

Rochester Institute of Technology

2012 COACHE Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey

Executive Summary

Introduction

In the fall of 2012, Rochester Institute of Technology joined the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE), based at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. COACHE, a consortium of over 200 colleges and universities, is a research initiative committed to supporting senior academic officers in developing best faculty recruitment and talent management practices. Membership in the collaborative enables colleges and universities to gather sound diagnostic and comparative faculty data needed to inform discussions, generate ideas and initiate appropriate actions. The core component of COACHE is a web-based survey specially designed for pre-tenure, tenure - and non-tenure-track faculty to collect information about their experience at their institution. Institutional reports provide college and university leaders with a powerful management tool to identify core strengths and determine areas to improve and enrich the quality of faculty work-life.

Instrument

The COACHE survey instrument was designed over a period of several years using prior job satisfaction surveys, faculty focus groups, and industry experts. Final design prototypes were pilot-tested and validated across multiple institutions. COACHE first began collecting pre-tenured faculty data in 2003, expanding its offerings in 2010 to include a tenured Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey. The 2012 survey has over seventy questions categorized into twenty summary themes, which describe faculty attitudes about their workplace. Each theme is comprised of several survey questions. COACHE enhanced its offerings in 2012-2013 with an optional survey module designed to assess the work satisfaction of full-time, non-tenure-track faculty. RIT elected to include the non-tenure-track faculty survey; however, the results are pending and not included in this executive summary. When these results are finalized, we will share as well.

Comparison Institutions

An RIT leadership team selected five institutions as a comparison group for our faculty survey results. The 2012 COACHE database consisted of over eighty participating universities ranging from large, public state systems to liberal arts colleges and small master's universities. The team used a scaled rating system with RIT faculty compensation benchmark schools in mind. COACHE recommended using the following criteria: which other institutions RIT faculty job candidates apply to, where they choose to work should they decline an RIT offer, and where faculty transition to work if they resign their positions at RIT. The five selected schools include Purdue University, SUNY Binghamton, the University of Rochester, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and SUNY Buffalo. These five institutions are well-established Research-Intensive universities. Most have larger endowments, higher records of sponsored research and lower teaching loads than RIT. These differences influence job satisfaction and must be kept in mind when interpreting results, particularly with scores that are compared to our five "peer institutions." However, while these institutions are not traditional RIT peer schools, nor do they share the same characteristics as RIT, they do provide a quality comparison group. Findings are also benchmarked to the entire 2012 cohort providing a broader context with the faculty labor market.

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Survey Administration

Launched in mid-October 2012, the RIT COACHE survey was open to all non-administrative full-time tenured, pre-tenure and non-tenured faculty. Electronic invitations were sent from President Destler and Provost Haefner inviting faculty to participate. Frequent reminder emails were sent while the survey remained open into January 2013.

The University's Oracle database maintained by the Human Resources Department was utilized as the primary data source for the identification of faculty participants using prescribed COACHE metrics. RIT's response rate (59%) exceeded the selected comparison institutions (48%) and the total COACHE 2012 cohort (50%). More pre-tenure faculty participated (63% vs. 58%) as well as more associate professors (63%) than full professors (55%). Women participated at a higher rate than their male colleagues – 65% compared with 57%. Faculty of color (including Asian faculty) participated comparably to white faculty – 58% to 60%. Additional institutional reports disaggregating gender and faculty of color have been requested from COACHE.

A Summary of Results

To initiate and inform an in-depth campus-wide discussion of the survey results, included here are two summary documents provided by COACHE: “Results at a Glance” and “Thematic Coding of Open-Ended Comments,” along with brief guides to reading them. The first chart presents the mean scores of RIT faculty grouped into themes, including satisfaction with teaching, research, and service; governance; tenure and promotion; personal and family support; climate and collegiality; and other aspects of our work life. The second graph depicts responses to the prompt: “Tell us the number one thing your institution can do to improve the workplace for faculty.”

The summary reports also compare RIT's results with those of respondents from the five selected institutions described above as well as those of all colleges and universities that participated in the survey. Thus, for each topic we can compare the RIT mean with those of each of the five comparison institutions, arrayed in a range of all responses.

The summaries reflect general satisfaction among RIT faculty with departmental collegiality, personal and family policies, and health and retirement benefits. Tenure reasonableness and pre-tenure mentoring are viewed positively overall.

These documents also highlight opportunities for improvement. As is evident in the “Results at a Glance” chart, mean scores are low in some key categories. In the near term, we will focus on three especially important matters: promotion clarity and post-tenure mentoring, tenure policy clarity, and appreciation and recognition.

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Next Steps for 2013-2014

Survey feedback is useful in informing actions to improve organizational health. Individuals and groups who have the ability to affect change will be engaged to develop action plans that address the three targeted areas. In addition, the timeline for activities includes:

Fall Semester 2013

Communication and dialogue: To facilitate discussions on these results, there will be several campus-wide presentations in a town hall format, an interactive presentation to chairs and directors, and a presentation to the academic senate. Deans will schedule individual college-wide meetings to discuss college results. Finally, focus groups will be used to get a deeper understanding of the results.

Promotion clarity and post-tenure mentoring: All departments in each college will be asked to identify best practices and recommendations to develop/improve promotion clarity practices/policies and post-tenure mentoring. Results will be shared within colleges, among deans and with the provost.

Tenure policy clarity: The Faculty Affairs Committee of Academic Senate will continue to vet its work on proposed revisions to E5.0 with the full Academic Senate. Proposed revisions do address tenure policy concerns raised by members of our faculty and staff.

Appreciation and recognition: The provost and deans will work together to identify best practices for appreciation and recognition. These best practices will be vetted with focus groups of faculty and department heads and chairs.

Tiger Term/Intersession

Provost reports out on progress and implementation plans for spring.

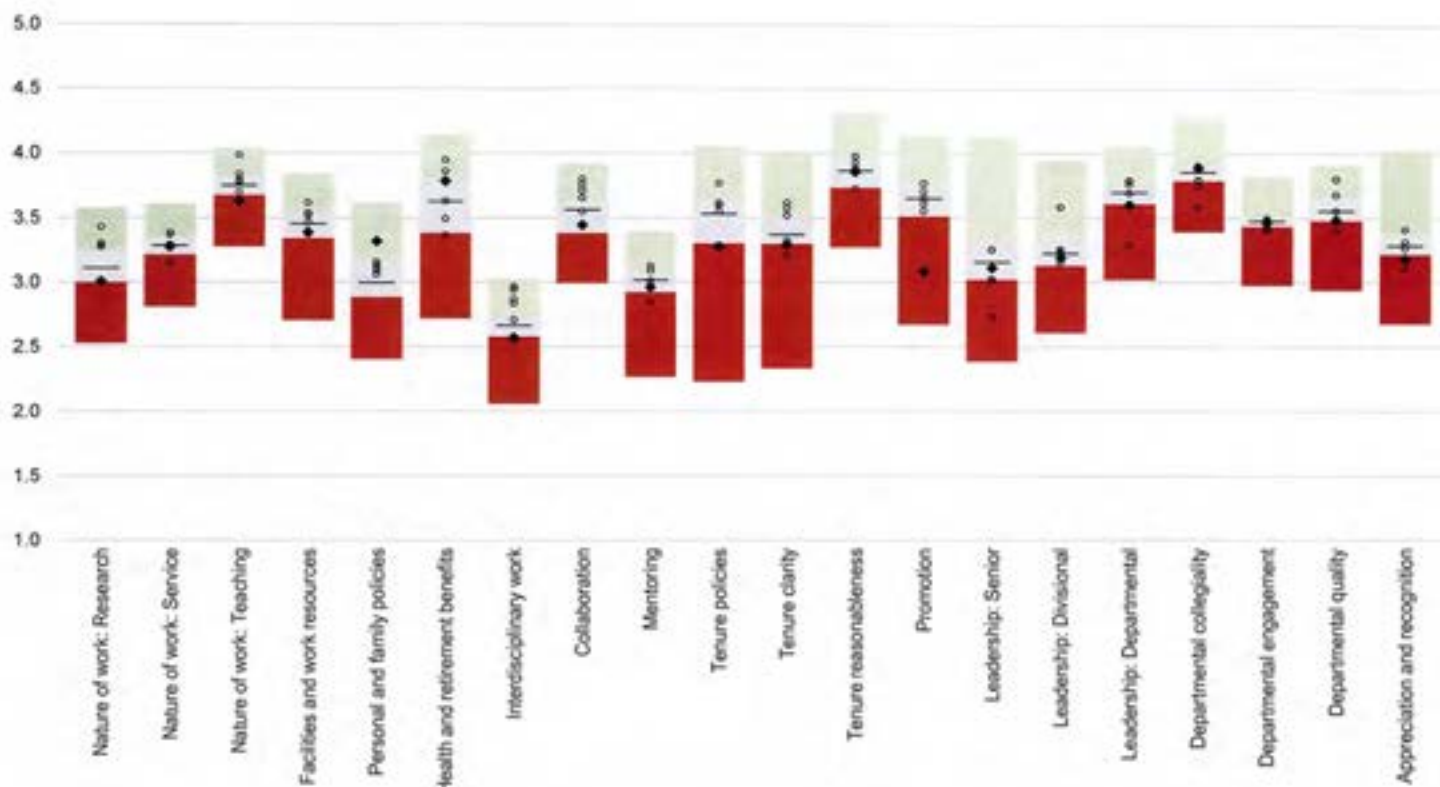
Spring Semester 2014

Best practices and recommendations on promotion clarity/post-tenure mentoring, tenure policy clarity and appreciation and recognition implemented.

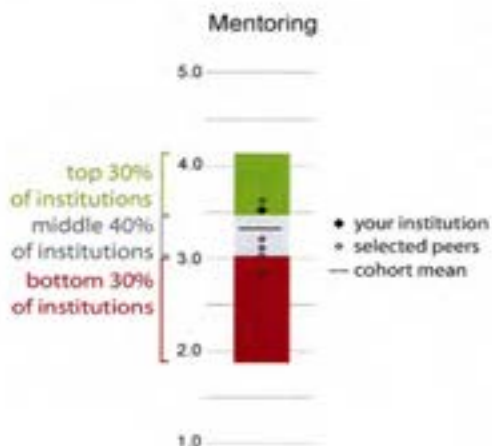
Summer Semester 2014

Assess implementation of best practices and recommendations and share results. Identify next areas for improvement to be addressed (or continue to work on first three if needed) in 2014-15.

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COACHE Results at a Glance



This chart summarizes over a half million data points in benchmark results for your institution relative to peers and the full cohort of COACHE's participating institutions.

Each column represents the range of institutional means (not the distribution of individual respondents) along that dimension. Within each chart, you can see your institution's mean score on the benchmark (♦), the mean scores of your five peers (○), and the distribution of the responses of the entire cohort of institutions as signified by the red, grey, and green boxes.

You should be most concerned with the placement of your marker (♦). A score in the red section of the column indicates that your institution ranked in the bottom 30 percent of all institutions. A mark in the green section indicates your faculty rated a benchmark in the top 30 percent of all institutions. A mark in the grey area indicates a "middle-of-the-road" result.

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The final question in the COACHE Survey asks faculty to describe the one thing your institution can do to improve the workplace for faculty. COACHE analysts assigned all responses to one or more common themes. The full comments are available elsewhere in the Digital Report Portfolio.

Tell us the number one thing your institution can do to improve the workplace for faculty.

