

University of Florida

University of Florida Faculty Survey 2004

EDUCATION

Comments

Number of Respondents Making Comments

35

Data Collected 2nd quarter of 2004

08-07-2004

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INTRODUCTION

The comments in this report are grouped by category, and the categories arranged in descending order of frequency.

When reading these comments, it is important to bear in mind that they do not necessarily represent the views of the majority, but rather serve to shed light on some of the statistical findings from the main part of the survey.

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Question 1

**What specific changes, if any, would you suggest to improve the
University environment for faculty?**

50 Comments

Compensation & Benefits (11)

We need to establish a culture that promotes and rewards scholarship more strongly.

We need partner benefits both for health and for the Florida State Retirement System.

Merit pay is a bad way to reward folks. In departments that have many good folks, the pay does not filter to all the good folks - only the elite few. Whereas in other departments, folks doing lesser work get the bonus. I prefer across-the-board raises. Also, I do not understand why as a single parent I must pay a family rate for my health insurance and two spouses working at the university do not pay at all for health insurance.

It is my belief that the university should have a salary schedule similar to that of the public schools. It is a public school, isn't it? I get really upset when I see brand new faculty come into this institution making around \$5000 less than an experienced, tenured full professor. I do not believe that it's correct to have this happen.

The University has taken advantage of the membership in the AAU, however, lags way beyond comparable institutions in salaries and benefits.

UF is way behind in salaries in the AAU, and our position in this regard is getting worse. The legislature is not responsive to UF's aspirations and I believe our ONLY hope to move upward among the best public universities is to obtain substantially more private dollars. The people of Florida have never indicated any commitment to being excellent, and are unwilling to do what is necessary to enable UF to compete on a national level. It is folly to think this many-decades-long tradition will change. We cannot attract and retain the best if we cannot compete on a national level, and private funds seem to be our only hope.

I have had to pay to park where I work for the last 30 years. Even coal miners

can park free at the mine!

Only one box could be checked above. Perhaps there should have been an option to rank order the importance of all the issues above because it is my view that all of the above need change.

The University needs to solve the problem of salary compression and extreme salary differences between departments. The University also needs a system in which faculty members who perform satisfactorily (as judged by other faculty in the department) receive an annual raise that is reasonable in light of inflation, receive substantial annual bonuses for superior performance (as judged by other faculty in the department), and can receive periodic substantial raises (e.g., every 3-6 years - longer time periods would be adequate if bonuses are substantial, shorter time periods are necessary if bonuses are small) for superior performance.

Health care options and costs increased over 200% this year (e.g., co-pays per visit) in certain plans and are outrageous! We need options and costs addressed. Faculty salaries (College of Education) are severely depressed compared to other areas.

Mostly, I believe that much is expected of faculty with insufficient compensation. The only way to be fairly compensated is to seek a counteroffer, which seems somewhat dishonest to the institution seeking to attract a faculty member. I also think faculty in our department are working so hard that they feel they have little left to give.

Resources & Efficiency (8)

Greater time and support for research, particularly in research assistantships.

Better dental benefits. Increased doctoral students and opportunities to teach doctoral courses. More flexibility in graduate enrollment for practicing teachers. Huge barriers exist for bringing teachers back to the university to engage in professional development. Salary is much lower than competing universities.

High emphasis on publishing and grants but no support for grants and increasingly little time for writing/publishing due to time demands on administrative duties (i.e., assessment and accreditation systems).

In our College (and maybe the University at large) there are insufficient resources. We lack resources to hire sufficient faculty, which means far too many upper-level undergraduate courses are taught by graduate teaching assistants. There are undergraduates who complete a program having had fewer than 4 full-time faculty as instructors. This is a travesty. and this puts a tremendous strain on full-time faculty who must supervise graduate students and adjuncts in order to maintain program quality. In addition, we find it necessary to hire adjunct faculty to teach master's level courses. We need more instructional resources (like materials for labs, videotapes, CDs, etc.) to support instruction. If there is a commitment to academic quality, it is essential to provide additional support. Additionally, it is important to recognize that some faculty members bear the burden of undergraduate education to the detriment of their own research agendas. Everyone's load looks like 100%, but some faculty members receive load credit for activities like supervision of doctoral students, research, and independent studies where others do these things on top of a full load. Some strategy for reporting what faculty actually does needs to be developed so that these kinds of inequities can be addressed.

If all colleges are to function as Research I colleges, we should have Research I resources - not just select colleges. Those of us that work in colleges other than the select 4 must still meet the same rules for T&P, keeping our jobs, etc., but certainly don't have access to the same resources.

The Dean of the College of Education is the most argumentative, combative, and totally unappreciative of senior researchers that I have witnessed. The senior research-oriented faculty in the College of Education are in a state of shock as to her actions, priorities, and inability to adjust to a research university. It is truly a shame.

We've worked very hard to bring in a grant worth over a million dollars. Yet Contracts and Grants and DSR has made this a miserable experience. My

colleagues at other universities cannot believe the nightmares we have had with grant administration at UF. It makes faculty think seriously whether grants are worth the misery of dealing with these offices.

I don't have the support I need to do my work well, particularly clerical/production/tech support.

Tenure & Promotion (8)

Reevaluate the process to allow for collaborative work and scholarship of engagement. Also, try to level the differences of standards between departments.

I don't know what the specific job performance expectations, evaluation, or advancement criteria are for my position. This often feels like a limbo state and although I work hard and I'd like to build a long-term career here, I'm not sure what to focus on or what skills are most valued. I'd like to know more about the College, other faculty, and know the Dean is setting multiple lunch meetings to open dialog with faculty. However, they are always scheduled on Mondays, which is our busiest teaching day (3 classes for me) and I can't attend any sessions/meetings, etc., to get involved. I enjoy the University setting, emphasis on student achievement, and recognition of recruitment/diversity issues.

If UF wants to keep its young faculty members, T&P procedures and rules need to be made clear from the first day and stay consistent. Surprises in the later stages of seeking T&P for faculty and constantly changing the rules according to what Dean/Administration is in office is not acceptable.

I do not believe that it is clear what can occur during the tenure and promotion process after the packet leaves the college. I do not believe that the academic personnel board is impartial in its deliberation and is too easily swayed by outside information provided against protocol by deans and chairs regarding tenure cases that have been flagged. There is no support for faculty relative to where to turn for advice, information, or assistance when problems arise in the

process when the problem has been created by the faculty's college administrators who are clearly no longer in support of the tenure case. When expectations are to receive tenure and that expectation is dashed after the packet has left the college, its impact is deeply felt by the faculty person, but it trickles down to spouses and families and especially children. There needs to be accountability for administrators who do not appropriately advise faculty or who change their minds after the case has obtained support and been sent to the board for review. The faculty person's livelihood has been irreparably harmed and the administrators who are partially responsible for the outcome are seen to have no impact, no consequences for their failure to communicate any and all concerns to the faculty and to have allowed the process to be stopped after the packet has left the college.

In my experience, mentoring of new (untenured) faculty has been virtually nonexistent. This needs to change. The salary scale for tenured professors must also improve substantially. The abundant sunshine won't keep the best faculty here!

The process does not reflect current lifestyles and life demands (e.g., women (married or not) in academe with families); rather, it appears to favor men with family support (e.g., wives).

Advice: Do not give faculty awards during their third and fourth years and then deny them tenure.

I think requirements for T&P need to be more specific. I also think there should be more mentoring from the first day the new assistant professor arrives. Course releases/reduced load should be given to new people their first year. Salary compression needs to be addressed. It is demoralizing for the assistant professors to be assigned all kinds of duties, be expected to carry a full load, and to be paid less than new, incoming people. We have not had an adequate pay raise in the 4 years I've been here. I really like the University of Florida, but feel I am very much underpaid compared to the work I contribute, both in comparison to people currently here, but also in comparison with other major research institutions.

Quality of Life (5)

Provide a better system for spousal hires.

Quality of life involves so many different issues, such as compensation. Need better raises and compensation for productive faculty; some faculty members who are full and inactive in their fields (deadweights) who making so much more than up-and-coming faculty members who are active and producing. Tenure and promotion: Too much uncertainty and causes too much stress in people's lives. Diversity: All faculty should be required to attend a diversity of workshop. Community: UF does not show that it really cares about the community - my community - the Black community. Santa Fe CC is doing a much better job in the NE and SE than UF; that's really sad.

Improvements beyond words for supporting dual-career spouses in academics need to be made. Not just at hiring, but consideration at the point of tenure and promotion as well. In addition, scheduling of meetings, especially related to faculty governance, needs to be reexamined in order to allow faculty with small children to participate. Most often many of these meetings begin at or go beyond 4:00 and it is not reasonable to participate and obtain adequate child care.

Requiring single parents to teach night courses, off-campus courses, and attend weekend functions is a hardship both financially and personally. Also, I do not understand why as a single parent I must pay a family rate for my health insurance and two spouses working at the university do not pay at all for health insurance.

Trailing spouse issues have made it impossible for me to continue to be UF employee. No adequate job here for my spouse.

Leadership (4)

There is a real need to get new ideas into central administration at UF. Good to see the old boys moving out of Tigert Hall, and a new generation of leadership moving in. I'm optimistic that change will occur, and we'll all be much better for it.

Some of the poorest decisions that University Administration has made over the last 2 years concern changes in tuition charges and mandatory insurance for students. Decisions were announced with little or no forewarning and no grandfathering period. Faculty with grants did not budget for these expenses - and these changes challenged or ruined those faculty with smaller, yet still important grants.

It is my opinion that we need new and fresh leadership at most levels of the university. For example, how can the VP of the foundation and other top administrators in the foundation keep their jobs when over \$1 million walks out of the office. Anyone in corporate or even in most academic areas would have been fired. Yet this is the type of leadership that continues to be kept and even appears to be protected at UF. A portion of every dollar funds the foundation so how can the university state that no donor dollars were lost. This is a very sad statement about our university.

I think more programs and/or resources should be put in place to build leadership capacity within the faculty, especially for women and faculty of color. It is extremely difficult to find good department chairs, and they are the critical link between upper administration and the faculty. Faculty also need to see ways of becoming a leader to move issues along without having to give up their research and teaching.

Strategy & Direction (4)

Graduate enrollment is increasing without adequate resources. I feel very torn between the need to continue programmatic responsibilities to undergrads, or lack of faculty to teach them, while growing a graduate program. We simply don't have enough faculty to do both.

I believe that the university's decision to identify core colleges was a kind of straw that broke the back of many faculty in those colleges that were not named among the elite. The "push me, I'll push you back" responses since that time between some senior administrators and those at the department level (where the action has to occur) have been more self-serving than collaborative, more comparative than supportive, and more divisive than team-building.

I'm not sure exactly where this comment fits best, but here goes: I am a faculty member in the College of Education, and as long as I have been at UF, the university's expectations for us seem to be different than its expectations for other colleges. I often have felt excluded from the mission the university articulates for itself, most notably now a move toward graduate education and research. The message we get here is that, oh yes, graduate education and research are important, but we cannot diminish our commitment to teacher preparation. Of course, teacher preparation consumes so much of our resources that advancing other agendas becomes impossible. I recognize that we bring a lot of this upon ourselves, but I've never gotten the sense that university administrators regard our college as fundamental to mission and direction.

The alumni seem to be an untapped resource to help fuel the finances of the university. It appears that most alumni resources go to athletics; academic units must initiate programs regularly to involve alumni as part of fundraising efforts.

Working Relationships (4)

The University needs a policy that precludes a spouse (e.g., a chair) from supervising his or her spouse (a faculty member) and prevents situations in which a spouse is the de facto supervisor of his or her spouse but the supervisory role is assigned in name to another.

It appears that systems within the university, i.e., registrar, finance and accounting, etc., are designed for the ease and convenience of those in charge rather than meeting the needs of college staff and faculty. Too much bureaucratic paperwork and/or redundancy. Lack of user- friendly systems for generating data related to students (NERDC system - hopefully to be easier with PeopleSoft, but not confident of that either).

This is the third university I've worked at and I've never seen such a top-down, wasteful bureaucratic structure. If someone wanted to design a system to discourage, for instance, faculty from applying for external research funding they could use UF as a model. If someone wanted to ensure faculty members gave up on innovation, use UF bureaucracy as a model. After being stymied for 5 years I've decided to actively seek employment elsewhere.

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Recognize the faculty union.

Communication (2)

Within the college of education and within our departments, there is very limited communication with the faculty about issues and concerns that impact faculty directly. There is a system of shared governance, but it is not well established, and decisions are often made outside of that system until it is brought to the dean's attention, then she will step back and try again. There is an attempt at transparency in the dean's office but that has not trickled down to the departments, and the chairs still hold a great deal of power and information from faculty, such as budget and cost savings that faculty help put in place but cannot collect or reap benefits from.

Do not push retiring professors out of their offices, change locks on their doors, and do not stop providing information about them on the Web sites of the college. Administrators should not tell people they are being terminated (in writing) and then act surprised when they say they are leaving, saying "No, you don't have to leave." People's lives should not be toyed with to bargain on salaries. Do not promise people permanent contracts and then switch contracts before signing. All these things have happened in our college to different people.

Faculty - Administration Relations (2)

Much paranoia still exists. I'm optimistic that the movement toward shared governance will help, but careful attention to this area is needed.

I hope there are more opportunities that faculty and administrators can meet and have more friendly relationship. I rarely see my chair except at the meeting or having problems, never see my dean, associate deans except in the distance or in formal settings, let alone presidents or other administrators. It seems there are clear class stratifications on this campus, and ordinary faculty are at the bottom.

Diversity (1)

This university needs to become far more aggressive in recruiting and retaining a diverse graduate student and faculty body. I believe some good initiatives have been put in place to create a more diverse undergraduate student body, but more support is needed at the graduate level to attract the best students.

No Category Indicated (1)

Greater support of interdisciplinary collaboration. Greater support for civic engagement.

