

## FSS Qualitative Analysis 2021

As with most open-ended questions in these types of surveys, a significant portion of subjects did not answer the open-ended questions – the exception being “What you would change about MiSU”. In this case many of the responses reiterated previous ones and are reflected there, however any additional trends will be indicated at the end of the report. Consistent with this format of questions, respondents that did answer focused on “areas of improvement” or issues that individual respondents have with a particular area.

When conducting qualitative analysis, we focus on general trends that seem to be consistent between multiple responses. While they may not have used the exact words, the analysis focuses on the general sentiment of the responses. The following is a basic summary of the findings from the 2021 Faculty Satisfaction Survey conducted in the Spring of 2021. Each of the 7 subsections of the survey will be briefly summarized and a final summary of “Overall Trends” will be given. Please note that some comments in a section pertain more directly to questions in other sections. In these cases, the data was applied to the appropriate area of analysis.

### 1. Job Satisfaction

Academic Quality vs. “Everyone Can Succeed” – concern about pressure to lower academic standards to maintain and recruit students. Recruitment needs to be more focused and increased.

Research Agenda – lack of support for active research agendas in the form of time and resources. Expectations for research are not in-line with reality of everyday time management. This seems especially true for non-tenured and younger faculty.

Obtrusiveness of “Extra” Work – A number of respondents mentioned that the increased amount of Assessment, Redundancy in Paper work and forms interferes with the duties that are at the heart of their positions.

Salary Equability and “Fairness” – Many feel there is a large issue with salary. This is either underpay or inconsistency within and between departments/divisions. Promotional compensation is inadequate.

Perceived Favoritism – A number of respondents, both here and in “State of the Faculty” expressed concern in favoritism by Administration towards Departments and specific faculty. This goes in line with a perception that a limited number of faculty are making decisions and “drown out” others or are listened to more.

Internal Division between Junior and Senior Faculty – Many of the stated concerns seem to be amplified between faculty at different stages of their professional career. This difference is supported in the qualitative analysis in the subsections. There is a perception that more senior faculty dictate the decision and have an attitude of “it’s always been this way, so why change it?”

### 2. State of the Institution

Reactive vs. Proactive – There is a sentiment that there is a lack of clear goals, unifying message or recruitment. This has led to a perceived lack leadership from the top down. Comments indicated that this may be connected to administration being “overwhelmed” and therefore not as responsive as they could be.

Communication between various Divisions/Offices/Departments – Unlike the 2020 survey, where most are satisfied this survey indicates a concern about lack of communication, cooperation and collaboration between Divisions/Offices/Department and Administration. Seems to be an issue of “siloeing.” In addition, it appears again in the section on Faculty Governance with a lack of communication between FS Committees. The result of this is a concern about redundancy and working at cross purposes.

Grade Inflation – as well as being mentioned in Job Satisfaction section, grade inflation is a concern. The feeling of pressure to make sure students “pass to retain them.” There is a feeling of “academics being on the back burner” while other areas are more focused on.

Marketing – general concern on perceived lack of consistency in message for marketing and recruitment.

### **3. State of the Faculty**

Three concerns from the previous FSS remained in this section: 1) Division or lack of Cohesion between Division/Offices/Departments and FS committees, 2) Salary Inequity and Pay/Workload Inconsistency, and 3) Grade Inflation. New concerns that were articulated this year are: 1) Faculty Centralization: limited number of faculty are making the decisions for all the faculty. There is an over-weighting of specific voices in faculty and not a general understanding of faculty needs when making decisions. 2) Jr. Faculty Retention - concern about recruiting and retention of Jr Faculty due to lack of support and inability to be heard by senior faculty, and 3) “Every Shifting Uncertainty” – lack of understanding of the long-term plans for the University and thus concern about the future of their positions, departments and the University.

### **4. Professional Support**

Many respondents expressed limited interaction with specific offices on campus. This is particularly true for adjunct or part-time instructors. Three areas of concern did solidify: 1) Academic Support – specifically understaffing in key area’s (IT, CLC, Career Services, Disability Services/Mental Health). Faculty feeling they don’t understand procedures and or know who to refer students to as well as a perception of “talking the talk but don’t walk the walk.” 2) Marketing – lack of support and understanding of what MSU and divisions offer, 3) Library – resources for research is lacking, especially journal access and data bases and 4) Assessment Support – there is a feeling that the assessment process is cumbersome, to complex and ineffective in measuring anything due to response rates, process, etc.

### **5. Faculty Governance**

“Cult of personality” – some faculty have too much pull over key committees and discussions. With many of the same people being chosen for committees or work based on personality and not ability to contribute. Redundancy in Tasks - Lack of communication between committee and tasks leading to redundancy and working at cross purposes. Transparency – increased transparency and ease of access to discussions and decisions that are made. Responsiveness - Lack of responsiveness from Administration to recommendations and decisions of FS as well as transparency of the final decisions made.

### **6. Curriculum**

Limited responses in this area in that many feel they cannot speak to other disciplines curriculum. Better Recruitment – respondents expressed a lowering of standards and caliber of students. Everyone Can Succeed – pressure to pass students even in face of substandard performance.

### **7. Tenure and Promotion**

Once again, there is a clear distinction between those that have received tenure and those that have not. Dual Process – there is a dissatisfaction with the separation between the two processes. Committee Composition – Respondents mentioned that the committee make up and how that seems to be influential to receiving T/P rather than the process. Scholarship – perceived inconstancy in definition of “scholarship” and lack of understanding of those requirements in different disciplines. This is coupled with the lack of support for research in time, space and money. Excessive and Inconsistent Expectations - Scholarship expectations are excessive and

unrealistic when combined with teaching and service expectations. Transparency – limited to no transparency in regards to the decisions made – both at the committee level and at the administration level.

## **8. What Liked Most**

Once again, the people, size, students and autonomy are the key positives for respondents. In addition, this year there was positive assessment of MSU's response to COVID as well as the support for flexibly granted to faculty in light of the changing conditions.

## **9. What You would Change**

The responses to this question were lengthy, however were basically restatements of previous comments. Consistent with the FSS from last year are: 1) Clearer Understanding of Mission/Goals/Long Term Planning. 2) Pay Equity. 3) Communication. 4) Research Opportunities. 5) Marketing/Recruiting. 6) Resistance to change and thinking "outside the box." New additions include: 1) Quality of Students, 2) Hiring and Retaining Faculty, 3) Preferential treatment of departments and faculty. 4) Unrealistic work exceptions placed of Faculty for advancement. 5) Feeling of being in "Crisis Mode" all the time. 6) More room/acceptance of new ideas.

## **10. "Overall Trends"**

It is important to note that many of the of the respondents qualified there comments with it being an "unprecedented year and a half."

While most of the comments are consistent with last year's results a few new trends have developed. One of these is perceived favoritism towards certain departments and faculty members. This was articulated both in Job Satisfaction as well as in State of the Institution sections specifically, but was alluded to in Faculty Governance and State of Faculty sections. As previously stated, this is a new trend, however the frequency it was mentioned, along with the perception it is "impeding MSU's growth," illustrates it should be taken into consideration.

General dissatisfaction, with workload, lack of research support (both time and funding) and service exceptions remains at all levels of faculty. Lower ranking faculty are more dissatisfied with research expectations and service requirements than higher ranking faculty. Connector to the previous general finding, it is perceived that only a small number of senior faculty "have the ear of the administration." They are then considered to speak for the faculty when in fact they do not.

Pay Equity and Fairness is mentioned in a number of areas. Tying directly in with an increase demand for faculty to take on more and more responsibility. As more forms, assessment and recruiting has fallen on faculty the pay does not reflect the requirements of the job. This seems to be disproportionately mentioned by younger faculty.

Dissatisfaction directed towards Marketing and Recruiting. Again, faculty feel that the majority of this responsibility falls to them.

Finally, a feeling of lacking an overall vision and mission or “trying to be everything to everyone and then being nothing to anyone” was articulated in a number of places. Focus seems to be lacking and thus impacting many of the previous findings.

Positively, the vast majority of those surveyed stated that they have positive feelings towards the students, faculty, and MSU. The “People” rate as the most consistent positive and “what you like about MSU” in the open ended questions.

Please note: As with most surveys of this type – there are more negative or “dissatisfied” comments than positive. While there are a number of concerns and issues expressed in the open-ended questions, the overall analysis of the data indicates that most faculty are optimistic in the future of MSU.