

## **The Spring 2003 Survey of SSU Faculty: A Summary<sup>1</sup>**

In Spring 2003, 370 faculty members who had taught at least one course in Fall 2002 or Spring 2003 completed a mail survey about their work experiences (a 62% response rate). 53% of the respondents were women, 14% indicated an ethnic minority background and the average age was 51 years. 27.1% of the respondents represent the School of Social Sciences, 23.1% represent the School of Science and Technology, 7.8% represent the School of Business and Economics, 10.3% represent the School of Education and 27.6% represent the School of Arts and Humanities.<sup>2</sup> 23.2% represent full professors, 11.1% represent associate professors, 15.4% represent assistant professors and 44.9% represent lecturers. Respondents reported teaching at SSU for almost 11 years on average. This brief summary outlines some of our findings.

### **What do SSU faculty members think is important to teach?**

Respondents rated the ability to write, think critically, learn independently and behave ethically as the most important things for students to learn. Effective speaking, working with others, identifying strengths and weaknesses and understanding people from diverse backgrounds received ratings above 4 (with 1 labeled as “not important” and 5 labeled as “extremely important”). Job skills, quantitative analysis, using computers, community service and how to continue one’s education received ratings above 3.5. When asked to list any other important goals, six respondents mentioned learning about power relationships within society, three respondents mentioned self-motivation, two respondents mentioned learning to enjoy learning for its own sake, one respondent mentioned a second language and one respondent wrote that students should learn “what they know and what they don’t know”.

### **What are the primary sources of satisfaction and stress reported by SSU faculty members?**

Respondents reported being most satisfied with their independence (M=4.3) and least satisfied with their pay and benefits (M=2.8, 1 is labeled as “not at all satisfied” and 5 is labeled as “extremely satisfied”). The mean ratings of respondents with different academic ranks were statistically different. Full professors reported the least satisfaction with administration (M=2.6) compared to other respondents (M=3.0), assistant professors reported the least satisfaction with pay and benefits (M=2.2) compared to other respondents (M=3.0) and lecturers reported the least satisfaction with their level of job security (M=2.0) compared to other respondents (M=4.0). Overall job satisfaction predicted respondents’ willingness to stay at SSU even after accounting for academic rank, years at SSU, gender, age, ethnicity and union membership.

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<sup>1</sup> This project is a collaborative research project involving Sarah Nevins, Libertie O’Meara, Tracey Cronin, Kristin Jacobs, Petra Torri, Brooke Bernal, Alanna Seeman, Purvinder Kaur, Amanda Stephens, Marie Roark, Nancy Codding, Ed Diaz, Sharon Muha, Justin Myers and Heather Smith. For further information, please contact Heather Smith ([smithh@sonoma.edu](mailto:smithh@sonoma.edu)). We would like to thank our administrative and faculty colleagues who helped us make this a much better project. The original questionnaire is posted at <http://www.sonoma.edu/users/s/smithh/psy445/pages/survey.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Using the school affiliation reported by 333 respondents, we can calculate response rates by school (figures are based on Fall term, 2003). 65% of possible respondents in the School of Social Sciences, 54% of possible respondents in the Arts and Humanities, 50% of possible respondents in Science and Engineering, 48% of possible respondents in Business and Economics and 44% of possible respondents in Education completed the survey.

Respondents reported the budget to be the most significant source of stress (M=3.9, 1 is labeled as “not at all stressful” and 5 is labeled as “extremely stressful”). Other than world politics (M=3.31), respondents rated no other stressor as highly (M=2.3). However, some groups of faculty reported certain stressors to be more stressful than did other groups of faculty. Faculty teaching in the arts and humanities reported that teaching load is a statistically significant greater source of stress (M=3.3) than did faculty teaching in other schools (M=2.9). Faculty teaching three or more classes also reported teaching load to be statistically significantly more stressful (M=3.37) than faculty teaching two classes (M=3.00) or a single class (M=2.19). Faculty teaching in science and technology reported that the lack of equipment and resources was a statistically significant greater source of stress (M=3.2) than did faculty teaching in other schools (M=2.5). Assistant, associate professors and faculty who teach in Business and Economics viewed the RTP process as particularly stressful (Ms>3.0). Assistant professors viewed publication demands (M=3.2), the lack of personal time (M=3.7), personal finances (M=3.1) and household responsibilities (M=3.3) as more stressful than did other respondents. Lecturers viewed the (lack of) job security (M=3.2) as statistically significantly more stressful than did other respondents (M=1.9).

### **Administration-faculty relations.**

We asked respondents to rate the extent to which they felt the administration treated them with respect, honesty and fairness from 1 labeled as “completely disagree” to 5 labeled as “completely agree”. The average rating for personal treatment was 2.8. We also asked respondents to rate the extent to which they felt the administration treated the faculty *as a group* with respect, honesty and fairness from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). The average rating for faculty treatment was 2.6. We think respondents’ feelings are captured by several of the open-ended responses respondents gave when we asked respondents on the final page of the questionnaire if there was any other information that they wanted to add about their experiences:

“For the most part, I really enjoyed my teaching experience at SSU; however given the current state budget woes and the apparent desire of the president to build new structures rather than support the faculty and students, I am very glad I (no longer work at SSU).”

“I enjoy my teaching and students. I do not enjoy the negative adversarial relationship between faculty and administration. The growing corporate nature of SSU and CSU is troublesome.”

“Often working with students and staff and colleagues is very rewarding. Many functionary administrators are doing their jobs well. At the highest levels there is contempt to disregard of faculty both at SSU and in the system.”

“My boss openly states that adjuncts exist to be exploited. I work hard and make a valuable contribution to our program and would appreciate more respect and some ACKNOWLEDGEMENT of what I do!”

It was ratings of treatment of the faculty as a group (rather than the respondent) that was most closely associated with participants’ job satisfaction, willingness to collectively protest and unwillingness to accept administration decisions, even after accounting for academic rank, years at SSU, gender, age, ethnicity and union membership.

### **Relations with colleagues.**

Respondents indicated the extent to which they felt their colleagues treated them with respect, honesty and fairness from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree).

Although the average rating of 3.9 is clearly higher than ratings of administrative treatment, 73 respondents reported examples in which they felt intimidated or fearful of their colleagues. Female and ethnic minority respondents were slightly more likely to describe an example than were male and ethnic majority respondents.<sup>3</sup> Twenty-one of the reported stories mentioned gender discrimination (including five examples of female perpetrators), 18 of these stories described discrimination due to rank or status differences, 16 of these stories described examples in which respondents felt professionally undermined by colleagues, 15 of these stories described administrative indifference to their position and three stories described examples of exclusion from decision-making procedures.

### **The situation for lecturers.**

61.3% of lecturers indicated their interest in applying for tenure track jobs. 22.8% applied for a tenure track job in the last year. Of these 36 respondents, 26 applied for a tenure track job at SSU. Among the lecturers, 63 viewed their teaching at SSU as their primary job and 99 viewed their teaching at SSU as not their primary job. Lecturers who viewed their work at SSU as their primary job taught more and larger classes, spent more hours on campus, felt the administration treated themselves and the faculty as a group less fairly and were more willing to protest than did lecturers who did not view their SSU work as their primary job. They also identified more closely with SSU and indicated that they were less likely to leave than lecturers who did not view teaching as their primary job.

### **Implications.**

We think four important patterns emerge from this survey. First, faculty members' assessments of the situation for the faculty as a group appear to be more predictive of their attitudes and behaviors than assessments of their personal situation. Faculty members might view their personal situation as quite reasonable, but if they view faculty members, as a group, as unfairly treated, they are more likely to report less job satisfaction, think about leaving and support collective action. We also think it is important to point out evaluations of the top administration were negative, and most negative among faculty members employed the longest and least likely to leave (e.g., full professors and part-time faculty who viewed their work at SSU as their primary job).

Second, the budget situation is clearly stressful for everyone but sources of stress vary across different groups of respondents. In particular, assistant professors report significant financial stress, faculty teaching in the arts and humanities report significant stress due to teaching load, and faculty teaching in engineering and sciences report significant stress due to the lack of equipment.

Third, the stories of intimidation illustrate how gender, ethnicity and rank shape faculty member's experiences – even when faculty members are not the personal targets of the intimidation but observe it (as reported by ten respondents).

Finally, two different patterns emerge from respondents' written comments. Many part-time faculty members feel disrespected and excluded because of their position (implicitly raising the question as to whether “excellent teaching” is valued). However,

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<sup>3</sup> A statistical test shows that this pattern does not reach standard conventions of statistical significance: for gender,  $X^2(1)=2.64$ ,  $p=.10$ , for minority/majority,  $X^2(1)=3.22$ ,  $p=.08$ .

other faculty members feel disrespected and excluded because they are trying to continue their scholarship (implicitly raising the question as to whether “excellent teaching” is all that is valued). To see the same negative feelings attributed to very different sources makes us wonder about mixed messages within departments, schools and the university. However, these written comments also confirm that that faculty member view their work with students as a source of inspiration and reward and value individual relationships with faculty, staff and administrators.