

Faculty Status and Welfare Survey, 2012
Executive Summary: Results and Recommendations
December, 2012

A. Introduction

Concerned with a variety of campus issues, in February 2012, the Executive Committee (EC) of the Faculty Senate (FS) charged the Faculty Status and Welfare subcommittee (FSW) to survey the faculty. The EC suggested that the broadly conceived survey should explore topics including the centralization of hiring, perceived replacement of tenure track lines with non-tenure track lines, faculty/student ratio, level of university support, and how these issues affect workload, tenure, and morale. The survey also asked faculty to comment on other issues pertinent to faculty status and welfare, and to offer suggestions. Following these guidelines, members of the FSW created an open-ended survey designed to capture a “snapshot” of campus issues. The survey was open for three weeks in March-April, 2012, and elicited 164 responses from tenured, tenure track and non-tenure track faculty, or a response rate of 11% of the university’s total ‘voting’ faculty (1,476) and 15% of those who received the survey (see explanation for this discrepancy below). This is a summary report compiled, collated and presented by members of FSW 2011-12 and 2012-13. It should be stressed that these findings are impressionistic and preliminary, and represent the opinions of a relatively small slice of the campus community. FSW intends that these results be used to initiate further conversations and outreach across campus.

B. Methodology and Implementation

Members of the 2011-12 FSW drafted the survey in February, 2012 (see below Appendix A, p. 10). The survey they designed did not focus on quantitative questions – rather it was designed to elicit comments from faculty on a wide variety of perceived areas of tension on campus as proposed by members of the EC and FSW. The survey asked participants to identify themselves by college, department (optional), rank, and time of employment at SIUC. It asked respondents to comment on the degree to which surveyed issues were topics of conversation on campus, and how they impact workload, the tenure process, and morale. It asked faculty members to include other matters of concern not specifically identified by the survey, to discuss possible outcomes, and finally to estimate their current morale from a range from very dissatisfied to very satisfied.

As the campus was transitioning to Desire2Learn (D2L), FSW opted to use this platform for the survey. Unfortunately, navigating a new system took time, and lack of familiarity with the system may have discouraged participation. 1,090 faculty received the first survey invitation on March 29, 2012. Reminders went out April 11 and 19. The survey closed on April 20.

C. Responses to the Survey Process and Tabulation of the Results

The survey process prompted some commentary from its participants. Through e-mails and comments made to committee members, a few people raised concerns about confidentiality. Two handwritten responses to the survey were returned in hard copy anonymously in campus mail envelopes, with notes clarifying that the respondents felt insecure answering online. There was also concern that information about a respondent’s college and department could be cross-referenced with the length of time at SIU to enable identification. This was not possible given the layout of the responses to each question, which were reported separately with no discernible way to link responses across questions. Nonetheless similar concerns by some faculty may have discouraged participation, and might speak to a climate of mistrust on campus. A couple of other comments raised criticisms about the survey, suggesting its questions might be skewed or slanted. However, many other respondents thanked

the FSW for the opportunity to voice concerns.

After the survey closed in April, 2012, the 2011-12 FSW met and began the process of reading and categorizing the comments generated from the open-ended questions (Q5-Q7 and Q9). We began with the categories already provided in Q5: centralization of hiring; perceived replacement of TT with NTT lines; faculty/student ratio; level of university support [including travel]; workload; the tenure process; and morale. We organized the additional comments generated in Q6, Q7, and Q9 into the following themes: communication issues; SIU identity; the Faculty Association; and the Faculty Senate. Because a concept such as “faculty welfare” is complex, these various themes are not neat, tidy categories; rather, they overlap with, build on, and at times contradict each other. FSW members endeavored to represent the data fairly, considering outlying opinions in addition to areas of consensus. Compiling and rationalizing data was a time consuming process we were unable to complete prior to the end of the spring 2012 semester. Differing schedules, travel, research and other projects meant that the editing process continued into Fall 2012 with members of both the 2011-12 and 2012-13 FSW committees. Members of 2012-13 FSW read the entire report and made recommendations which appear in the final section of this executive summary.

We recognize that the survey process was not without flaws. Because a number of faculty (especially from the School of Medicine) had not claimed their SIU ID numbers or their siu.edu email addresses at the time of the survey, they did not have access to D2L. This is why the survey only reached 1,090 faculty members out of a possible 1,476 identified by the Faculty Senate as ‘voting faculty.’ Thus while the overall response rate of all faculty was 11%, the response rate for those with D2L access at the time of the survey was 15%.

In addition, the survey did not contain quantitative questions, so it cannot rank faculty concerns. The wording of questions may not always have been clear to respondents. These voices and opinions are nonetheless important as a means to initiate a conversation about campus climate and morale. We offer the following summary of survey results and comments (pp. 3-7), with some recommendations (pp. 8-9), in the hopes that it will prompt further dialogue on the issues that face our campus. This survey should be regarded as a “pilot” that should lead to the systematic implementation of a more precise and regular survey process as one of several possible ways to gauge faculty sentiment and tap faculty expertise on issues germane to the university as a whole.

D. Statistical breakdown of participants:

164 faculty members provided responses. Data from Q4 (time of employment at SIUC), reveals participants ranging from their first year of employ up to their thirty-fourth, with many having logged twenty plus years at the institution. The charts below provide numbers and percentages of participants by rank and college.

Responses by rank (Q3)	respondents	faculty¹	Response rate
Non-tenure track	24	585	4.1
Tenure-track	32	n.a.	n.a.
Tenured	108	891 (T/TT)	15.7 (T/TT)
Totals	164	1476	11.1

¹ Total faculty data numbers provided by Becky Armstrong of the Faculty Senate, derived from a Human Resources list, and checked by college deans. This data did not include a break down into tenure track vs. tenured professors. We would like to thank Becky Armstrong and JP Dunn for their assistance.

Respondents by college (Q1)	respondents by college (n=136)	faculty in college ²	Response rate
CoLA	43	285	15.09
CEHS	20	259	7.72
CoS	17	135	12.59
CASA	15	150	10
MCMA	12	54	22.22
Agriculture	9	58	15.52
Library	8	27	29.63
Business	4	48	8.33
Engineering	4	65	6.15
Medicine	4	361	1.11
Law	0	34	0

Q8 of the survey asked respondents to characterize their satisfaction in terms of morale. The results appear below.

Assessment of Morale (Q8)	Respondents (n=162)	Response rate
Very dissatisfied	52	32.09
Dissatisfied	56	34.56
Neutral	30	18.51
Satisfied	19	11.72
Very satisfied	5	3.08

E. Summary of Faculty Comments (Q5-Q7, Q9)

FSW committee members organized the narrative data from the opened-ended questions (Q5, Q6, Q7, Q9) on the survey into the eleven areas listed below. Those themes that were discussed most often by respondents appear first, while the ones that included fewer comments appear later. The only exception to this is the issue of morale, which received the second largest number of direct comments (after centralization of hiring). We present the morale section last, because it provides an overview of the issues that are presented more thoroughly earlier in the report. Readers will note a certain amount of unavoidable overlap between categories, which is understandable given how, for example, an issue such as centralization affects workload, identity, communication, etc.

1. Centralization.

Ninety-eight survey respondents commented on centralization of hiring in their responses. Indeed, several respondents named it as the “most important” and “most discussed” issue among their colleagues. Although a few comments indicated cautious support for the policies of centralization, many more were opposed, both to the process of centralized hiring, and with anticipated effects of it. Comments indicated that centralized hiring discounted departmental knowledge and expertise, removing decision making power from those most qualified. Further, faculty respondents were concerned about the criteria used by the Provost’s office to assess hiring requests, worried that they were mysterious or weighted to benefit particular programs and colleges, and that ultimately decisions rested with a very small committee and the Provost himself. Some respondents questioned whether the new system added layers of bureaucracy and time to an already time-sensitive process. Many other comments addressed the difficulties in planning for the future and managing colleges as a whole that

² Numbers provided by Becky Armstrong, and derived according to the process outlined in note 1.

centralization poses for deans. Discussions of centralization also revealed a certain amount of misunderstanding and misinformation about centralization policy.

Responses also indicated the perceived link between reduced hiring and centralizing of the process of hiring. Many, many faculty responded with concerns about lines left unfulfilled, and the concomitant impact on teaching and pedagogy, student mentoring and progress to graduation, faculty workloads, and morale.

2. Workload

Workload issues generated seventy-three comments in the survey. The most common themes related to the severe pressures generated by ‘doing more with less,’ the effects that increasing teaching and service, administrative and committee workloads have on a number of other areas such as the ability to offer quality instruction to students (as already noted above), and the development of online courses. Some comments reflected concern with faculty’s ability to mentor the seemingly-growing number of students not adequately prepared for college-level work. Others worried about their ability to provide mentorship to graduate students. And a persistent fear found in responses concerned how increased teaching and service work would negatively affect research agendas, grantsmanship and progress to tenure.

Other concerns included the criteria and metrics used to evaluate teaching, indirect teaching and research; the equity of and accountability for workload assignments among “high productivity research” faculty and those perceived to be less research-focused; differences in metrics across departments and colleges (and especially in the library); and the impact of shorter term contracts for chairs and directors.

3. University Support (Including Travel)

The issue of university support for faculty teaching and research emerged in several ways in sixty-four comments. The most comments in this category addressed travel support. In general, there was a strong sense that support has eroded over the last few years, primarily in terms of financial travel support and OTS, but also institutional support, and the perception that the state legislature does not value our research mission. Many respondents acknowledged the difficulty of maintaining travel funds in times of declining state support and the current national economic crisis. Nonetheless, lack of travel funding has caused at least some faculty to alter their research plans, and many expressed concern of the potential impact on both tenure and promotion and the mentoring of students. Some who have not yet experienced a lack of travel funds fear that that is what the future holds. Some predict that failure to replace faculty will result in fewer researchers on campus, an inability to attract new faculty, and that without sufficient support to research, maintaining research status and reputation will be difficult if not impossible. Lack of travel funds also triggered poor morale among a number of faculty who reported that they value the exchange of ideas and professional development offered by conference participation.

Other comments pointed to the deteriorating state of existing facilities as well as the priorities for new construction on campus, and the impact these have on research, teaching, and the recruitment and retention of students and faculty. Still others commented on the decline in both faculty lines and support staff, while others worried about lack of resources for the library, curricular and other forms of faculty development, merit pay, and UC101.

4. Perceived Replacement of TT lines with NTT lines

The perceived replacement of tenure-track (TT) lines with non-tenure-track (NTT) lines prompted fifty-seven comments overall. Some felt that NTT hiring in a time of fiscal crisis was appropriate, while others questioned whether this was even a widespread practice. Many fear that decisions about replacing TT lines with NTT are made with the “bottom line” primarily in mind, rather than pedagogy, departmental needs or research. Some felt that such replacements will lower research productivity and undermine the reputation and uniqueness of the university as a research institution. Others worried about the pressures facing NTT in terms of load and length of contract, and the degree to which this would affect quality of teaching and engagement with the university community.

5. SIU Identity

SIU identity was not a question on the survey. It nonetheless emerged as a category based on the fifty-six related responses we received. Some identified threats to SIU’s research identity, citing concerns with declining academic standards, lowering admission standards, the perceived replacement of tenure track lines and threats to graduate education on campus. Others addressed SIU as a state university traditionally committed to granting broad access to public education. Some felt this tradition was under threat through the perceived admission of more academically unprepared students, while others worried that our commitment to those students had diminished. Still others commented on the perceived “corporatization” of the university and of higher education nationwide, suggesting that it was being turned into a “diploma mill” or “business” with little regard for the quality of faculty or the learning of students. Finally, some respondents addressed how SIU’s public image, expressing concern in particular about the credibility of some university leaders (especially Dr. Poshard), and the message, or mixed messages presented by university and board leadership on topics including the recent faculty strike.

6. Communication Issues

Communication issues between faculty and administration were discussed directly in approximately forty comments and suggestions. The most common issue addressed was the need for increased transparency and honesty in decision-making. Some expressed frustration with what they perceived to be disinterest in faculty opinions, experiences, input, and a lack of recognition for the centrality of faculty as ‘the face of the university.’ They cited poor communication between faculty and administration and lack of commitment to genuine shared governance. Other respondents noted a perceived gap between the reality of SIU currently and the messages of its marketing campaign.

7. Faculty/Student Ratio

The question about the faculty-student ratio prompted thirty-five responses. First, certain respondents were satisfied with the current faculty-student ratio. At the same time, respondents emphasized that ratios should take different kinds of teaching assignments into consideration. Second, other respondents expressed concern about changing faculty-student ratios. Respondents identified that changing ratios were due to both the decline in student enrollment—a consequence of both national trends and factors specific to SIU—and the increasing number of faculty leaving. As noted above, fluctuating workloads triggered other concerns: workload equity, maintaining quality of research and teaching, preserving accreditation and being able to place students in internships. Third, respondents highlighted the critical nature of this issue. They noted that declining student enrollment and faculty numbers are feeding into each other and becoming a vicious cycle; faculty departures diminish the offerings available to students, which can lead to declining enrollment, which, in turn, further

diminishes programs. Respondents offered different assessments of the administration's response to these challenges: some found the administration response to be attentive and timely, while others found the response to be inadequate.

8. The Tenure Process

Fifteen respondents provided direct comments on tenure and the tenure process. A few comments criticized the idea of tenure itself. More pointed to problems with flaws in how tenure is granted in particular departments with respect to teaching and research expectations. The bulk of comments worried about possible changes to tenure as a result of other crises/changes on campus, including a fear that fewer lines and centralized control of them would act as a motivation to grant tenure to undeserving candidates, and, as noted above, concerns about the ability of tenure track faculty to complete research and attend conferences.

9. Faculty Senate

The Faculty Senate (FS) was not specifically mentioned in the open-ended questions in this survey; however, this category emerged from the responses. Two major sub-themes emerged from nineteen comments: the limitations of the Senate and suggestions for helping the Senate become more powerful. Overall, comments regarding FS were neutral to negative in terms of knowledge about the roles and activities of the Senate, and perceived inaction, lack of effectiveness, and 'rubberstamping' of administrative policies.

10. Faculty Association

Fourteen respondents commented either on the Faculty Association (FA), the recent strike, or both. Several voiced criticisms about the FA. One respondent simply wanted the union to "go away," but many more identified specific concerns with the union, particularly in terms of its leadership, and on the issue of merit pay, which they believed the FA had unduly limited. Others found the FA to be only one of several contributors to low morale, including also actions by the administration, reductions in state funding, threats to pensions, etc. These voices suggested that the FA and administration share responsibility for recent events. Still others felt that administrative treatment of the FA during the strike and a failure to mend fences afterwards demonstrated a failure to acknowledge the principles of shared governance.

11. Morale

The survey generated ninety-seven comments that directly referred to morale. These comments represent a consensus among survey respondents that morale is low at SIU.

These responses significantly overlap with other concerns already raised, such as centralization and micromanaging, lack of stability, communication, and respect for faculty contributions. An analysis of references to morale identified a number of emergent themes. In addition to concerns over issues of control and centralization, faculty linked their low morale to perceived mismanagement, scandals and bad press, feelings of disrespect and lack of trust and support, faculty departures and lack of replacements, inability to assist ill-prepared students, workload, communication, lack of transparency, a 'culture of whining'/criticism of leadership, and the 2011 faculty strike.

F. Conclusions, Recommendations

As the above section suggests, respondents linked issues identified in the survey, and many others of their own making, to low morale on the SIU campus. Low morale is a very serious problem facing this university, and it is one that must be addressed. It is

equally clear from these results the tremendous affection faculty have for the institution, and its students, and how many faculty actively desire to formulate and contribute to the articulation of solutions to some of the problems outlined here. One of the greatest resources of this institution is its faculty, as many noted in this survey. Collectively faculty and the administration must face our perceived and real differences, find ways to reconcile, and most importantly promote inclusive dialogue and develop concrete policies to address our many concerns. Based on responses to Q7 (desired outcomes) and Q9 (final thoughts), the FSW makes the following recommendations. We posit these as low or no-cost solutions which faculty and administration, working together, can use to recognize and address the concerns outlined above.

- **Acknowledgment that morale is a problem:** Many faculty on campus feel anxiety about a variety of issues, feel undervalued by the university, and believe that campus conversations focus too much on dollars and short term efficiencies, rather than on maintaining and enhancing the academic quality necessary for long term prosperity. Low morale affects not only individual faculty, but also our ability to work together to address problems such as state cuts and enrollment and retention challenges. We call for a regular annual survey of faculty needs and concerns. Such a survey should be scientifically constructed and vetted by faculty with relevant knowledge and experience, and once institutionalized, survey data be studied and receive response from administrators and constituency groups.
- **Communication:** Some faculty anxieties and concerns are based on misunderstandings of administrative policy, and the survey illustrates the role played by miscommunication and especially rumor in low morale. We urge upper administrators and bodies such as the Faculty Senate to think creatively about how to keep communication lines open. Faculty Senators must do their part as disseminators of accurate information.
- **Transparency and Administrative Visibility:** One concrete way to prevent misinformation is for there to be greater transparency about administrative decisions which affect us all, and especially concerning centralized decision making and the budget. Many respondents called for greater transparency in their responses to Q7. The chancellor's website and initiatives to meet with small groups of faculty are good steps towards greater transparency, but to increase buy-in and avoid impressions of inequity, metrics and principles used to make decisions regarding resource allocation, and cuts made to non-academic programs and administrative offices should be more consistently shared with faculty and clearly explained to the university community. Directly and indirectly, respondents to Q7 and Q9 called for more to be done to bolster connections between faculty and administrators, especially involving face to face interactions and listening sessions. We urge members of the upper administration and constituency groups to think about formats to foster faculty/administrative interaction, exchange and dialogue, including small groups, town hall meetings with upper administrators, deans and faculty in colleges, Q&A sessions, regular budget updates, suggestion boxes or encouraging other means of written communication, and interaction between administrators and union leaders.
- **Shared Governance:** The evidence above suggests that some faculty feel that their voices are not heard on campus on crucial issues including the budget and hiring, and that centralization squanders the knowledge and experience of faculty and deans. The most commonly made suggestions in Q7 (outcomes) were the return of hiring to department/dean level, and a substantive, visible increase in meaningful shared governance and faculty input. These results call for clarifications to be made about the function of deans on campus - there was a strong sentiment that much of the decision making as is feasible should take place at more local levels and that deans be given more autonomy.

Administrators and constituency groups need to foster substantive campus conversations about what is meant by the phrase 'shared governance.' Constituency groups (Faculty Senate, Graduate Council, etc.) need to take the lead in this endeavor, especially as several respondents questioned the Faculty Senate's effectiveness. Our meetings should be more than listening sessions, and more truly deliberative. Faculty who feel they have a voice in the future of this institution, either through an active vigorous and visible constituency group, through other modes, or through some sense of local, departmental empowerment will be more engaged in creative thinking about the university's future. They will feel greater loyalty to the institution, and their morale will rise accordingly.

- **Academic Quality:** These results reveal the perception that SIU's financial woes, combined with other factors, have directed focus away from academic quality as our number one priority. We urge those who are making decisions about hiring, reallocation, program review, etc., to consider academic quality *first* in their deliberations, and to clearly articulate it as a priority in all decision-making.
- **Equity:** Respondents noted perceived inequities with regard to travel allocations, workload, hiring preferences, and cost cutting. Improved transparency may eliminate most of the perceptions. However if any real disparities surface, efforts should be made to agree upon campus-wide standards or decision making metrics. Declines in enrollment and funds create a climate that unnecessarily pits faculty member against faculty member, and department against department. Administrators and constituency groups should be wary of these tensions, and consider ways to ameliorate them.

Appendix A –Survey Text

Faculty Senate Faculty Status and Welfare Committee Survey Spring 2012

This survey has been constructed by the Faculty Status and Welfare (FSW) Committee of the Faculty Senate. Its intent is to increase the lines of communication campus-wide about recent and impending changes and to give you the chance to share your thoughts. It need only take a few minutes, or as long as you'd like. It would be especially valuable to provide campus constituency groups and decision-makers with your thoughts and concerns about your status and welfare as faculty, especially in relation to real or perceived changes such as:

- centralization of hiring decisions
- the perceived replacement of tenure track lines with non-tenure track lines
- faculty/student ratio
- level of university support, including travel funding

AND how these and other issues affect:

- workload
- the tenure process
- morale

This survey is confidential, and your name will not be associated with your comments. It will be available **until midnight on Friday, April 20th**. After this, the FSW Committee will go through the comments and thematize them into a brief report that will be shared with the entire campus community.

SURVEY QUESTIONS:

Basic information:

- 1) Please indicate the college you work in
- 2) (optional) Please indicate the department or unit you work in
- 3) Please indicate your rank [tenured, tenure track, or NTT]
- 4) How long have you been employed at SIUC?

Open-ended questions: (write as much or as little as you like)

5) What discussions, if any, have you had with colleagues about any of the following? What are your thoughts on these issues?:

- centralization of hiring decisions
- the perceived replacement of tenure track lines with non-tenure track lines
- faculty/student ratio
- level of university support, including travel funding (i.e. have you reduced your conference or research-related travel and if so, why?)

AND how these and other issues affect:

- workload
- the tenure process
- morale

6) What issues have we not raised that should be included in discussions of faculty status and welfare?

7) What outcomes would you like to see?

8) Please estimate your current level of morale related to your status and welfare as an SIUC faculty member:

_____ Very satisfied

_____ Satisfied

_____ Neutral

_____ Dissatisfied

_____ Very dissatisfied

9) Open space for any final thoughts: