

Departmental Cultures Survey, Fall 2016 -MEMORANDUM

**TO: DR. RALPH FORD
DR. MARY KAHL**
FROM: NON-TENURE TRACK COMMITTEE
RE: RECOMMENDATIONS BASED UPON SURVEY RESULTS

We are writing to provide you with our committee's recommendations based upon the Departmental Cultures Survey administered during the Fall 2016 semester. Please note the following abbreviations used throughout this memo: PT = part-time faculty; FT = fixed term faculty; TT = tenure track /tenured faculty.

Q1.6 Salaries

We were surprised that only 23% (17 of 74) of FT's responded that their "salary and pay are...close to equitable or attempts are made to make it equitable." Over three-fourths (77%, or 57 of 74) said that their salary and pay were grossly to marginally inequitable. Even including those TT who responded, the percentage who perceive pay to be equitable only rises to 33% of respondents.

Recommendation: Could faculty see a chart that shows salary by school, gender and rank?

Rationale: There is a widespread perception of inequitable pay. Any actual inequities with regard to gender and within ranks should be caught and rectified.

Q1.7 Part-Time Hiring Practices

77% of FT's (58 of 75) found adjunct hiring practices "haphazard and random" to "mostly intentional and organized." Only 23% found it carefully done. We need to do better in hiring part-time faculty. This would benefit the departments and the students.

Recommendation: Part-time faculty searches and hires should be done by March 1 for the fall semester and October 1 for the spring semester.

Rationale: This would give part-time faculty a chance to prepare for the courses they are going to teach and be mentored by a full time faculty member.

Q1.8 Hiring/Contract Renewal

43% of FT's (31 of 74) answered that their hiring was "always at the last minute" to "typically before courses begin." Although there are policies in every school that give dates for contract renewal, it appears that such policies are not consistently followed. It is stressful for faculty not knowing if their contract will be renewed, and even more so when renewal is done at the last minute.

Recommendation: In a contract renewal year, faculty should be notified at the beginning of the fall semester whether their contract will be renewed.

Rationale: This is good for the faculty member up for renewal (peace of mind and not having to update vitae), the department (no search needed) and the students (faculty member is not stressed out about contract not being renewed or using their time that should be spent on teaching to update their vitae)

Q1.11 Mentoring

100% of PT's (23), 81% of FT's (63 of 77) and 61% of TT's (22 of 36) answered that, in terms of mentoring, they were provided "no guidance" to "regular, informal guidance." Only 18% of FT's are part of a formal mentoring program. This is undesirable.

Recommendation: It appears that we at Behrend could do a better job of mentoring the faculty. By and large, the only new faculty getting mentored right now are tenure track faculty (informally or formally). Just over a third of FT's (38%) report even informal mentoring, and no part-time faculty at all report any kind of mentoring. Change is needed.

We recommend a structured mentoring program in all four schools for tenure track, fixed term, and part-time faculty. Mentors should be assigned to new faculty by program chairs, and a measure of accountability should be enforced. No one should serve as a mentor if they do not wish to, and the mentoring should be structured (e.g., regular meetings or correspondence, teaching reviews and feedback). This work by the mentor should be recognized and valued. If a mentor does not do their job, there should be accountability.

Rationale: Too many new faculty are left on their own with regards to teaching. They are only given little bits of guidance and knowledge intermittently during their first semester and academic year. Immediate mentoring not only helps the new faculty member in terms of adapting and relieving anxiety, it also helps the students who are being taught by this new faculty member by getting a much better teacher.

Q1.19 Advising Information

60% of FT's (41 of 68) and 68% of TT's (23 of 34) responded that they did not have enough information to adequately advise students, or had at most basic information. 20 PT's answered this question which was disturbing, as they should not be formally advising students.

Recommendation: We recommend that all faculty who are assigned students to advise be emailed a link at the start of the semester to help with advising. The information in the link could describe the advising process, have easy access to recommended action plans and answers to frequently asked questions. In addition, as discussed below for Q1.30, we recommend a dedicated advisor for each school to advise students during their first two years at Behrend.

Rationale: Between Lionpath and Starfish, advising has become overly complicated and very time consuming

Q1.22 Communications and Interactions

39% of FT's (29 of 74) answered #1-3 and 45% of TT's (15 of 33) answered #2-3; the vast majority of these responded that they had only informal communication with department colleagues. The committee questions why just over half the faculty would feel they have formal, intentional, and regular interaction with their colleagues. It seems very odd, and it gives the committee the impression that either many departments are not holding regular meetings, or that there is a fear of FT's and TT (tenure-track) faculty to express their feelings to higher level faculty (associate and full).

Recommendation: All departments should formally and intentionally meet on a regular basis, for the proper functioning of these academic units. Faculty at all levels should be genuinely encouraged to attend and share their thoughts.

Rationale: Regular meetings should lead to better decision-making at all levels, broader consensus for solving problems, a better understanding of issues facing departments, and more complete follow-through on projects and ideas. This is better for faculty, and better for the students.

Q1.27 Raises

64% of FT's (53 of 82) and 60% of TT's (34 of 57) replied that they "neither agreed nor disagreed" to "strongly disagreed," when considering whether "it was open and transparent how raises are determined." Many faculty have no idea what their raise represents. It is very discouraging for faculty to get a good annual evaluation, and then receive a dismal raise.

Recommendation: We should be transparent about how raises are determined. Send out an email explaining everything.

Rationale: Faculty will know and it will not be a source of contention with the administration.

Q1.28 Evaluation

73% of FT's (56 of 76) and 62% of TT's (21 of 34) answered from "somewhat agree" to "strongly disagree" that "it is open and transparent how my job performance is evaluated." This tells us that even if the faculty understand some of the evaluation process, they do not understand all of it. It can also get confusing when policies say one thing, and directors or program chairs are using their own method of evaluation.

Recommendation: We would like to see fair policies, fairly applied, across all of the schools. All faculty should be supplied with copies of all policies pertaining to their job performance and annual evaluation. If directors and program chairs are going to evaluate faculty using the policies of their schools, then they have to show where in the policy they are referring to in the evaluation. If directors and chairs do not follow policy, then that needs to be documented for the protection of the faculty member.

Rationale: Too many times faculty are told they are “not doing things according to policy,” however, the alleged policy is not referenced. Documentation can provide clarity when there are misunderstandings.

Q1.30 Advising

31% of FT's (23 of 74) and 45% of TT's (15 of 33) replied that they have from twenty (20) to more than sixty (60) advisees. Given the high teaching load at Behrend, especially for FT's, it is unreasonable to think that faculty have the time for 20 to 60 or more advisees. Advising has become even more time consuming in recent years (*see* Rational under Q1.19).

Recommendation: Have a dedicated advisor for each school to advise students during their first two years at Behrend. This person can keep up with all the changes to different programs as well as changes in advising software. For bigger schools, more than one advisor can be hired. For faculty, advising is currently evaluated under teaching, and should really go under service, as it does not pertain to classroom instruction.

Rationale: This will free up valuable time for faculty to focus more on their teaching and research.

Q1.31 Courses

45% of FT's (34 of 75) and 79% of TT's (26 of 33) teach from one to six course sections per year. 54% of FT's (41 of 75) and 21% of TT's (7 of 33) teach from seven to nine (or more) course sections per year. These answers are disturbing.

16% of FT's (12 of 75) are teaching one to four course sections, while 29% of FT's (22 of 75) are teaching five to six. This is well below the established “4/4” course assignment for FT's. 15% of FT's (11 of 75) are teaching nine or more course sections. This inequity in course load and course assignment must be addressed.

It is extremely unreasonable to expect scholarly activity and research out of a FT teaching nine or more course sections a year. These faculty members are probably getting poor evaluations for scholarly activity and research as well, due to the limited number of hours in a day. Of course, setting aside the number of courses taught, we are concerned about the number of students taught

as well. On the other hand, the lighter loads of the FT's are a cause for concern as well. 7/33 TTT's are teaching 7 or more courses. This is also cause for concern.

Recommendation: Workloads should be calculated both in terms of courses taught, and by number of students taught as well. Preparations for some courses are also more time consuming than other courses and should also be valued.

Rationale: To succeed as a university, Behrend needs to attract and retain good faculty. The reported gross inequities in workloads, especially with FT's, are likely to contribute to higher faculty turnover and dissatisfaction, which is harmful to everything that we do, whether teaching, research, or service.

The committee would like to put forth two more recommendations.

1. Behrend should perform an annual employee survey, by ranks, to identify areas of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.
2. Put on the Behrend website, publicly accessible and not password protected, the non-tenure track and tenure track policies and resources just as Northwestern has done in the School of Arts and Sciences. These policies and resources should be easy to find and open to all.