

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

2013-2014 COACHE Faculty Satisfaction Survey

Executive Summary

The Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) Faculty Satisfaction Survey was administered to all Iowa State faculty by the Harvard Graduate School of Education in winter 2013-2014. More than 200 institutions provide national and peer benchmarks. The survey addresses nine broad areas that are considered critical to the professional success of faculty members:

- Aspects of research, teaching and service
- Institutional resources in support of faculty work
- Compensation, benefits and work/life
- Interdisciplinary work and collaboration
- Departmental collegiality, quality and engagement
- Appreciation and recognition
- Leadership and governance
- Mentoring
- Tenure and promotion process

In 2013, COACHE made an updated survey available to all faculty (previous surveys in 2005 and 2009 included only pre-tenure faculty). Fifty percent of Iowa State's tenure-eligible faculty (581 out of 1171) participated in the survey: 49 percent (441) of the respondents were tenured and 52 percent (134) were pre-tenure. In addition, approximately 20 percent (114) of our non-tenure-eligible faculty completed the survey.

Peer comparisons

Iowa State selected five participating institutions to include as our peer comparison group: North Carolina State University, Purdue University, University of Arizona, University of California - Davis, and University of Minnesota - Twin Cities. Because not all institutions collected data from their non-tenure-eligible faculty, COACHE provided a comparative analysis of responses from tenure-eligible faculty only. These results are highlighted below.

Areas of strength

Iowa State's faculty satisfaction ranked first or second among its peer group in six areas listed below. The mean scores on a five-point scale are given in parentheses. In these six areas Iowa State is in the top 30 percent of all institutions surveyed:

- Health and retirement benefits (4.0)
- Facilities and work resources (3.6)
- Departmental engagement (3.5)
- Senior leadership (3.3)
- Mentoring (3.2)
- Interdisciplinary work (2.9)

Iowa State also ranked in the top 30% of institutions in faculty satisfaction with Collaboration (3.6), and third within our peer group.

When asked to identify the overall best aspects of working at ISU, respondents identified five characteristics:

- Quality of colleagues;
- Cost of living;
- My sense of “fit” here;
- Academic freedom;
- Opportunities to collaborate with colleagues.

The first four characteristics were also recognized as top attributes previously in the 2009 COACHE Survey.

Rankings of strengths were fairly consistent across all demographic categories and ranks, although there were a few notable differences. Faculty of color rated tenure policies and tenure clarity higher than white faculty. Mentoring was noted as an area of strength among assistant professors: 61 percent agreed or somewhat agree that there is effective mentoring of pre-tenure faculty in their department, compared to 49 percent at peer institutions.

Areas for improvement

Responses from tenure-eligible faculty identified three areas in which faculty satisfaction ranks lower than our selected peers. These are:

- Tenure reasonableness (3.7)
- Departmental leadership (3.5) and collegiality (3.7)
- Satisfaction with time spent teaching (3.8) & teaching loads (3.1)

Iowa State is within the middle 40 percent of all institutions surveyed in tenure reasonableness and in the satisfaction with time spent teaching and teaching loads. It ranks in the bottom 30 percent of our peer group with regard to satisfaction with departmental leadership and collegiality. The clarity of tenure criteria in the department and formal feedback on the progress toward tenure are areas of concern for assistant professors in particular.

Comparison with peer institutions identified five areas of faculty dissatisfaction with working at Iowa State. These are:

- Geographic location
- Compensation
- Too much service
- Lack of support for research
- Quality of departmental leadership

The first two aspects were similarly ranked in the 2009 survey. In contrast, two other characteristics from the 2009 survey – dissatisfaction with diversity and the quality of graduate students – showed significant improvement and fell off this list.

Areas for improvement showed greater variability by professorial rank than by race or gender. Women and faculty of color rated collaboration and colleagues' commitment to diversity lower than white male faculty. As a group associate professors registered greater dissatisfaction with the mentoring they received than others: 71 percent of associate professors somewhat to strongly disagreed that there is effective mentoring of tenured associate professors in their department. Iowa State also ranks lower than peer institutions in all questions that address the clarity of criteria for promotion to full professor. At the same time 70 percent of associate professors (compared to 73 percent at peer institutions) agreed that there is, in fact, a departmental culture that encourages associate professors to work towards promotion to full professorship.

Other areas of concern for associate professors include research and service benchmarks, specifically the time spent on research and service, and equitability of committee assignments.

Potential opportunities

The results of the COACHE survey identify areas of faculty satisfaction that may be showcased more prominently when recruiting faculty and promoting the institution. The COACHE results will also be utilized with an eye to improving and enhancing institutional climate and culture so that all faculty can be successful contributors to Iowa State's educational mission. Several potential opportunities have been identified to enhance faculty satisfaction:

Mentoring of associate professors

- Communicate criteria, timeline, process, and best practices for promotion to full professor
- Promote more mid-level faculty development

Clarity of tenure and promotion criteria and process

- Communicate college-level processes for P&T review
- Provide training for department and college P&T committees

Department leadership and collegiality

- Provide mentors for new chairs
- Standardize critical policies and practices across departments and colleges