

Synopsis of Faculty Surveys from 2008-2012
Prepared for Strategic Planning Steering Committee
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Introduction: This report includes summary data and observations from surveys administered to SDSU faculty and non-faculty exempt professionals between fall 2008 and spring 2011. This summary was prepared to identify themes that could inform the University's Strategic Plan. It includes a summary of the following surveys and the years administered: Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey, 2011; the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) 2010 and 2008; Great Colleges to Work for Survey, 2010; and the HLC Faculty and Non-faculty Exempt Surveys, 2008. The last two surveys included items for non-faculty exempt, professionals.

Purpose: The purposes of the surveys were to gather information and perceptions about the University climate in the areas of teaching, research and service and to identify strengths and weaknesses that could be capitalized upon or enhanced to improve the University. These data, along with many other forms of evidence, can inform institutional improvement efforts for the future.

Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) survey is conducted every three years and was last conducted in Spring 2011. Surveys were sent to 619 faculty with 216 responding. Because the intended survey group was undergraduate full-time faculty, the data reflect the responses of 160 undergraduate faculty respondents.

Since the survey was administered in Spring 2011, faculty were clearly concerned about the institutional budget, and it is not surprising that the data reflect that faculty were less than satisfied with salary, retirement benefits, and other resources. Fully 25% of the respondents considered early retirement (20.6% at peer institutions) and 46.3% (31.7% at peer) considered leaving the University. Other concerns reflected in the data include changes in work responsibilities, institutional priorities and promotion and tenure criteria.

SDSU faculty are experiencing a transition in their roles as the University redefines its expectations relative to a balance between research, teaching, and service. Teaching remains a high priority for faculty and over 76% indicate it is "essential" to them personally. Over 72% are satisfied with the freedom to determine course content and the autonomy and independence provided. However, while assignments are changing, faculty experience heavy teaching loads with nearly 50% of the respondents teaching nine or more hours/week and spending 13 or more hours per week preparing for class. On average, SDSU faculty teach three undergraduate courses/per term (compared to 2 at peer institutions) and have a larger average class size.

Teaching , Research and Service

While teaching is important, there is a struggle to incorporate the wide array of pedagogies that improve student learning. More faculty are teaching interdisciplinary courses, seminars for first year students and courses on the Internet. Many are incorporating service learning and increasing efforts to involve undergraduates in research. Additionally, results indicate that faculty use more real life problems and less grading on a curve. However, while faculty are encouraged to use student- centered pedagogue and active learning, respondents continue to use multiple choice exams, quizzes, electronic quizzes with immediate feedback, and extensive lecturing. They report less use of essay exams, term papers, multiple drafts of written work, class discussion, and cooperative learning (small groups), which are practices that improve learning.

There appears to be a disparity in assignments between men and women which may be a function of rank, highest degree completed, and discipline. More men than women respondents hold the rank of professor, are tenured, and are contracted for research. Women's contracts have higher teaching expectations, and therefore, they report higher teaching loads and less research. Women also focus their professional development on teaching and

receive incentives to integrate technology and to develop new courses. On the other hand, more men than women participate in sabbaticals, feel that research is valued by others in their department and receive training for administrative leadership roles. (Note: There is only one active woman Distinguished Professor, Dr. Marge Hegge, who earned her recognition in 1991.).

Faculty respondents (37.5%) indicate that research is essential to them personally, and more men than women report having research results published. Additionally, nearly 43% of women respondents felt that they had to work harder than colleagues to be perceived as a legitimate scholar. The institution's faculty report less scholarly research productivity in the form of articles published and submitted than faculty in the comparison group.

Service is essential to 22.5% of faculty. Women more frequently report involvement with volunteer work and service, use of scholarship to meet community needs and instill a commitment to community service into students.

Diversity and Institutional Priorities

Nearly all (92.4%) faculty agree that a diverse student body enhances the educational experience of all students, ethnic diversity should be more strongly reflected in the curriculum. Over 84% indicated that women, faculty of color, and gay and lesbian faculty are treated fairly. Between 55% and 63% of faculty see the following as important personal values and educational goals.

Promoting racial understanding (55.5%)

Enhancing students' knowledge of and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups (57.6%)

Teaching students tolerance and respect for different beliefs (63.1%)

Less than 40% of the respondents agreed that increasing minority representation, developing an appreciation of multiculturalism, gender equity and recruitment of minority people were institutional priorities. Since 2008, faculty perceive increased emphasis on building the institution's prestige, on hiring faculty "stars," pursuing extramural funding, enhancing the institution's national image, and strengthening links with the for-profit corporate sector.

Relationship with administration and criteria for advancement

The data vary with respect to the faculty perception of and relationship with administration. More than 70% perceive that faculty are typically at odds with campus administration and find "red tape" stressful, and between 60-67% of faculty would like more involvement in campus decision making. However, the same percentage indicates that faculty concerns are considered when making policy and that the University is open about its policies. In 2011, 38.7% of faculty indicated that they were unclear about the criteria for advancement and promotion. This is a nearly 10% increase since 2008.

Great Colleges to Work For Survey - 2010

In 2010, South Dakota State University participated in the Great Colleges to Work For (GCTWF) survey conducted by the Chronicle of Higher Education and ModernThink LLC. Surveys were returned by 327 (51%) of the 638 faculty, administrators, and exempt professional staff. Faculty accounted for 176 of the respondents (79 tenured and 42 professors, 35 Associate Professors, 54 Assistant Professors, 15 Instructors); 27 were administrators; 78 were exempt professional staff; and 10 were non-exempt /other staff. Several individuals declined to answer demographic items.

The survey includes 60 statements organized into fifteen (15) broad categories. Each of these is informed by two or more items. For reporting, a scale was created to represent the average positive (strongly agree or agree) responses: 75%-100%, Very good to excellent; 65%-74%, Good; 55%-64%, Fair to Mediocre; 45%-54%, Yellow Flag, and 0%-44%, Red Flag . The overall responses for the fifteen categories were as follows:

- Good (65%-74% positive)
Job Satisfaction/Support, Professional Development, Pride, Supervisors/Department Chairs.
- Fair – Mediocre (55%-64% positive)
Teaching Environment; Compensation, Benefits, & Work/Life Balance; Facilities; Policies, Resources & Efficiency; Senior Leadership; Faculty, Administration & Staff Relations; Collaboration; Fairness; Respect & Appreciation
- Yellow Flag (45%-54% positive)
Shared Governance, Communication

The administrative respondents overall positive average was 73%; the exempt /professional’s was 58%, and the faculty’s average was 60%. The administrators’ highest positive average was 85% for “Supervisors/Department Chairs” and the lowest for “Facility” (58%). In contrast, for faculty the highest positive average was 73%, “Professional Development” and the lowest was 53% “Shared Governance.” For exempt professional staff, the highest average positive response was 76% for “Pride” and the lowest was 47% “Communication.” See Table 1

Table 1: Highest and lowest positive average by job category

Job Category	Highest	Observation	Lowest
Administrators	85% Supervisors/Dept Chairs	83% Pride 66% (Shared Governance)	58% Facilities
Faculty	73% Professional Development	70% Pride 70% Supervisors/Dept Chairs	53% Shared Governance 59% Facility
Professional Staff	76% Pride	59% Supervisors/Dept Chairs	47% Communication 50% Shared Governance 54% Facility

“Pride” received average positive responses of 70% from all job categories; “Supervisors/Department Chairs” also received positive responses of 70% from faculty and administrators. Faculty (53%) and exempt professional’s (50%) rated “Shared Governance” with low positive averages. For exempt professionals, “Communication” received the lowest positive average of 47%. The facilities category, which had the lowest positive average for administration, was also in the lower ranges for faculty and exempt professional staff.

There is a decline in the overall positive average for all respondents (faculty, professional staff, administration, etc.) which appear to be related to time in a job at the University. See Table 2

Table 2: Percent positive responses based on years on job/at institution

Years on Job/at Institution	N	Positive Percent
Less than 2 years in job	78	73%
Less than 2 years at institution	67	74%
2-4 years in the job	55	59%
2-4 years at the institution	38	55%
16-20 years in the job	14	41%
16-20 years at the institution	28	56%

Additionally, compared to other ranks, professors (N=42) had the lowest overall positive average (53%); and when compared by tenure status, tenured faculty (N=79) provided the lowest overall positive average (56%).

The category related to “Pride” included several items with positive averages. At least 75% in **every college or unit** responded positively to the following items by category:

Job Satisfaction/Support: “I am given the responsibility and freedom to do my job.”

Policies, Resources & Efficiency: “This institution actively contributes to the community.” (Service)

Pride: “I understand how my job contributes to this institution’s mission.”

Among the items with at least 74% overall positive averages were three diversity-related items, two items in the "Pride" category and three others in various categories:

The institution places sufficient emphasis on having diverse faculty, administration and staff. 74%
The institution has clear and effective procedure for dealing with discrimination 74%
At this institution, people are supportive of their colleagues regardless of their heritage or background. 81%
Pride: "Overall, my department is a good place to work" (79%).
Pride: "I am proud to be part of this institution" (77%).
My job makes good use of my skills and abilities (83%).
I understand the necessary requirement to advance my career (75%).
The institution takes reasonable steps to provide a safe and secure environment for the campus (75%).

The items with the lowest positive responses reflected resources, communications, and rewards and recognition. Items that had 50% positive responses or less from all job categories include:

My department has adequate faculty/staff to achieve our goals. (35%).
I am paid fairly for my work. (41%)
I am provided with resources I need to be effective in my job. (42%)
The facilities (e.g. classrooms, offices, laboratories) adequately meet my needs. (48%)

Faculty, administration and staff are meaningfully involved in institutional planning (47%).
At this institution, we discuss and debate issues respectfully to get better results (48%).
There is regular and open communications among, faculty, administration and staff (49%).
Changes that affect me are discussed prior to being implemented (50%).

Our recognition and awards program are meaningful to me (38%).
Issues of low performance are addressed in my department (47%).
I am regularly recognized for my contributions (48%).

Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)

The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) was administered in the spring of both 2008 and 2010 to faculty teaching at least one undergraduate course during the academic year. This survey is designed to measure faculty expectations of student engagement in educational practices associated with high levels of learning. In 2010, a total of 289 faculty responded for a response rate of 50%. These respondents indicated that they were teaching full time and teach between four and six courses a year.

Compared to 2008, a larger percent of 2010 undergraduate teaching faculty reported that they are spending more time on teaching activities including more hours per week teaching, preparing for class, providing written or oral feedback. A larger percent of faculty reported using lecture in 2010 than in 2008. There was also an increase in the percent of faculty who reported using small groups and student presentations, structuring classes to use technology, and using technology to discuss or complete assignments.

Consistency exists between 2008 and 2010 for the following: involving students in research outside of class, valuing practicum, internships, clinical assignments, and field, co-op senior capstone experiences.

In 2010 a smaller percentage of faculty reported spending time on service activities and advising; however, those who do engage in these activities spend more time, indicating a greater focus. There was a slightly smaller percent of faculty who reported spending 13 or more hours/week on research and scholarly activities.

There was little change in emphasis on involving students in serious conversations with others different from themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, political opinions or personal beliefs.

SDSU Self-Study – Higher Learning Commission Survey - Fall 2008

In preparation for the self-study for re-accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission, surveys were conducted in fall 2008 of faculty, exempt personnel, career service, and students. This report includes results concerning faculty and exempt personnel responses.

Faculty survey (165 Respondents)

From the faculty surveys, it was apparent that supervisors/department heads hold the confidence of nearly 78% of the faculty respondents; the same percentage indicated that the department involves them in the decision making process, provides opportunities to work as a part of a team, and that there were appropriate learning opportunities. Also, 69.9% indicated that leadership development opportunities were available.

These percentages decrease when the same items were presented at the College and University levels. Of the respondents nearly 67% agreed that the college and 64% agreed that the University leadership is satisfactory. However, nearly 52% indicated agreement that the college involved them in the decision making process while only 44% felt the same at the University level.

In 2008, just 51% of faculty agreed that the governance structure of the University allowed their voice to be heard.

Related to the issue of diversity, 82% of the respondents indicated that there was respect for the expression of diverse values and beliefs; and 94 % said they have contact with individuals of different ethnicity.

Non-Faculty Exempt (120 Respondents)

From the non-faculty exempt survey, supervisors/department heads were satisfactory to 72% of the respondents; 67.5% indicated that the department involves them in the decision making process, and 87% agreed that there are opportunities to work as a part of a team. Over 80% of respondents indicated that unit members work well with the administration, faculty, and other employees. The same percentage indicated that there were appropriate training and learning opportunities.

In 2008, 58% of the respondents indicated that the governance structure of the University allowed their voice to be heard. Additionally, 66% agreed that the evaluation system allowed for recognition of accomplishments and 63.5% indicated that the system encouraged continuous improvement.

Themes

Surveys are conducted to discover the “tenor” of the campus at one point in time. From these, a campus learns that there is both stability and change. As respondents’ perspectives evolve with the institutional initiatives and priorities, the political, social and economic environment, and students’ abilities and interests, there is opportunity for institutional improvement.

Resource limitation: Given the economic climate since 2009, it is not surprising that respondents expressed dissatisfaction with salary, benefits, retirement, staffing, facilities and other resource limitations in both the HERI and the GCTWF surveys. It is clear that this University is struggling to control spending yet meet the mission of the institution. Inadequate funding impacts personnel recruitment and retention, removes options for hiring to meet the needs of the increasing number of students, and restricts the provision of other resources to assist units in meeting institutional goals.

Supervisors/Department Heads: Both the GCTWF survey and the HLC survey results reflected satisfaction and trust of the respondents’ supervisors and department heads. This is not surprising as most employees interact more

frequently with and are more loyal or “tightly coupled” to their department than to either the college or the institution. In many case, faculty are even more closed aligned to their discipline.

Pride: The GCTWF survey reflects strong pride as related to the institution. Both faculty and exempt professional staff share a sense of pride, and this is a strength that can be augmented to build additional energy and creativity. However, pride may also decrease if individuals are unsure of the value placed on their efforts, recognition to be earned, whether it will “count” for advancement.

Shared Governance and Communication: Both faculty and exempt professional staff concerns about shared governance and their “voice being heard” emerged in the data collected for the institutional self-study in 2008 and emerged in the GCTWF survey in 2010. Being consulted and being comfortable and safe expressing alternative points of view would contribute to building confidence and trust in the future direction of the institution.

Multiple initiatives – Conflicting Priorities: Both the FSSE and the HERI surveys indicate that faculty struggle to balance the changing priorities and expectations of the university related to teaching, research, and service. Additionally, many initiatives (student centered learning, service learning, undergraduate research, on-line courses, technology, advising, grant writing, publication, community service) lead to confusion about where to spend energy. Teaching remains a high priority for faculty and many are engaged in learning initiatives. Faculty with heavy teaching loads and large classes are searching for ways to implement alternative pedagogies and to build research portfolio by involving the local community in research efforts. Increased research and scholarly efforts leading to publication, presentation, performance, exhibition and external funding create stress and worries about job security.

A more complete study of the primary contract responsibility for men and women may be important. If women and men do indeed have disparate teaching, research and service assignments, and if researchers are “rewarded” based on the research funding and publication, the University may be unintentionally contributing to gender bias.

Since 2008 the HERI survey results indicate that faculty perceive changes in the institution’s priorities with an increased emphasis on building the institution’s prestige, on hiring faculty “stars,” pursuing extramural funding, enhancing the institution’s national image, and strengthening links with the for-profit corporate sector.

Diversity: Faculty view multiculturalism and diverse populations as important for a University, and data indicate that employees feel people are treated with respect and supported regardless of ethnicity. However, they also perceive that increasing minority representation, developing an appreciation of multiculturalism, gender equity and recruitment of minority people are less of a priority to the institution.

Insecurity: Over the past years, faculty and staff have seen many of their colleague lose their jobs or have their salaries positions cut. In addition, the University revised the promotion and tenure process, the standards for promotion and tenure, and the types of evidence one must provide in promotion documents. These many changes have increased a lack of clarity about the criteria for advancement and promotion. This is evident in the 2011 HERI survey where 38.7% of faculty indicated that they were unclear about the criteria for advancement and promotion. This is a nearly 10% increase since 2008. (27% of respondents were not yet tenured and 48% of respondents were Assistant (29%) or Associate Professors (19%).)

Changing priorities and lack of clarity in promotion and tenure requirements, may contribute to non-tenured faculty productivity as the try to determine what and how much they need to do to remain employed. And perhaps senior faculty, especially those who excelled at teaching are feeling under-appreciated and pressured to re-build research skills.

GCTWF data show that individuals who have been at the University less than two years have more positive responses than longer term employees; and for tenured professors, positive responses fell to among the lowest. The development of a funded mentoring program for young and mid-career faculty and professional exempt staff

with a focus on “helping them meet expectations” could reassure individuals that they understand the requirements for advancement. For more senior faculty and staff, leadership opportunities, time for rejuvenation, including sabbaticals and research support are important. Of course, adequate staffing to allow time for mentoring and to be away from the campus is imperative. Professional development programs and other support systems for professional staff need to be implemented.

Rewards and recognition: In the current environment, salary and other tangible resources are limited and often not available; other forms of recognition and reward might increase morale at minimal expense. The key is to find reward and recognition systems that are meaningful and fair.

Conclusions

Build on the sense of pride and the positive views of supervisors/and department heads to enhance two-way communication. Conversations and involvement which leads to a sense of being part of a team, encourages and honors respectful dialogue and fully-considers alternative views could improve the University. Meaningful and appropriate rewards and recognition efforts also could impact the University positively.

Note:

Links to the FSSE 2010 full report and the HERI full report are found below.

FSSE <https://insidestate.sdstate.edu/academics/general/aea/NSSEFSSE/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

HERI <https://insidestate.sdstate.edu/academics/general/aea/Reports/Forms/AllItems.aspx>