items are relatively aligned (top) while others (bottom) have a wider difference between the two measures. Areas of greatest difference are in the “environment of shared decision making” (difference of 1.43), “Adequate time for research/creative activity” (difference of 1.35), and “Sense of equity and inclusion” (1.14). Although these were not rated as the most important aspects of departmental life, satisfaction was the lowest. On the other hand, “A diverse population of colleagues” rates the least difference between importance and satisfaction. Although respondents were satisfied with diversity, they may have felt that diversity did not automatically bring a sense of equity and inclusion. The interviews provide more insight on these scores as well as the scores for “Environment of shared decision making.”

Because several questions have large importance/satisfaction differences, it is easy to overlook questions having smaller or mid-size differences. “Support for graduate students” or “an academically strong department” do not stand out as positive in this graph but will emerge later as areas of success when scores of importance are plotted against scores of satisfaction.

### *University, College, and Campus Practices*

The instructions for this question bank read “How **important** have the following university, college, and campus practices been to you as a faculty member? How **satisfied** have you been with each of these?”

Question responses ranged from 19 to 34. Respondents attached slightly less overall importance to university, college, and campus practices than they did to department life (Table 15, below). Most aspects were rated below a 4.00. The median for importance is 3.72 as opposed to the department life of 4.37.

Like its counterpart at the department level, “Fairness of the performance review process” ranked the highest in importance with an average of 4.48 (Table 15). “Rewards for research/creative activity” was the second highest average at 4.18.

Least important in this question bank were “Opportunities to contribute to University governance” (3.12) and for “college governance” (3.27). Both these items had satisfaction exceeding their stated importance. With the relatively high difference between satisfaction and importance for “a sense of shared decision making” within the department, these scores appear contradictory and the assumptions and scope of shared decision making might be further explored.

Overall, respondents rated university, college, and campus practices lower in terms of importance than they did for aspects of department life, but also reported less satisfaction within them. Satisfaction for department life averaged above 3.0 for all but one item, while four out of ten university, college, and campus practices were lower than a 3.0.

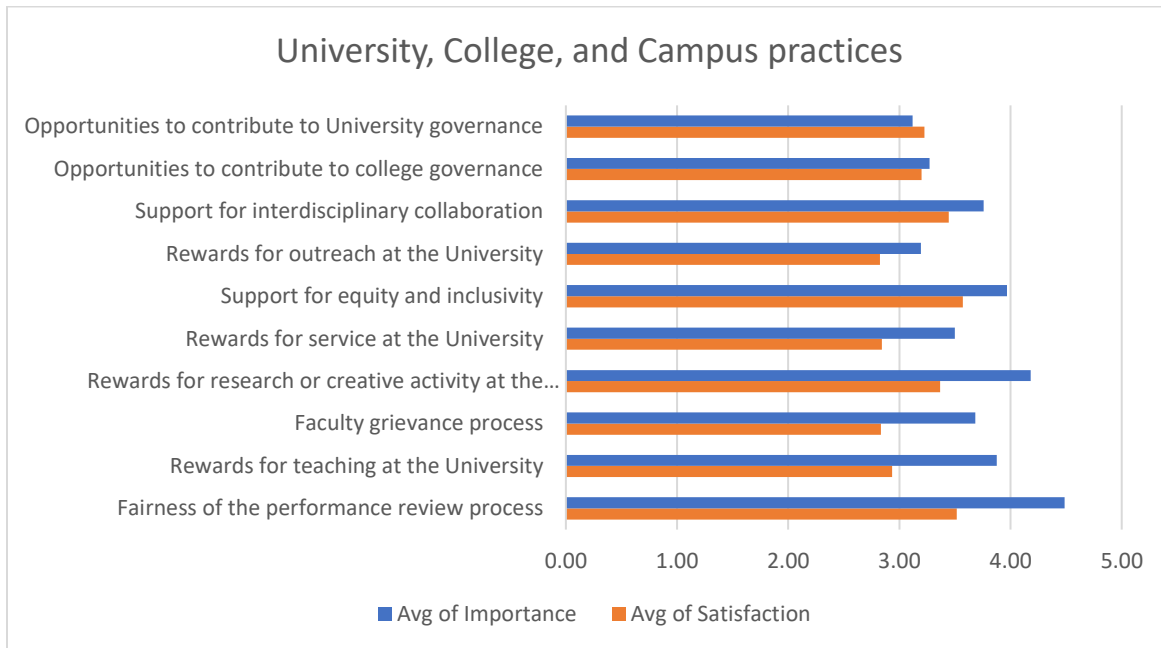
The difference between importance and satisfaction averages did not exceed a single point in this question bank while five out of eleven were above 1.0 for department life. The lack of large differences for university, campus, and college questions is mostly due to the lower importance of these items. Notably, post-remote respondents scored the importance of rewards for teaching, research, and service almost a point lower than their pre-remote counterparts. While there was no statistical difference in the satisfaction scores, the pandemic may have dampened the importance of rewards for teaching, research, and service to the point where the difference between importance and satisfaction was not large. Thus, the difference between importance and satisfaction may have been higher for these three. No statistical difference existed in responses for the other seven questions.

**Table 15: University, College, and Campus Practices**

Question	Count of Importance	Avg of Importance	Count of Satisfaction	Avg of Satisfaction	Difference
Fairness of the performance review process	33	4.48	31	3.52	0.97
Rewards for teaching at the University*	32	3.88	30	2.93	0.94
Faculty grievance process	19	3.68	18	2.83	0.85
Rewards for research or creative activity at the University*	33	4.18	30	3.37	0.82
Rewards for service at the University*	34	3.50	32	2.84	0.66
Support for equity and inclusivity	31	3.97	28	3.57	0.40
Rewards for outreach at the University	26	3.19	23	2.83	0.37
Support for interdisciplinary collaboration	29	3.76	27	3.44	0.31
Opportunities to contribute to college governance	33	3.27	30	3.20	0.07
Opportunities to contribute to University governance	34	3.12	31	3.23	-0.11
<b>Median for Importance</b>		<b>3.72</b>			
<b>Median for Satisfaction</b>				<b>3.21</b>	

\* Post-remote respondents provided scores that were typically a point lower in average than their pre-Remote counterparts.

**Figure 2: University, College, and Campus Practices Chart**



*Individual Considerations*

The instructions for this question bank read “How **important** have the following Individual considerations been to you as a faculty member? How **satisfied** have you been with each of these?”

Based on the average scores, individual considerations were generally seen as more important than aspects of university, college, and campus life but less important, overall, than aspects of department life. Flexibility in choosing research/creative activities was the most important item among all four sections. Respondents also were generally more satisfied with individual considerations than they were with aspects of the previous two areas. Satisfaction ranged from 4.56 to 3.33 (Table 16). Even the largest difference between importance and satisfaction in “Flexibility in choosing your course teaching assignments”) was only .74, compared to the University, college, and campus “Fairness in the performance review process” (.97) and the department life “Environment of shared decision making” (1.43).

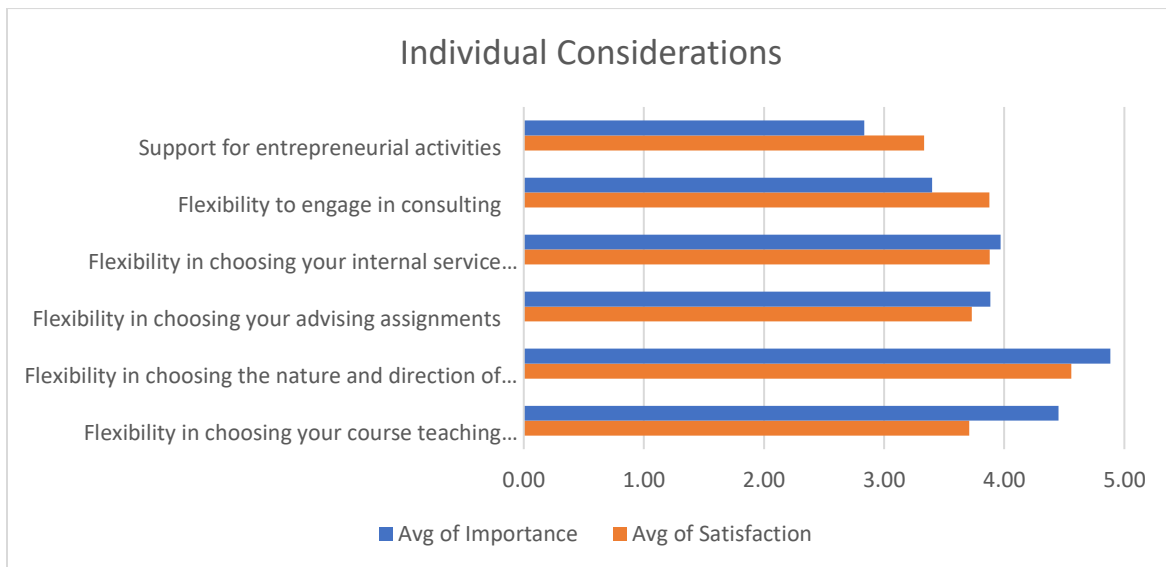
Satisfaction exceeded importance in two areas: “Flexibility to engage in consulting” and “Support for entrepreneurial activities.” However, these questions had the lowest response rates in the entire section (12 and 15, respectively). Respondents not finding these questions pertinent likely chose N/A or skipped them altogether.

Table 16 lists the numbers for individual considerations while Figure 3 represents the averages graphically.

**Table 16: Individual Considerations**

Question	Count of Importance	Avg of Importance	Count of Satisfaction	Avg of Satisfaction	Difference
Flexibility in choosing your course teaching assignments	31	4.45	31	3.71	0.74
Flexibility in choosing the nature and direction of your research or creative activity	34	4.88	34	4.56	0.32
Flexibility in choosing your advising assignments	26	3.88	26	3.73	0.15
Flexibility in choosing your internal service assignments	32	3.97	33	3.88	0.09
Flexibility to engage in consulting	15	3.40	16	3.88	-0.48
Support for entrepreneurial activities	12	2.83	12	3.33	-0.50
<b>Median for Importance</b>		<b>3.93</b>			
<b>Median for Satisfaction</b>				<b>3.80</b>	

**Figure 3: Individual Considerations**



*Support Services and Other Resources*

The instructions for this question bank read “How **important** have the following support services and other resources been to you as a faculty member? How **satisfied** have you been with each of these?”

All six support services were rated with high importance by departing faculty members, ranging from 4.00 (“Quality of laboratory facilities”) to 4.64 (“Quality of library facilities”). Only the Department Life section, with nine out of eleven above 4.00, was comparable.

Respondents were most satisfied with the “Quality of the library facilities” (4.58) and least satisfied by “Grants and contracts support” (3.50) and “Instructional development support” (3.50). Overall,

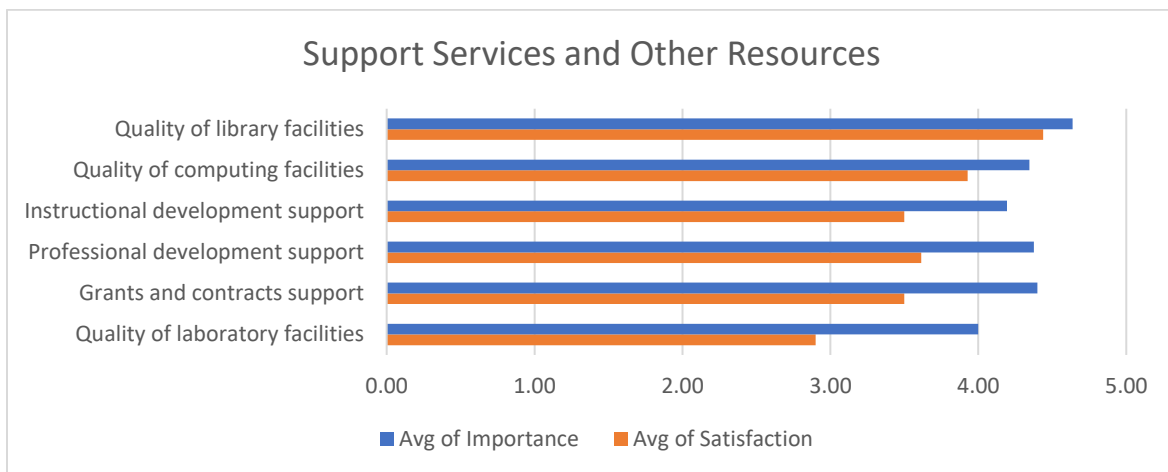
however, the disparity between average importance and average satisfaction was not great, ranging from .20 (“Quality of library facilities”) to 1.10 (“Quality of laboratory facilities”).

**Table 17: Support Services and Other Resources**

Question	Count of Importance	Avg of Importance	Count of Satisfaction	Avg of Satisfaction	Difference
Quality of laboratory facilities	11	4.00	10	2.90	1.10
Grants and contracts support	30	4.40	30	3.50	0.90
Professional development support	32	4.38	31	3.61	0.76
Instructional development support*	31	4.19	30	3.50	0.69
Quality of computing facilities	29	4.34	28	3.93	0.42
Quality of library facilities	33	4.64	32	4.44	0.20
<b>Median for Importance</b>		<b>4.36</b>			
<b>Median for Satisfaction</b>				<b>3.56</b>	

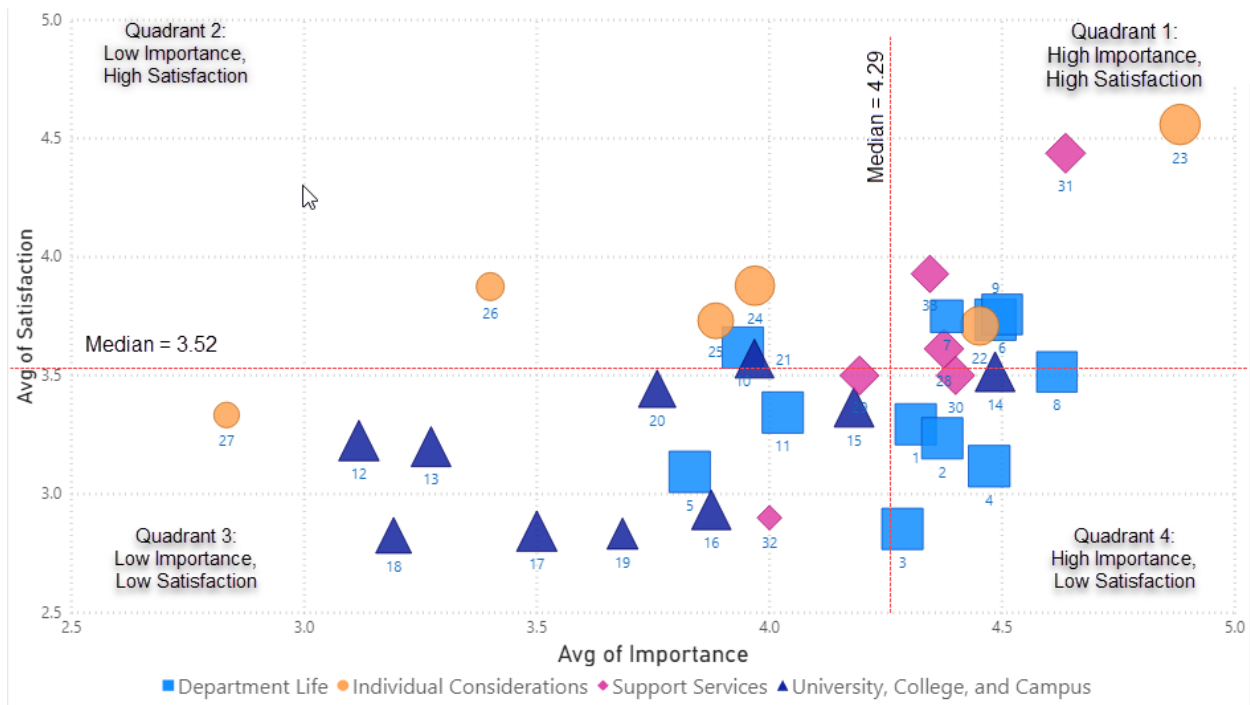
\* Post-remote respondents provided scores that were typically a point lower in average than their pre-Remote counterparts.

**Figure 4: Support Services and Other Resources**



Comparing the difference between importance and satisfaction for each topic only provides information on the difference in magnitude. It does not help in identifying areas of strength, strategic importance, or possible action. To understand these ideas, Figure 5 plots the average response for each question. Plots are color-coded based on question bank and shape size indicates the number of respondents for the question.

**Figure 5: Plotting Satisfaction and Importance for Each Question**



The medians for Importance and Satisfaction across all questions were 4.29 and 3.52, respectively. Quadrant 1, High Importance and High Satisfaction, shows topics that departing faculty members valued and with which they were satisfied. The two areas of highest overall satisfaction from Table 18 (“Flexibility in choosing the nature and direction of your research or creative activities” and “Quality of the library facilities”) appear at the far upper right. However, several other individual and department factors cluster above the medians, including “An academically strong department” (6), “Support for graduate students” (7), “Professional development support” (28), and “Quality of the computing facilities” (33). The academically strong department also appears in the interviews where several interviewees were positive regarding how their programs have gained in national rankings.

Only four areas fell into Quadrant 4, High Importance and Low Satisfaction, and they were all aspects of department life with high differences between importance and satisfaction (Table 14). Question 1 and Question 3, “a sense of collegiality” and “a sense of shared decision-making”, respectively, are also reflected in the interviewee comments where variations of “less collegial” and “top-down decision making” were mentioned.

Three topics were close to the satisfaction median between Quadrants 1 and 4. These were “Grant and contracts support” and “Fairness of the performance review process” for both the department and the University, campus, and college levels. These call for more examination. How can they be moved to Quadrant 1? What will keep them out of Quadrant 4?



**Table 18: Data points shown on Figure 6**

Bank	Question	Number	Importance/ Satisfaction
Department Life	Sense of collegiality	1	High/Low
	Sense of equity and inclusion	2	High/Low
	Environment of shared decision making	3	High/Low
	Adequate time for research/creative activity	4	High/Low
	Mentoring of junior faculty	5	
	An academically strong department	6	High/High
	Support for graduate students	7	High/High
	Fairness of the performance review process-Dept	8	
	Opportunities to communicate with department leadership	9	High/High
	A diverse population of colleagues	10	
	Support to maintain work-life balance	11	
University, College, and Campus	Opportunities to contribute to University governance	12	
	Opportunities to contribute to college governance	13	
	Fairness of the performance review process-Unit	14	
	Rewards for research or creative activity at the University	15	
	Rewards for teaching at the University	16	
	Rewards for service at the University	17	
	Rewards for outreach at the University	18	
	Faculty grievance process	19	
	Support for interdisciplinary collaboration	20	
	Support for equity and inclusivity	21	
Individual Considerations	Flexibility in choosing your course teaching assignments	22	High/High
	Flexibility in choosing the nature and direction of your research or creative activity	23	High/High
	Flexibility in choosing your internal service assignments	24	
	Flexibility in choosing your advising assignments	25	
	Flexibility to engage in consulting	26	
	Support for entrepreneurial activities	27	
Support Services	Professional development support	28	High/High
	Instructional development support	29	
	Grants and contracts support	30	
	Quality of library facilities	31	High/High
	Quality of laboratory facilities	32	
	Quality of computing facilities	33	High/High

\*

In summary, respondents were satisfied with many of the services or aspects of their experience at Penn State that they also deemed important. Freedom to decide research/creative direction was both the most important item and garnered the most satisfaction, followed closely by the importance of and satisfaction with the library facilities. Respondents were also satisfied with the academic strength of their departments and support for graduate students. Although respondents were less satisfied with the sense of shared decision-making within their departments, they were more satisfied with opportunities to meet with their unit heads.

### Additional Questions

After the four question banks, the survey addressed specific issues of interest, such as merit raises or benefits. As these questions were later in the survey, overall responses were lower as people dropped out. The five questions regarding how someone was encouraged to leave only had three responses, so they were omitted.

#### *Merit Raises*

A bank of three questions on a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, and 5=Strongly agree) covered aspects of merit raises. The median is provided as an indication of the shape of the responses in Table 19. Fifty percent of respondents answered the first two questions with a 4 or above while the other fifty percent answered with a 4 or below. As the midpoint is at 4, more responses are favorable (4 or 5) rather than neutral or unfavorable (1, 2, or 3).

The third question, “Getting an outside offer is almost the only way to get a good raise in my department,” has a median of 3 even though the average is higher. The 3 indicates that the midpoint for this question is neutral. Those having strong opinions on this question are likely to have answered with a 5, pulling the average up.

Given the distribution of scores for the other Likert scales in the question banks, these averages are not outside expectations, being neither very high nor very low.

**Table 19: Merit Raises**

<b>Merit Raises</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Median</b>
I understand the process that my department uses to determine merit raises.	33	3.39	4
The process that my department follows in determining merit raises is fair.	33	3.30	4
Getting an outside offer is almost the only way to get a good raise in my department.	35	3.43	3

#### *Reasons for Leaving*

A total of 48 individuals responded to this question, the highest response in the survey. Retirement accounted for the largest reason people left Penn State (N=13). Other reasons were fairly evenly distributed, and those leaving for tenure-related reasons amounted to 5.

**Table 20: Reasons for Leaving**

<b>Leave Reason</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Retirement	13	27.1%
Tenure denial	3	6.3%
Did not expect to receive tenure	2	4.2%
More attractive position elsewhere	9	18.8%
Family reasons (e.g., spousal opportunity, desire to be closer to family)	7	14.6%
Other	6	12.5%
Prefer not to answer	8	16.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

A follow up question asked, “Were you encouraged to leave (e.g., by colleagues, tenure committee, departmental/college leadership)?” Only three individuals indicated they were encouraged to leave, although eleven preferred not to answer. A little over half indicated they were not encouraged to leave (Table 21).

**Table 21: Encouragement to Leave**

<b>Were you encouraged to leave (e.g., by colleagues, tenure committee, departmental/college leadership?)</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	3	9.4%
No	18	56.3%
Prefer not to Answer	11	34.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The reason for leaving was further examined. Respondents were asked, “You indicated your primary reason for leaving Penn State. Now can you give us a little more detail? Please indicate the next three most important contributing factors to your decision to leave Penn State.” Table 22 lists the top three secondary reasons for leaving.

**Table 22: Secondary Reasons**

<b>Top 3 Secondary Reasons for Leaving</b>	<b>Count</b>
Geographic location	6
Desire for more resources and institutional support for my work	6
Overwhelmed by my job responsibilities	6

Comments from the interviews and the optional text could only provide context for the first and third choices in Table 22. Interviewees mentioned climate. As for the third reason, survey respondents mentioned teaching and advising loads or that the teaching load was too high for the amount of research and service required.

### *Benefits*

The survey question read: “To what, if any, extent did the following aspects of Penn State’s benefits program contribute to your decision to leave Penn State?” Listed were cost of health care benefits, quality of health care benefits, retirement benefits, and educational benefits.

This table is not shown because only three individuals out of twenty indicated that cost and quality of the health care benefits “influenced somewhat” their decision to leave. Benefits did not play a significant factor for any respondents’ decision to leave.

The structure of this question is very different than how it was asked in the previous survey, where health care had both importance and satisfaction scores. Healthcare was a large issue for the 2015/16-2016/17 cycle and was placed in Quadrant 4 (High Importance/Low Satisfaction) in that report. However, health care hardly causes a ripple in this cycle. Such a difference is most likely due to the change from an importance/satisfaction format to one related to the decision to leave. Likely, health care is still important but perhaps not as salient as it was during the mid-2010s when it was a controversial campus issue.

### *New Positions*

Out of the 35 respondents in Table 23 who did not retire, half indicated that they had obtained a new position while a little less than half indicated that they preferred not to answer.

**Table 23: New Positions**

Have you obtained another position?	Count	Percent
Yes	14	50.0%
No	3	10.7%
Prefer not to answer	11	39.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Out of those 14 indicating yes, 10 went to another public research university while three went to another type of institution. Ten of these fourteen obtained tenure-line positions and four were academic, non-tenure track (table not shown).

### *Counter Offers*

Of those leaving for reasons other than retirement, only fifteen responded about counter offers. Ten did not seek a counteroffer, four sought and obtained one, and one sought but was unsuccessful (not shown).

### *Tenure Stay*

Only four of thirty-five responding individuals took a tenure stay (table not shown). However, 22 out of 35 (two-thirds) were not sure if doing so would bear negative consequences. Some hesitation probably

exists within existing faculty members regarding tenure stay, which may affect assistant professors' decisions to use it.

**Table 24: Tenure Stay Beliefs**

Did you feel that taking a stay of tenure negatively effects a faculty member's chances of promotion and tenure?	Count	Percent
Yes	3	8.6%
No	10	28.6%
Not Sure	22	62.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Inequity*

Although there were few responses for these questions, the answers indicate that work is not complete in addressing equity issues at Penn State. Table 25 reports how respondents answered the initial question "Did you ever experience difficulties related to equity issues at the University (e.g. discrimination or harassment?)." Table 26 breaks out the types of inequity experienced.

**Table 25: Experiencing Inequity**

Did you ever experience difficulties related to equity issues at the University (e.g. discrimination or harassment?)	Count	Percent
Yes	11	25.0%
No	25	56.8%
Prefer not to answer	8	18.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Table 26: Types of Inequity Experienced**

To what extent did you experience inequity based on the following?	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	To a great extent
Sexual harassment	6		3	
Gender discrimination	2		6	1
Discrimination based on sexual orientation	9			
Racial/ethnic discrimination	8	1		
Ageism	6		3	
Discrimination based on religion	9			
Discrimination based on political beliefs	8		1	
Other type(s) of discrimination	6			2

Eleven out of the 48 respondents reported experiencing some kind of inequity, the majority being gender-related with some episodes of ageism and other areas. Table 6 indicates that survey respondents included one self-identified Black or African American faculty member, two Asian faculty members, and one faculty member who chose “Other.”

## Thoughts from the Exit Interviews

Forty-eight interview responses were collected out of a total of 187 departing faculty members for a response rate of 26%. A separate set of questions was asked depending on the reason for leaving (e.g. retirement, departure, and departure due to anticipated or actual denial of tenure). Most interviews were in the template format provided by the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, although some were emails written by the departing faculty members themselves while others were compilations of a series of interviews from a single interviewer.

Out of the 48 individuals, 22 indicated they were retiring. Based upon the template information filled in by the interviewer and some of the narrative, gender and campus could be derived for most of the interviewees. Table 27 lists the breakdown.

**Table 27: Demographics of Interviewees**

Gender		Retirement		Campus	
Men	19	Retiree	22	UP	28
Women	21	Non-Retiree	26	Non-UP	18
Unknown	8			Unknown	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>

As not all interviewees were asked the same questions and some responses did not follow the question format, it was sometimes difficult to compare across all questions.

All the responses, regardless of departure reason, were reviewed and coded based on emerging themes. A matrix was then developed that listed criteria for each theme. Responses were then recoded based on the matrix. For example, a question was asked about workload on all three surveys. If an individual talked about how they believed the workload was fair or comparable to workload experienced in other institutions, they were coded as having a positive response to this question. If they expressed unhappiness, stress, or mentioned how it was unfavorable to experienced workload at other institutions, they were coded as negative. If they did not address the question or gave an ambiguous response, such as “It was OK” the theme was left blank. Each interviewee only had one score per theme.

An overall positive or negative experience was calculated mostly through answers to the following questions:

1. Were you generally satisfied with your experience at Penn State? (leaving)
2. How do you assess your last years at Penn State and your level of satisfaction as opposed to your earlier years? (retiring)
3. Overall, do you feel that Penn State treated you fairly? (denied tenure).

In the absence of a definitive response, responses to other questions were also considered if they were consistent with one another. For example, if retirees expressed hope or enthusiasm to stay connected with the institution and mentioned elsewhere that they found their time at Penn State rewarding, they might be assigned a positive overall experience rating. If retirees described how they were disappointed by the institution and then indicated that they did not wish to be contacted in the future, they might be given a negative overall experience rating.

From the 48 interviews, 36 held information allowing the categorization of a positive or negative overall experience. Two thirds of these had positive experiences and one third had negative experiences. The positives and negatives were equally split between men and women. Out of the 22 retirees, 16 had classifiably positive experiences at the end of their careers while only two left with negative experiences towards the end of their careers.

Questions about workload, mentoring, and support appeared in all three interview variations. Respondents gave predominantly positive responses for the mentoring and support they had received, although a sizeable minority existed with negative comments. Women tended to answer favorably more often than men regarding the positive mentoring they received. Non-retirees were more likely to have addressed these questions and to have provided definite answers. Support was viewed positively by many faculty members from the campuses and campus colleges. Those having more negative experiences with support tended to be departing for reasons other than retirement.

Regarding equity and inclusion, a majority of those providing specifics felt that positive steps had been made but that more work was needed. Some said there was “a lot of talk but little action” while others said that inclusiveness depended on unit. Sometimes the issues went beyond campus. One person felt their unit and location was very welcoming to LGBTQ people but that the surrounding community was not. These responses provide more insight into the high importance, low satisfaction ratings for “a sense of equity and inclusion” within the survey.

Many of the other themes bubbled up spontaneously. Themes such as work environment, people, and growth in national disciplinary standing emerged as generally positive factors. Faculty members from a few specific areas, especially, praised their deans or chancellors for providing strong leadership to move their unit forward.

Negative responses had a lot of focus around growth in bureaucracy and a shift towards a more corporate mentality that considered students as customers and enacted top-down decisions as the norm. Previous academic administrators lamented the difficulty in hiring faculty and staff while respondents from all levels complained about the hidden costs of administrative work being “pushed” onto the faculty through various system changes and staff reorganizations. These comments came mostly from retiring faculty members or those based at University Park. Faculty members from the commonwealth campuses rarely complained about these topics.

## Conclusion

### Where interviews and survey questions intersect

The interviews and survey intersected in three areas. Two areas can be tied back to the tremendous growth seen by the university since the early 2000s. As seen in Table 28, the budget doubled during this timeframe, research dollars grew, and the number of students and full-time employees also rose.

**Table 28: Indicators of University Growth since 2005**

	2005	2010	2015	2019
<b>Financial<sup>6</sup></b>				
Total Funds Budget	\$3,044,866,000	\$4,016,443,000	\$4,901,693,000	\$6,809,655,000
General Funds Budget	\$1,284,091,000	\$1,687,419,000	\$1,909,116,000	\$2,537,292,000
<b>Employees<sup>7</sup></b>				
Full-Time	15,190	17,784	18,770	21,063
Part-Time and Casual	15,237	15,385	18,936	16,179
<b>Students<sup>8</sup> (no Penn College)</b>	80,124	93,123	97,494	96,408
<b>Research<sup>9</sup></b>	N/A	780M	801M	968M

The first intersection is very positive. Survey respondents ranked “an academically strong department” and “support for graduate students” as high in importance and satisfaction. Both these items are enabled by growth in financial resources and in research dollars. Additionally, growth allowed the university to expand and maintain library and computing facilities, which were also rated with high importance and high satisfaction. Interviewees spoke about their programs rising in national rankings, becoming more prestigious, and that “things are heading in a good direction.”

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<sup>6</sup> Source: University Budget Office. *Comparison of Percent Change in General Funds Budget and Total Budget 1995-96 through 2019-20*. Does not include Penn College or Hershey.

<sup>7</sup> Source:  
<https://factbook.psu.edu/factbook/HrDynamic/FacultyStaffTableOfContents.aspx#AllFacultyStaff&FBPlusIndc=N>. Does not include Hershey or Penn College.

<sup>8</sup> Source:  
<https://factbook.psu.edu/factbook/StudentDynamic/HistoricalComparisonOfEnrollment.aspx?YearCode=2019&FBPlusIndc=N>. Does not include Penn College.

<sup>9</sup> Source: <https://www.research.psu.edu/ovpr/annual-reports>



The downside of growth is seen in the low satisfaction ratings for “an environment of shared decision making” and “a sense of collegiality.” Interviewees mentioned the “top-down” nature of decision making<sup>10</sup>. Dissatisfaction with the degree of shared decision making and a more “corporate” environment are likely unintended consequences of the growth of a complex and geographically dispersed organization. A few retirees, having experience at other institutions, lamented the managerial nature of Penn State departments over the model where the department chair acts as a peer and leader of the faculty.

As for collegiality, interviewees noted there was less collegiality today than in the past. This loss of collegiality is carried over from the 2015/16-2016/17 report, where interviewees posit that the more business-like management style increased competition and eroded collegiality.

The third issue involves the sense of equity and inclusion and interviewee comments that ranged from “Absolutely welcoming” to “It’s better than it was...but there is still a ways to go” to “Stop giving lip service...” One interviewee confided that they felt things were improving, but they still heard occasional comments about certain groups that were inappropriate.

If the interviews and the survey questions can be considered together, it appears that while improvements are in process, progress is not evenly distributed, and the institution is not always where these departing faculty members wanted it to be. Survey respondents were satisfied with “a diverse population of colleagues” but less so with “a sense of equity and inclusion.” As one interviewee said, “People are so busy that no one ever really reached out.”

## Recommendations

Faculty turnover is inevitable as members retire or leave for many reasons, which may or may not relate to their experience at Penn State. For example, six survey respondents indicated that geography and climate were factors in their decision to leave. Nonetheless, filling positions is expensive in both time and effort--and oftentimes remaining faculty members must make up for the vacancy through increased advising load (especially at the graduate level), increased “other duties” (e.g., mentoring), and increased service work (all the various committees, and especially on the replacement search committee). The purpose of the survey and interviews is to understand reasons for faculty departure and to identify factors that are under institutional control so that appropriate decisions can be made regarding what could be done to mitigate the negatives and enhance the positives.

The new exit survey format has made it easier to identify categories of issues, such as their level (department versus university, college, and campus) or the type (individual considerations or support). However, the survey only reaches faculty members who have tendered their resignations and not those who are still here. Given that one of the primary reasons for this data collection is understanding departure to minimize turnover, it makes sense to see how all faculty feel about these issues before taking further action.

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<sup>10</sup> Top down management was also mentioned by interviewees in the 2015/16-2016/17 report.

In addition, departing individuals in the post-remote period answered five of the questions in a statistically different manner. Most surprising was the lower importance attached to rewards for teaching, research, and service. Remote work may change the calculus of importance and satisfaction considerations. As the pandemic drags on, more insight regarding how it is affecting our faculty members can only be advantageous.

In the meantime, the results of the 2018/19-2019/20 survey and interviews suggest that departing faculty members appreciated the flexibility to pursue interests, choosing teaching assignments, strong academic programs, resources to support graduate students, professional development, a comprehensive library, and technology. Results also suggest that negative factors such as top-down decision making, bureaucracy, lack of a sense of collegiality, and inadequate time for research should be monitored carefully. If a study were to be done for all faculty, questions pertaining to all the above topics should be included.