

Rochester Institute of Technology

2012 COACHE Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey

Executive Summary II

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 retention 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-tenured, tenured, 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 had 158 questions categorized into 20 summary themes which describe faculty attitudes about their workplace. Each theme is comprised of several survey questions.

In 2011 COACHE piloted a new survey module designed to assess the work satisfaction of full-time, non-tenure-track faculty at four institutions. RIT elected to be part of the inaugural launch of the non-tenure-track module along with 11 other institutions. The 2012 survey for non-tenure-track faculty had 151 questions categorized into 16 themes (excluding tenure policies, tenure clarity, tenure reasonableness and promotion). Although there is no benchmark for promotion, there is a subset of 13 questions regarding promotion, contract renewal, and institutional governance and leadership. The non-tenure-track faculty survey results are included in this executive summary.

Comparison Institutions

The 2012 COACHE database consisted of over 80 participating universities ranging from large public state systems to liberal arts colleges and small master's universities. Twelve of the eighty schools (including RIT) elected to survey non-tenure-track faculty. An RIT leadership team selected five institutions as a comparison group for our tenure-track faculty survey results. The team used a scaled rating system with RIT faculty compensation benchmark schools noted. 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 as part of the selection process. The five selected schools include Purdue University, SUNY Binghamton, the University of Rochester, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and SUNY

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Buffalo. While these institutions are not traditional RIT peer schools, they do provide a quality comparison group. Purdue University and Virginia Polytechnic Institute were among the 12 institutions that participated in the non-tenure-track faculty survey in 2012. The other nine institutions who participated include: Indiana University – Bloomington, Johns Hopkins University, Kansas State University, New School University, North Carolina State University, Otterbein, Radford University, University of Missouri-Columbia, and University of Washington Tacoma.

Non-tenure-track faculty findings are benchmarked to the entire 2012 cohort of 11 schools who collected non-tenure-track faculty data and RIT tenure-track faculty data providing a broader context with the faculty labor market.

Survey Administration

The RIT COACHE survey was open to all non-administrative full-time faculty beginning in mid-October 2012. Electronic invitations were sent from President Destler and Provost Haefner inviting faculty to participate. Frequent reminder emails were sent while the survey remained opened 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. The NTT faculty population surveyed was 207. Men = 126, Women = 81, White = 175, FOC = 32. Length of time in contract: 1-2 years (73%), 3-4 years (15%), 2 semesters (7%). Primary Responsibility: Teaching (85%), Research (4%).

RIT's non-tenure-track response rate of 46% (96/207) is exactly on par with the total NTT cohort response rate of 46% at the 11 other participating institutions. Men at RIT participated at a slightly higher rate than their female colleagues – 47% compared with 46%. White faculty response rate was 48% compared to faculty of color (including Asian faculty) at 38%.

A Summary of Results

To initiate and inform a campus-wide discussion of the survey results, included here are two summary documents: “Two Best Aspects of Working at Your Institution,” “Two Worst Aspects of Working at Your Institution”. The charts present the survey response rate to questions for both NTT and TT RIT faculty.

The summaries reveal my sense of fit here and quality of colleagues to be the two best aspects of working at RIT followed closely by academic freedom and support for teaching. Compensation and tenure/promotion clarity were the two worst aspect of working at RIT. Other areas of concern included teaching load and too much service/too many assignments.

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Next Steps for 2014

Survey feedback is useful in informing actions to improve organizational health. Individuals and groups who have the ability to affect change have been assigned responsibility for developing action plans to address the three targeted areas based on Tenure Track Faculty Results. Mentoring and Appreciation and Recognition were also concerns expressed in the Non-Tenure Track faculty data.

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

Tenure policy clarity: The Faculty Affairs Committee of Academic Senate will continue to vet its work on proposed revisions to E5.0 to the full Academic Senate. Proposed revisions will 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/Chairs.

Spring Semester 2014

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