



Tenured and Tenure-Line Faculty Exit Survey 2020-2021 – 2021-2022

Executive Summary

Penn State has conducted the Faculty Exit Survey biennially since 1998. Every departing tenured and tenure-line faculty member is given the opportunity to participate in an exit interview and exit survey. This report analyzes and summarizes data from the academic years of 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 to better understand the experiences of tenured and tenure-line faculty members¹ as well as help the University respond to faculty concerns. In total, 94 exit surveys² and 48 exit interviews were completed. Highlights for this cycle include the following:

Three-quarters of exited faculty who completed the survey strongly agreed or agreed that they were treated fairly by the University.

Faculty rated flexibility in choosing the nature and direction of their research/creative activity, a sense of equity and inclusion, and adequate time for research/creative activity as most important to them in their role as faculty members; quality of library facilities and flexibility in choosing the nature and direction of their research/creative activity were rated highest in terms of satisfaction.

Items with the greatest misalignment between ratings of importance and satisfaction (i.e., higher importance and lower satisfaction) included “environment of shared decision making (Department Life category), “adequate time for research/creative activity,” (Department Life category), “fairness of the performance review process,” (University, College, and Campus Practices category), “sense of collegiality (Department Life category), “sense of equity and inclusion” (Department Life category), and “faculty grievance process” (University, College, and Campus Practices category).

Issues related to equity and inclusion arose in both the survey and interview responses. Although a relatively low number of respondents answered the question, 31% of respondents indicated they had experienced equity issues at Penn State. In addition, equity and inclusion items in both the department and university categories received high rankings from faculty in terms of their importance but lower rankings in terms of satisfaction. Finally, multiple interview respondents pointed to equity and inclusion issues related to mentorship, support from department leadership and colleagues, micro-aggressions, and more.

¹ Tenured and tenure-line faculty members include Assistant Librarians, Assistant Professors, Associate Librarians, Associate Professors, Librarians, and Professors. For this study, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor will be used to describe both professors and librarians.

² Only includes survey responses in which more than 50% of the questions were answered.

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Introduction

Since 1998, the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs³ has coordinated with deans and chancellors to offer every departing tenured and tenure-line faculty member the opportunity to participate in an exit survey and interview.

Although this report occurs every two years, 2017–2018 was skipped due to a change in the human resources system and almost complete turnovers in the Faculty Affairs and Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research offices.

There are four sections of this report. The first section describes the data collection methods, highlights the response rate of the current cycle (in comparison to the two most recent cycles), and describes methodological limitations. The second section provides the aggregate demographics for all exiting faculty (whether they completed survey and interviews or not), exiting faculty who completed surveys, and exiting faculty who completed interviews for the current reporting cycle. The third section uses responses from the survey and interview questions to describe the experiences of exiting faculty. The fourth, and final, section discusses commonalities between the survey and interview responses and provides recommendations for future faculty exit studies.

Data Collection

Two methods were used to collect data from faculty leaving Penn State between July 2020 and August 2022—a 15-question interview and 40-question online survey. The process can differ by unit, but typically, upon learning of a faculty person’s impending termination or resignation, the unit’s Human Resources Consultant, Human Resources Strategic Partner, academic unit head, or executive communicates these details to the unit’s Exit Interview Officer (EIO), who in turn contacts the exiting faculty member. EIOs encourage exiting faculty to complete the online survey by emailing them a weblink for the survey and inviting the faculty member to complete the survey and participate in an interview. The weblink is also available via the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs webpage. Participation is voluntary and faculty are not required to complete the interview or survey before exiting Penn State. As displayed in Table 1, more faculty chose to complete the survey (40% of exiting faculty) than interview (24%) during the 2020–2022 cycle.

Comparison of Response Rates Across Time

In addition to showing details of the current period, Table 1 displays the response rates for the two previous cycles. More faculty exited the University during 2020–2022 – a period including the “Great Resignation” when U.S. workers resigned from their jobs at higher-than-normal rates – than in the 2018–2020 period, but fewer than during the 2015–2017 period⁴. While there was a nine-percentage point dip in faculty participating in interviews from the previous cycle to the current, the survey response rate was essentially unchanged.

³ Prior to summer 2017, this position was the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

⁴ During the 2016-2017 academic year, Penn State offered a Voluntary Retirement Program (VRP) to approximately 1,270 eligible faculty and staff.

Table 1. Comparison of Response Rates from the Past Three Cycles

	Total Exited	Interview (Count)	Interview (Percent)	Surveys (Count)	Surveys (Percent)
2015–2017 ⁵	374	84	22%	61	16%
2018–2020 ⁶	187	48	26%	62	33%
2020–2022	278	48	17%	94 ⁷	34%

Limitations

The 2022 Faculty Exit Study has two primary limitations. First, its findings cannot be directly compared to the results of pre-2020 Faculty Exit Reports because the survey instrument was changed after the 2015-2017 cycle. These changes were the result of recommendations from a University committee organized to advise the Faculty Exit Study. Direct comparison between this report and others is challenging because the surveys contain differences in wording, question order, and context. A second limitation of this report is the Exit Survey data only represents participants who completed at least 50% of the survey questions. This rule provided consistency between the 2020 and 2022 data. Participants were not required to complete every survey question and many participants did not: of the 257 people who began the exit survey, only 94 completed at least half of its questions.

Demographics of Exited Faculty

This section highlights key demographic breakdowns of faculty who left Penn State during the 2020-2022 cycle. Key demographics include rank, age, birth sex, race and ethnicity, reason for leaving, and campus location. Faculty data was disaggregated into three sub-sections below. The first sub-section describes all faculty who left Penn State during this cycle. The second sub-section focuses on exiting faculty who completed an exit survey. The third sub-section includes faculty who completed an exit interview. Because of the anonymity of the survey and option for anonymity in the interviews, it is not possible to determine which faculty completed both.

All Exited Faculty Demographics

This sub-section presents key demographics of all tenured or tenure-line faculty who left Penn State between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2022. This data was gathered by Human Resources and cleaned by OPAIR prior to the publishing of the 2022 report. The cleaning process involved three steps. The first was to remove any data pertaining to faculty whose “faculty status” equaled “not on path” because these faculty were not tenured or tenure-line. The second step was to remove data regarding faculty whose “termination reason” was identified as “deceased.” Finally, these numbers were reviewed and

⁵ Source: Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty Exit Study: 2015/16-2016/17

⁶ The 2017/18 year was skipped due to changes in systems and practices.

⁷ Although there were 257 total responses, only 94 completed more than 50% of the survey.

validated by the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (OVPFA)⁸. Using these criteria, a total of 278 faculty left Penn State during the 2020-2022 cycle.

Table 2. Primary Reason for Leaving (All Exited Faculty)

Reason for Leaving	Count	Percent
Denied Tenure	13	5%
Other Reason ⁹	3	1%
Resigned	132	47%
Retired	130	47%
Total	278	100%

The highest percentage of these faculty were White (60%), male (63%), full professors (43%), 60-69 years old (31%), and located at the University Park campus (64%). As shown in Table 2, the leading reason faculty left Penn State was resignation (49%), followed by retirement (47%). Retirees were more likely to identify as White while faculty who resigned or were denied tenure were more likely to identify as being from an Underrepresented Minority (URM)¹⁰ community (Table 3). Of the 13 faculty members denied tenure, 7 identified as URM, 2 identified as international, 2 had an undisclosed race/ethnicity, and 2 identified as White.

Table 3. Primary Reason for Leaving by Race/Ethnicity (All Exited Faculty)

Reason for Leaving	Underrepresented Minority (%)	Int'l (%)	White (%)	Undisclosed (%)
Denied Tenure	11%	8%	1%	4%
Other Reason	2%	0%	1%	0%
Resigned	63%	92%	33%	68%
Retired	24%	0%	65%	28%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

⁸ Upon data validation, the OVPFA identified five faculty members who had been denied tenure but had a “faculty status” of “not on path” or whose “termination reason” was originally listed as “resigned”. These were added to the dataset.

⁹ “Other Reason” includes faculty who involuntarily left due to dismissal under AC70, involuntarily left due to resigning in lieu of dismissal, and voluntarily left due to exhausted leave with no retirement eligibility.

¹⁰ For the purposes of this study, URM Includes persons identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and two or more races.

Exit Survey Respondents' Demographics

Approximately 257 respondents clicked past the first page of the exit survey, but only 94 respondents answered 50% or more of the questions. This summary pertains only to data collected from the 94 respondents who answered at least half of the survey questions. No survey questions were required. This could have contributed to approximately 2/3 of respondents not answering any of the demographic questions. Tables 4-8 show that the majority of survey respondents identified as White (67%), female (50%), full professors (40%), and were from the University Park campus (64%). Participants were also most likely 30-39 (33%) or 60-69 (33%) years old and to have left Penn State due to retirement (33%).

Only 30 survey respondents revealed their race or ethnicity (Table 4). The majority of respondents who did so identified as White (67%) while the remainder identified as Asian (17%), Hispanic/Latinx (10%), Black/African American (3%), or another race not previously mentioned (3%).

Table 4. Respondents by Race and Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Count	Percent
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0%
Asian	5	17%
Black or African American	1	3%
Hispanic or Latinx	3	10%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0%
White	20	67%
Another Race or Ethnicity	1	3%
Total	30	100%

While female and male respondents were evenly distributed, one participant preferred not to reveal their birth sex (Table 5).

Table 5. Respondents by Birth Sex

Assigned Sex at Birth	Count	Percent
Female	16	50%
Male	15	47%
Prefer Not to Respond	1	3%
Total	32	100%

Table 6 shows that slightly more respondents were full professors (40%), than associate professors (31%) or assistant professors (29%).

Table 6. Respondents by Rank

Faculty Rank	Count	Percent
Professor	14	40%
Associate Professor	11	31%
Assistant Professor	10	29%
Total	35	100%

As represented within Table 7, nearly two-thirds of the respondents were located at University Park (65%), while the second largest group were at Campus Colleges (20%).

Table 7. Respondents by Campus

Primary Campus Location	Count	Percent
Campus Colleges ¹¹	7	20%
University College ¹²	4	12%
Professional Education Campuses ¹³	1	3%
University Park	22	65%
Total	34	100%

Nearly half of the survey respondents were 30-49 years old (48%) while another 48% identified as 60 or above (Table 8). These percentages are consistent with the resignation (47%) and retirement (47%) rates of all faculty.

Table 8. Respondents by Age

Age Range	Count	Percent
30-39	9	33%
40-49	4	15%
50-59	1	4%
60-69	9	33%
70+	4	15%
Total	27	100%

Exit Interview Respondents' Demographics

This section describes the demographics of faculty who completed exit interviews with an EIO. In total, 48 faculty exit interviews were submitted to OPAIR in the 2020–2022 cycle. These interviews were divided into three categories: Faculty leaving for other positions (21), faculty leaving for retirement (25),

¹¹ Campus Colleges include the Abington, Altoona, Berks, Erie (Behrend), and Harrisburg (Capital) campuses.

¹² University Colleges include the Beaver, Brandywine, DuBois, Fayette, Greater Allegheny, Hazleton, Lehigh Valley, Mont Alto, New Kensington, Schuylkill, Scranton, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre, and York campuses.

¹³ Professional Education Campuses include Penn State Law, Dickinson Law, Penn State College of Medicine (Hershey), and Penn State Great Valley.

and faculty leaving due to tenure denial (2). All interviews, except those submitted for faculty leaving due to tenure denial, corresponded with faculty who left Penn State between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2022. Although the two faculty members leaving due to tenure denial departed Penn State prior to July 1, 2020, their data is included within the 2022 Faculty Exit Report because the interview notes were submitted during the 2020-2022 cycle and were not recorded in the 2020 Faculty Exit Report. While 96% of interviewees revealed their names, two decided to remain anonymous and are not reflected in the demographic tables below. Tables 9-13 show that the highest percentage of exiting faculty interviewees were White (67%), male (54%), full professors (39%), 60-69 years old (41%), and from the University Park campus (46%).

After White, Table 9 shows the second largest racial group was Asian with 17% of the total interviewees.

Table 9. Interviewees by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Count	Percent
Asian	8	17%
Black	4	9%
Do not wish to disclose	2	4%
Hispanic/Latinx	1	2%
White	31	67%

Like the survey participants, the percentage of female interviewees was comparable to that of male interviewees (Table 10).

Table 10. Interviewees by Birth Sex

Sex	Count	Percent
Female	21	46%
Male	25	54%

Interviewees who were full professors slightly outnumbered assistant professors and associate professors (Table 11).

Table 11. Interviewees by Rank

Rank	Count	Percent
Assistant Professor	14	30%
Associate Professor	14	30%
Professor	18	39%

Table 12 shows that, consistent with the demographics of survey participants, the majority of interviewees were 60 years of age or older (54%).

Table 12. Interviewees by Age

Age	Count	Percent
20-29	1	2%
30-39	10	22%
40-49	8	17%
50-59	3	7%
60-69	19	41%
70-79	5	11%

Forty-six percent of interviewees came from University Park, while 28% worked at Campus Colleges (Table 13).

Table 13. Interviewees by Campus Grouping

Campus Grouping	Count	Percent
Campus Colleges	13	28%
University Colleges	7	15%
University Park	21	46%
Other Campuses or Special Mission Units	5	11%

Experiences of Exited Faculty

Survey Respondents' Experiences

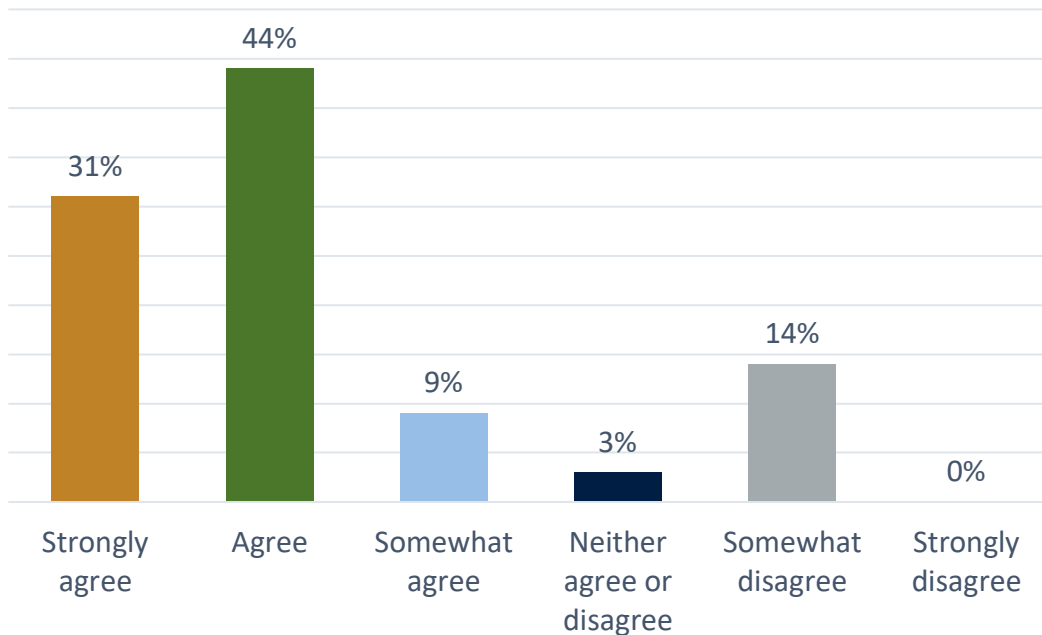
Survey respondents answered survey questions regarding their perceived treatment by Penn State, reasons for leaving Penn State, new positions, and issues of equity.

Treatment by Penn State

When asked if they felt the University treated them fairly, more than 80% of respondents strongly agreed (31%), agreed (44%), or somewhat agreed (9%). These percentages increased from the previous reporting cycle by 4% (strongly agreed), 16% (agreed), and 12% (somewhat agreed) respectively (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Treatment by the University

Overall, I feel that I was treated fairly by the University



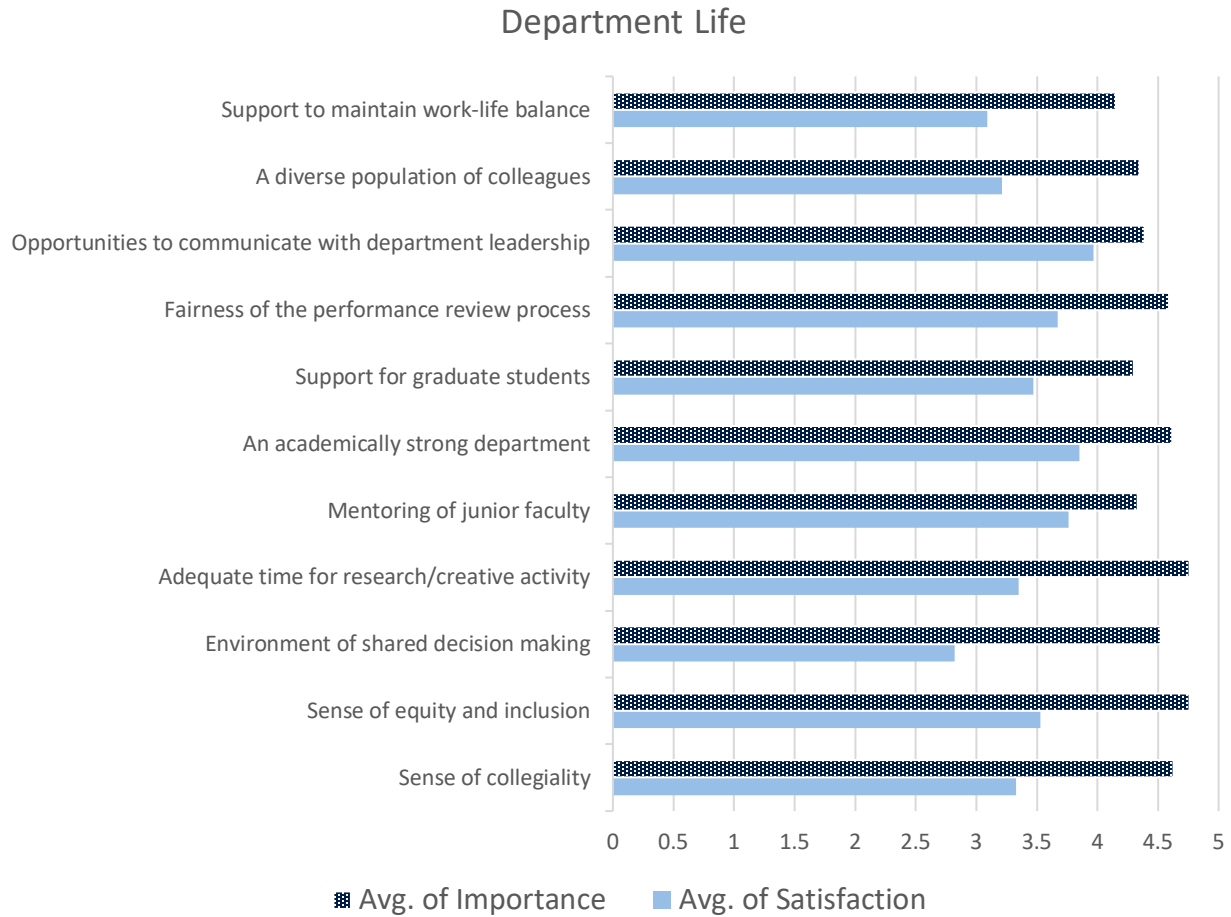
One aspect that could have influenced this positive shift is that a slightly higher percentage of respondents identified as retirees during the current, 2020-2022 cycle (33%) than the 2018-2020 cycle (27%).

Aspects of Importance and Satisfaction

This section consists of four question banks containing responses arranged in a five-point Likert scale with 1 being Low Importance or Satisfaction and 5 being High Importance or Satisfaction. The question bank categories include “Department Life,” “University, College, and Campus Practices,” “Individual Considerations,” and “Support Services and Other Resources.” A separate selection was available for “NA/Don’t Know.” The “NA/Don’t Know” values were not factored into the averages or counts in the following table and figures.

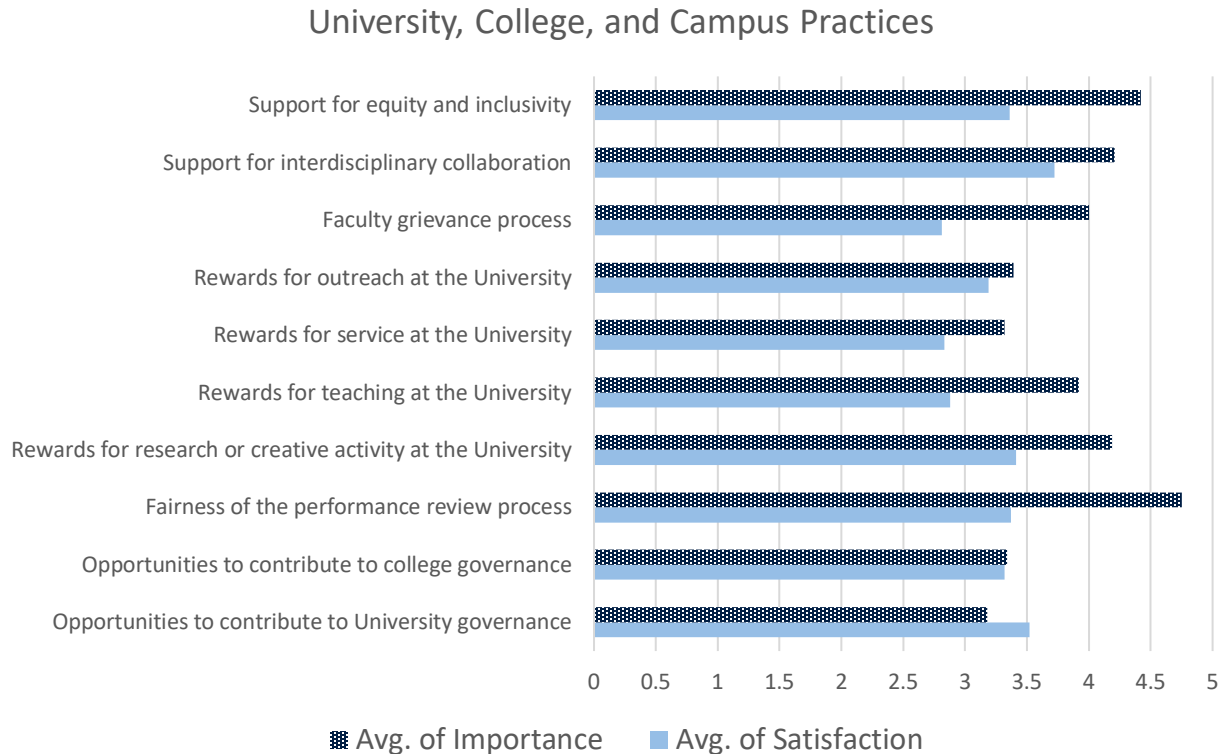
The highest-rated aspects across all four categories were those that supported individual and/or professional success. Characteristics with the highest importance across all categories were “sense of equity and inclusion” (Figure 3), “adequate time for research/creative activity” (Figure 3), and “flexibility in choosing the nature and direction of your research or creative activity” (Figure 5). Characteristics with the highest satisfaction ratings were “quality of library facilities” and “flexibility in choosing the nature and direction of your research or creative activity.”

Figure 3. Importance of / Satisfaction with Aspects of Department Life



As illustrated in Figure 3, “adequate time for research/creative activity” (4.76) and “sense of equity and inclusion” (4.76) were the items of greatest importance while “support to maintain work-life balance” (4.15) was the item of least importance within the “Department Life” category. Respondents were most satisfied with “opportunities to communicate with department leadership” (3.97) while least satisfied with “environment of shared decision making” (2.82). The greatest difference between level of importance and level of satisfaction existed within “environment of shared decision making” (-1.70).

Figure 4. Importance of, and Satisfaction with, University, College, and Campus Practices



“Fairness of the performance review process” (4.75) was of the greatest importance while “opportunities to contribute to University governance” (3.18) were of least importance in the “University, College, and Campus practices” category (Figure 4). Faculty were most satisfied with “support for interdisciplinary collaboration” (3.72) and least satisfied with the “faculty grievance process” (2.81). The item with the largest difference between the level of importance and satisfaction was “fairness of the performance review process” (-1.38).

In terms of individual considerations, Figure 5 shows that “flexibility in choosing the nature and direction of your research or creative activity” (4.88) was considered most important and “support for entrepreneurial activities” (3.53) was rated least important. In accordance with what they labeled most important, participants identified “flexibility in choosing the nature and direction of your research or creative activity” (4.59) as most satisfying. Least satisfying was the “flexibility in choosing your advising assignments” (3.36). Two aspects, “flexibility to engage in consulting” and “support for entrepreneurial activities” received higher ratings for satisfaction than importance – differences of +0.66 and +0.29 points, respectively. The item with the largest difference between satisfaction and importance was “flexibility in choosing your course teaching assignments” (-0.65).

Figure 5. Importance of and Satisfaction with Individual Considerations

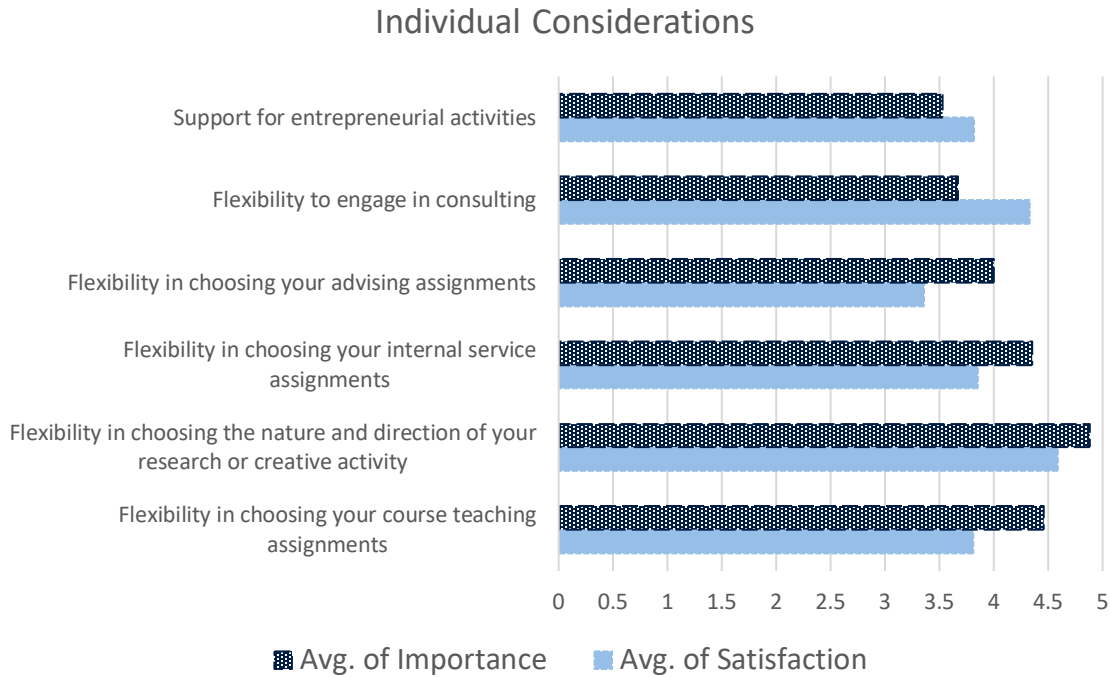
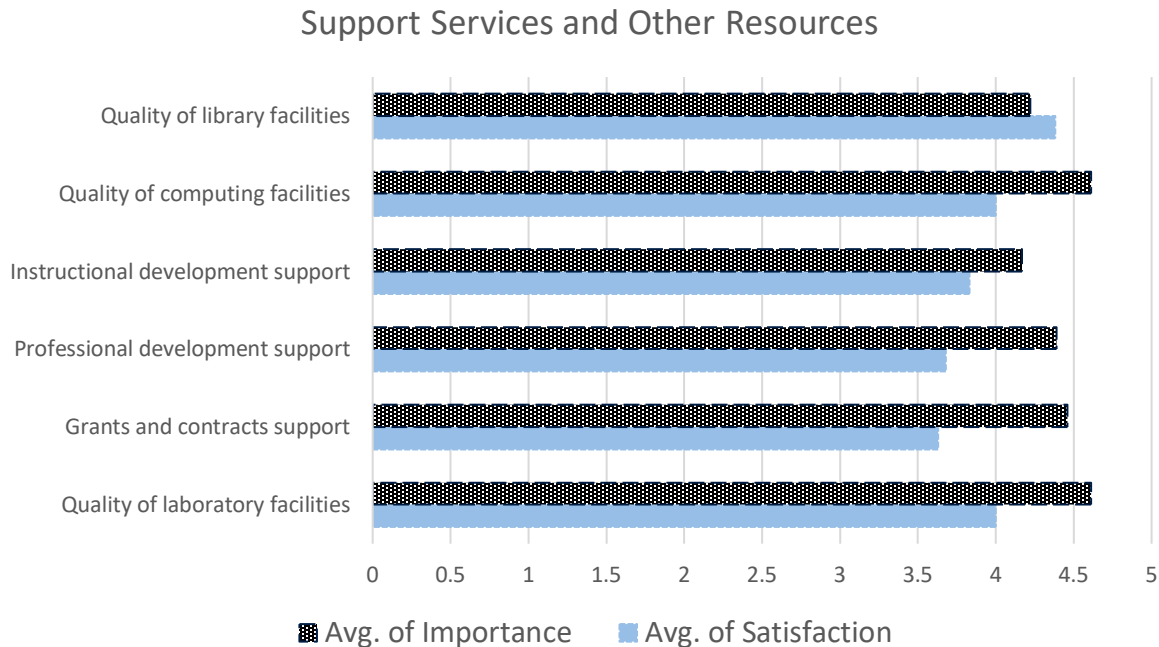


Figure 6. Importance of, and Satisfaction with, Support Services and Other Resources



The items of highest importance within the “Support Services and Other Resources” category in Figure 6 were “quality of laboratory facilities” (4.61) and “quality of computing facilities” (4.61), while the item of lowest importance was “instructional development support” (4.17). “Quality of library facilities” (4.38)

was labeled most satisfying and “grants and contracts support” was rated least satisfying. Like the “Individual Considerations” category, “quality of library facilities” surpassed respondents’ expectations by +0.16 points.

In conclusion, flexibility to direct their own research and creative activity was the item rated as most important and with which respondents were most satisfied across all categories. Contributing to University governance, labeled least important, appeared to exceed respondents’ expectations, and garnered a higher rating for satisfaction than importance. Respondents were most satisfied with flexibility to engage in consulting and quality of campus facilities, and least satisfied with the faculty grievance process and rewards for service.

Leaving Penn State

When asked if they were encouraged to leave by someone within Penn State, Table 14 shows the majority of 32 respondents answered “no” (53%), but 34% selected “prefer not to answer.”

Table 14. Encouragement to Leave

Encouraged by someone at Penn State to leave	Count	Percent
Yes	4	13%
No	17	53%
Prefer not to answer	11	34%
Total	32	100%

While approximately one-third of respondents answered the “encouragement to leave” question, significantly more (57%) provided specific reasons for leaving Penn State (Table 15). Of the seven options available, 33% identified “retirement” as their primary reason for leaving. Two reasons, “prefer not to answer” and “more attractive position elsewhere,” tied for second at 19%. The least-selected reason was “did not expect to receive tenure” at 2%. These percentages are comparable to the 2018–2020 cycle where retiring faculty made up the largest proportion of respondents (27%) followed by those leaving for more attractive positions elsewhere (19%). During that same period, 4% of respondents left because they “did not expect to receive tenure” – the least-selected option.

Table 15. Primary Reasons for Leaving

Primary reason for leaving Penn State	Count	Percent
Retirement	18	33%
Tenure denial	4	7%
Did not expect to receive tenure	1	2%
More attractive position elsewhere	10	19%
Family reasons ¹⁴	4	7%
Other (please explain)	7	13%
Prefer not to answer	10	19%
Total	54	100%

A small number of participants also provided secondary reasons for leaving Penn State as shown in Table 16. Due to the large number of possible reasons from which respondents could select, only the top four responses are presented below. The top secondary reason for leaving Penn State was “desire for a better salary” followed by a three-way tie between “desire for more resources and institutional support for my work,” “desire for a better intellectual environment,” and feeling “unsupported by my department chair and/or colleagues.” While “desire for more resources and institutional support” was a top secondary reason from the 2020 report, the other two popular reasons that year were “geographic location” and “overwhelmed by my job responsibilities.”

Table 16. Secondary Reasons for Leaving

Top 4 secondary reasons for leaving	Count
Desire for a better salary	6
Desire for more resources and institutional support for my work	5
Desire for a better intellectual environment	5
Unsupported by my department chair/head and/or colleagues	5

New Positions

Approximately 69% of respondents who did not retire shared they had obtained a new position elsewhere (Table 17). Nearly one-third (31%) did not seek a counteroffer from Penn State and no counteroffer was extended. Of the 16 respondents who provided details of their new position, seven accepted positions at private universities. Six of these seven accepted a tenured or tenure-track position while one accepted an academic non-tenure-track position. Consistent with Table 16, faculty who sought “better salary” may have received “better salary” at private universities.

¹⁴ May include examples like new spousal opportunity, desire to be closer to family, etc.

Table 17. New Positions

New position obtained	Count	Percent
Yes	22	69%
No	2	6%
Prefer not to answer	8	25%
Total	32	100%

Tenure Stay Beliefs

A majority of respondents (55%) were not sure if taking a stay of tenure would negatively impact a faculty member’s chances of promotion and tenure (Table 18). Thirty-six percent of respondents did not believe a stay of tenure negatively affected a faculty member’s chances of promotion and tenure. Consistent with the 2020 report, negative perceptions and uncertainty about the impact of stays of tenure may discourage some faculty from using them¹⁵.

Table 18. Tenure Stay Beliefs

Believe stay of tenure negatively affects faculty chance of promotion and tenure	Count	Percent
Yes (please explain)	3	9%
No	12	36%
Not sure	18	55%
Total	33	100%

Issues of Equity

Approximately one-third of respondents experienced equity-related issues during their time at Penn State (Table 19). Respondents who answered “yes” to the equity issues question were more likely to be identified as URM or international (44%) and female (50%) while respondents who answered “no” were more likely to be White (53%) and male (67%).

Table 19. Experiencing Inequity

Experience difficulties related to equity issues at the University ¹⁶	Count	Percent
Yes	17	31%
No	28	52%
Prefer not to answer	9	17%
Total	54	100%

¹⁵ It should be noted that only assistant professors without tenure are eligible for a stay. Many departing faculty were ineligible for this action.

¹⁶ Examples include discrimination or harassment.

Table 20. Inequity Experienced (by Race/Ethnicity and Birth Sex)

Experienced difficulties related to equity issues	Yes (Count)	No (Count)	Prefer Not to Answer (Count)	No (Percent)
White	14	24	7	53%
Under-represented or international	3	4	2	44%
Male	5	10	0	67%
Female	6	8	0	50%

Eleven respondents, who most often identified as White (81%), provided answers related to the types of inequities they had experienced (Table 20). The types of inequities most cited by the group included “gender discrimination” and “other type(s) of discrimination.” Respondents were not given the ability to expand upon “other type(s) of discrimination” within their survey response. The least selected inequities were “discrimination based on political beliefs” and “discrimination based on religion.”

Table 21. 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	Total
Ageism	6	2	3	0	11
Discrimination based on political beliefs	8	2	1	0	11
Discrimination based on religion	10	1	0	0	11
Discrimination based on sexual orientation	7	1	2	1	11
Gender discrimination	3	1	6	1	11
Other type(s) of discrimination	4	2	4	0	10
Racial/ethnic discrimination	7	2	2	0	11
Sexual harassment	7	2	2	0	11

Of those who replied to the equity issue questions and stated their race and sex, 84% identified as White and 51% identified as male. Additionally, only two of nine faculty who identified as a race or ethnicity other than White responded to the question in Table 21. Some URM faculty may have felt uncomfortable revealing their experiences with discrimination even if the survey was anonymous. Previous research shows that faculty of color, who feel tokenized, may engage in practices such as strategic invisibility¹⁷ to counter negative experiences within the workplace (Settles, Buchanan, and Dotson, 2019; Lollar, 2015).

¹⁷ Described as “agentic behaviors in which individuals manage the risk of being mistreated (e.g., stigmatization, rejection) by choosing to make themselves invisible” (Settles, et al., 2015, p. 69)

Interviewee Experiences

The results in this subsection pertain to 48 faculty who completed exit interviews because they retired (52%), moved to a new position outside Penn State (44%), or were denied tenure (4%). As previously stated, responses for the two faculty members in the “denied tenure” category who resigned prior to July 1, 2020, but were not included in the 2020 Faculty Exit Report,¹⁸ are included in this report.

Interviewees were asked a series of questions by EIOs. One of these inquiries was about the faculty member’s general satisfaction with, or perception of fairness at, Penn State. As displayed in Table 22, the phrasing of this question varied depending on the faculty person’s reason for leaving Penn State.

Table 22. General Satisfaction and Fairness Questions

Reason for Leaving	Interview Question
Denied Tenure	Overall, did you feel Penn State treated you fairly? If not, what should have been done differently?
Resigned	Were you generally satisfied with your experience at Penn State? If not, did you express your dissatisfaction to your administrative supervisors before seeking other opportunities or deciding to leave?
Retired	Were you generally satisfied with your experience at Penn State? If not, did you ever express your dissatisfaction to your administrative supervisors or others? If so, what was the outcome?

Direct responses to these questions were used to determine if interviewees considered their Penn State experience fair/satisfactory, or not. In situations where interviewees did not answer the question with a direct “yes” or “no”, answers to other questions were used to determine if their experience was fair/satisfactory. These secondary questions highlighted why the person was leaving and/or why they thought they were “denied tenure or advised out.”

Experiences described in the interview summaries were categorized as either “positive” or “negative” by the analyst. Words or phrases in the interview summaries used to identify positive experiences included “positive,” “appreciated,” “good,” “helpful,” and “impressed by.” Words or phrases used in conjunction with negative experiences included “frustrated by,” “insufficient,” “challenging,” and “less satisfied.” Positive and negative statements were quantified to identify which experiences were most common across participant interviews.

Using the methods above for determining satisfactory and fair experiences, 75% of interviewees had satisfactory or fair experiences while 25% had unsatisfactory or unfair experiences at Penn State. Most satisfied interviewees were faculty who retired (63%) whereas the highest percentage of unsatisfied interviewees were faculty who resigned (75%). Both respondents who were denied tenure were categorized as unsatisfied because they did not consider their experiences to be fair.

Satisfied Interviewees

While 75% of interviewees had satisfactory experiences, these faculty discussed their grievances more than their delights. Among satisfied participants, social support was the most identified “positive” across

¹⁸ June 30, 2020 was the deadline for faculty exiting Penn State between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2020 to be included within the 2020 Faculty Exit Report. An exception was made for these two cases.

interviews. This type of support usually came from supervisors and fellow faculty members. In one instance, a faculty member discussed feeling more supported by colleagues across Penn State than at their previous university system of a similar size. The person also noted being “most impressed” by Penn State’s librarians and the librarians’ accomplishments. Other interviewees were “impressed” by the general support provided by their supervisor(s) and acknowledged feeling more supported than some colleagues. These faculty noted having positive working relationships with their colleagues and considered their work responsibilities “reasonable.” In addition to social support, satisfied faculty also discussed being grateful for the opportunities and other benefits and perks (e.g., retirement plan, and higher income-to-cost of living ratio) associated with Penn State’s status as an R1 institution.

Common negatives identified by the satisfied faculty group included issues of equity and work-life balance. References to issues of equity primarily revolved around the lack of URM people across Penn State and faculty of color experiencing micro-aggressions or feeling isolated. Additionally, there were comments about the “Penn State Story” needing to be more reflective of the institution’s diversity and changing the “boys club mentality” of departments by uplifting the voices of younger and newer faculty. References to work-life balance mostly involved statements about having too many professional responsibilities and not enough time to complete them all. These responsibilities ranged from larger-than-expected advisee and supervisee caseloads to having more projects and courses to teach than other faculty members.

A few faculty members discussed feeling their workload was inequitable because of issues out of their control. A faculty member, who left for another position outside Penn State, voiced frustration with salary discrepancies among faculty. Although the person did not clarify, it is presumed they believed their salary was unfairly lower than that of other faculty members. A URM professor, who also left Penn State for another position, discussed being “sought out” by URM students more than their White faculty colleagues, as one of the only faculty of color in their department. This concern has been cited by many faculty of color, across the nation, as an issue that can influence faculty burnout.

Unsatisfied Interviewees

Although to a much lesser extent, unsatisfied interviewees also referenced positive experiences. Some of these experiences included mentorship and University prestige. Comments regarding mentorship mostly highlighted specific people that were helpful or groups of colleagues that provided informal mentorship. References to University prestige focused more generally on Penn State’s academic reputation and students’ “genuine attitude to learning.”

Unsatisfied faculty members also cited opportunities for improvement at the University. The most referenced opportunities focused on improving faculty mentorship, strengthening departmental community, and building department communication. While some interviewees considered their mentorship experiences positive, several did not. For example, one faculty member discussed “significant differences” between the type of mentoring provided to junior faculty recruited by senior faculty versus junior faculty not recruited by senior faculty.

References to the second opportunity for growth identified above, departmental community, highlighted “toxic” work environments. Although interviewees did not give specific details, they generally mentioned having colleagues who did not respect each other and supervisors who negatively impacted employee retention. Poor communication, in the form of “empty promises” and ill-defined job

responsibilities, represents the third opportunity for growth. Some faculty discussed receiving contradictory tenure advice by members of their department. Other faculty talked about not receiving a clear definition of their roles and responsibilities, which led to a confusing hierarchical reporting structure.

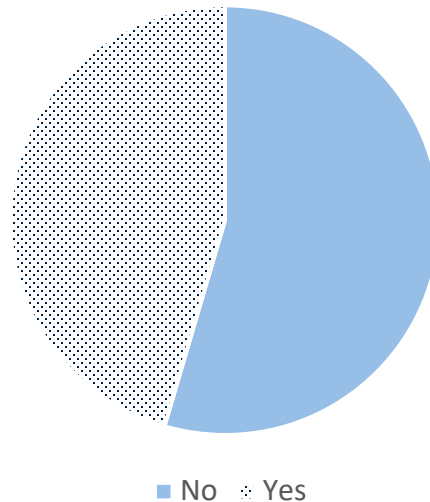
Impact of COVID-19

In addition to answering questions about their general satisfaction with Penn State, faculty were asked about the influence of COVID-19 on their decision to leave. The two faculty members who left due to tenure denial were not asked about the influence of COVID-19 on their departure. Figure 7 displays interviewee responses to this question.

Of 44 interviewees, 45% said COVID-19 did impact their reason for leaving while 55% said it did not. Faculty whose decisions to leave were impacted by COVID-19 were mostly White (70%), 60-69 years old (35%), associate professors (40%), and located at Campus Colleges (45%). Half were male and half female. Faculty whose decision to leave was not impacted by COVID-19 were mostly White, Male (58%), 60-69 years old (50%), full professors (46%), and located at University Park (62%). When asked “in what way” the pandemic influenced their decision to leave, resigned faculty discussed wanting to be closer to family and to live in more physically desirable locations while retired faculty noted concerns for their physical health and disinterest in remote teaching/learning.

Figure 7. Influence of COVID-19 Pandemic on Leaving

Did any pandemic-related circumstances influence your decision to leave Penn State?



Conclusion and Recommendations

Intersecting Survey and Interview Data

There were three areas in which the survey and interview data overlapped. These areas included faculty members' perceptions of work-life balance, the performance review process and communication, and sense of collegiality.

Work-life balance

Survey responses indicated that work-life balance was the least satisfying experience of department life but also the least important to respondents. Interview data supported the notion that work-life balance was least satisfying, but for interviewees, it took on greater importance. Work-life balance was commonly referenced as a negative experience by faculty who resigned who were otherwise generally satisfied with their experiences at Penn State. These faculty members discussed accepting new positions that reduced their workload (e.g., teaching load, project load, and serving multiple campus roles) or paid more than Penn State.

Performance Review and Communication

The performance review was rated the most important experience within the "University, College, and Campus Practices" category of the survey. It also, however, had one of the largest differences between perceived "importance" and "satisfaction." Lack of communication and transparency related to the performance review and promotion processes were issues for faculty who resigned and who were denied tenure. Interviewees noted the importance of clarifying requirements of the tenure process, better explaining faculty responsibilities, and being transparent about how promotions are approved or denied.

Collegiality

Collegiality among colleagues was rated as one of the more satisfying elements of both survey participants' and interviewees' experiences. Although survey participants were unable to provide context for their responses, interviewees discussed who they considered supportive and in what ways they were supported. People considered supportive included fellow professors and supervisors. The support these colleagues provided involved helping participants identify professional opportunities for their significant others, giving enough course release to support tenure duties, and providing effective administrative guidance.

Recommendations

The results of this report highlight opportunities to explore areas of misalignment between some of the importance/satisfaction items. The items with greatest misalignment between importance and satisfaction (i.e., the greatest difference between respondents' ratings of an item's importance to them and of their satisfaction with it) were "environment of shared decision making (Department Life category), "adequate time for research/creative activity," (Department Life category), "fairness of the performance review process," (University, College, and Campus Practices category), "sense of collegiality (Department Life category), "sense of equity and inclusion" (Department Life category), and "faculty grievance process" (University, College, and Campus Practices category).

This report also highlights the need to expand efforts in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging. As noted above, "Sense of equity and inclusion" received high rankings in terms of importance (4.76 out of 5) and relatively low rankings in terms of satisfaction (3.53) in the Department Life Category. There was

also a disparity between respondents' ratings of importance (4.42) and satisfaction (3.36) for "Support for equity and inclusivity" in the "University, College, and Campus Practices" category. Both interviewees and survey respondents referenced issues of inequity. Interviewees cited issues related to the lack of URM people across Penn State, micro-aggressions, and feelings of isolation experienced by faculty of color. In addition, 31% of survey respondents indicated that they had experiences issues related to equity; gender discrimination and other types of discrimination were most frequently cited. URM and international faculty were more likely than White faculty to say that they had experienced some type of inequity, and female faculty were more likely than male faculty to do so.

The Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (OVPFA) is engaged in ongoing efforts to address some of the issues identified above. For example, as this report is being prepared, the OVPFA is poised to begin an effort aimed at examining and bolstering faculty retention. This effort will involve college- and campus-level review of data related to faculty departures (resignations and retirements) and ongoing discussions among deans, chancellors, and central support units about ways to support faculty retention.

Additionally, the OVPFA will explore additional ways to engage with faculty and leadership to identify and address areas where additional effort should be applied. Efforts might come in the form of partnerships with relevant offices and entities such as the University Faculty Senate, the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity, and the Affirmative Action Office; workshops or other trainings for academic administrators; and reviews/revisions of academic policies and practices.

Future Enhancements to the Exit Study

To establish consistency with other University reports that count exiting faculty, the study period will be adjusted slightly in future iterations of this report. Future studies will focus on faculty departures occurring between October 1 and September 30 during the report years as documented in official census data. While this adjustment will impact longitudinal comparisons, we believe the impact will be minor and that the establishment consistency among official reports is a compelling reason to make the change.

Based on faculty exit data collected from the 2020-2022 cycle, there are several recommendations for enhancing future Faculty Exit Studies.

A possible enhancement to the Faculty Exit Study involves giving survey respondents the option to elaborate on their responses to closed-ended questions. For example, the current survey template allows respondents to select "other type(s) of discrimination" as a type of inequity experienced at Penn State but does not allow respondents to explain the "other type(s) of discrimination" they experienced. This solution could assist the OVPFA in naming and better understanding types of inequity that are not already listed in the survey.

Another suggestion is to include all survey data from all un-duplicated survey entries despite completion status of the entries. As previously mentioned, this report only includes data from survey submissions in which at least 50% of survey questions were answered. Including data from all survey entries, rather than a select group, can strengthen Penn State's ability to capture the experiences of exiting faculty members more accurately.

The Faculty Exit Study should be expanded to include the experiences of non-tenure-line faculty or a second, separate study instituted. The current study only focuses on exiting faculty who have received tenure or are in tenure-line positions, but non-tenure-line faculty comprise approximately 46.4% of all full-time faculty at University Park and the Commonwealth Campuses, and 52.5% of all full-time faculty including the College of Medicine. Highlighting the experiences of non-tenure-line faculty could improve Penn State's understanding of concerns shared by all faculty.

In addition to the above suggestions, future Faculty Exit Studies should include more asset-based questions to identify positive aspects of faculty experiences. Most of the questions within the current survey and interview protocols focus on the concerns of exiting faculty, rather than what they enjoyed most about working within Penn State. Asking departing faculty about their positive experiences can assist Penn State in identifying, and honing, its strengths while also acknowledging its opportunities for growth.

Each of these recommendations can assist Penn State in improving the experiences of its academic employees. More specifically, it can help advance faculty development, leadership training, and other professional opportunities by providing the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs a more robust understanding of both tenured/tenure-line and non-tenured/tenure-line faculty concerns.

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