2016 Strategic Plan Key Question Committee – Final Report

Question(s): *How can we ensure we hire the right faculty, in the right way and are accurately portraying our institution, our core values and our expectations in the hiring process? How can we increase the number of new faculty hires obtaining tenure in 7 years?*

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Summary:

This committee used several sets of survey results, along with members' insights, to gather data for analysis. Specifically, we used the Great Colleges survey results from 2009 and the COACHE survey results from 2013 to gain insight into previous data gathered on areas of satisfaction and concern for faculty. We also conducted two surveys of our own: a survey of all regular faculty (tenured, tenure-track, instructors) and lecturers about areas of satisfaction and concern, and a survey of department chairs regarding the hiring process for faculty. The committee then took the results of these surveys, performed statistical analysis using SPSS and qualitative analysis of comments, to formulate conclusions and recommendations. Since the committee included a broad representation of roles and levels (a dean, several chairs, an instructor, and two people who have staff assignments but who are also faculty), we feel that we had an excellent opportunity to use these varied insights to perform this work.

Key Findings Summary

Key Finding 1	Faculty are concerned about workload, especially equity and lack of time for research.
Key Finding 2	Leadership and collegiality are strong determinants of job satisfaction.
Key Finding 3	Department chairs believe the hiring process starts too late and is too cumbersome.

Recommended Actions Summary

Recommended Action 1	Review workload expectations and assignments to align with university mission and values.
Recommended Action 2	Provide leadership training where necessary and move to improve workplace climate by addressing problem employees.
Recommended Action 3	Move to approve hiring lines earlier and make other process changes to improve search timelines and results.

Background:

ISU has performed several surveys of faculty satisfaction over time: the Great Colleges survey in 2008-9 and the COACHE survey in 2013 are the two most recent. Despite any changes made as a result of these two surveys, the fact is that many of the same areas of dissatisfaction are still evident today. These areas have to do with process (e.g., workload, evaluations, recognition, hiring process), and with people (e.g., leadership, collegiality).

We believe that the issues identified in the two previous surveys (and still evident today) are foundational to our failure to attract and retain faculty. When we use the term regular faculty, we are referring to tenured, tenure-track, and instructors since they are playing an increasingly important and visible role on our campus.

Analysis Methods:

Surveys:

1. Great Colleges
2. COACHE
3. Survey of all chairs on faculty hiring process (N $\geq$ 35)
4. Survey of all faculty – hiring and retention. (N = 447 total responses: Full Time Lecturer = 22, Part Time Lecturer = 51, Instructor = 74, Tenure-Track Faculty = 97, Tenured Faculty = 201)

Process:

Faculty Survey (item 4) – Retention and Hiring

1. Analyzed survey results using SPSS
2. Coded and classified comments
3. Used those results (1 and 2) to identify major themes
4. Compared themes to those identified in previous surveys (Great Colleges, COACHE) to confirm continuing issues or identify changes
5. Organized results into conclusions
6. Developed recommendations based on conclusions, survey data, and committee member insights.

Chair Survey (item 3) - Hiring

1. Entered survey responses (written or typed) into an Excel spreadsheet
2. Sorted various columns to group and analyze responses
3. Reviewed comments and gathered themes
4. Distilled results of activities 2 and 3 into conclusions and recommendation.

Key Findings:

First and foremost, it is important to note that many of our issues appear to relate directly to a lack of clarity in our values or, more to the point, a failure to align our systems and processes with our values. Our institutional mission focuses on student success, which implies excellence in teaching and a real commitment to spending time to mentor and assist students. However, the data we gathered and the

insights and experiences of our committee members suggest that our operational processes require and reward other activities either in addition to or instead of excellent instruction.

For example, instructors have a standard 5/5 teaching expectation. However, many instructors serve on college and university committees, serve as program directors, and/or participate in scholarly activity. Evaluation criteria for instructors are not flexible enough to accommodate these differences. Ensuring that our institutional values are threaded throughout decisions about workload, evaluation, recognition, and compensation processes (many of the categories identified in our surveys over time) should be the overarching and specific goal of the strategic planning initiatives defined for the next five years.

Many of the issues also point to communication as a concern threaded throughout our findings. We stress the need for transparency and clear expectations to eliminate misunderstanding and miscommunication. The right information needs to get to the right people in a clear, understandable, actionable fashion.

Hiring

On hiring, we find these key issues:

Decision-Making: There is a startling lack of information regarding how new or replacement faculty lines are determined. Clear criteria and open discussion at all levels about how searches are approved will help alleviate the wide-spread angst about this process.

Process: Most consistently, we heard the concern that the search process starts too late in the national hiring cycle and that as a result, we are not able to attract the largest possible pool of qualified applicants. In addition, the ATS is considered cumbersome, and the process is difficult for those who do not work with the system frequently/constantly. The lack of key tools such as video conferencing or the ability to offer a job opportunity to a spouse or partner results in inefficiencies, higher costs, or the failure to attract the best candidate. Search committee chairs and members are not regularly exposed to legal and success-oriented aspects of the search process; training is either not available or not well-communicated. Since failed searches are not allowed to "roll over" to the next year, committees feel pressure to hire (potentially) unsuitable candidates so that they do not "lose the line."

Resources: The $2500-per-search allocated is not sufficient given the conditions and requirements for many searches. Qualified candidates with higher potential travel costs are sometimes dropped from consideration in favor of candidates who are within driving distance of Terre Haute. Our findings from the chair survey suggest that a search requires approximately $4,000 - $7,500 depending on the field. We recommend that $4,500 be allocated to each search, with exceptions handled on a case-by-case basis. This would be adequate for most faculty searches.

Values: Our institutional values are not well communicated to applicants, either through advertisements or the interview process itself, leading to serious mismatches in new-hire expectations and institutional requirements.

Retention

Our research, and our review of past research, has led us to these specific findings related to retention:

Collegiality: This was a strong indicator of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, illustrating its importance in quality of work life, and presumably faculty retention. When asked what do you like best about your department, one respondent noted, "My department seems to be very relaxed and understanding of my needs as a new faculty member. They are welcoming and inviting. They seem to be really good teachers and professional educators." Yet, a representative comment from another respondent about what was least liked about their department was, "Some of my colleagues are horrible people. There is no route at ISU to address faculty bullies."

Leadership: This drew equally strong positive and negative comments, again suggesting the importance of good leadership in creating and maintaining a good work environment. In response to our question about what faculty members liked least their job, one responded: "My department chair is a terrible leader and nothing can be done about it." There were numerous comments along this line. Yet, there were even more positive comments about departmental leadership, such as "My chair does a fantastic job of juggling many responsibilities and advocating for the department to the extent possible, and mediating differences at the department level."

Workload: There are perceived issues with overall workload. In addition, there are strong feelings about the balance of workload across teaching, service, and research.

Evaluation and recognition: Faculty are uneasy about the evaluation process (particularly the biennial review) and how evaluations are used or not used. Faculty also are concerned that appropriate mechanisms do not exist to recognize high performance in key areas, especially teaching.

Salary and benefits: Despite much work and allocation of resources to these area by the institution, there is still apparent dissatisfaction with salary and benefits. When asked why ISU is having trouble retaining faculty until tenure, one respondent noted, "Salary is lower here than many other universities. I feel that people get a job at ISU to build teaching experience and then take that to another university that pays a higher wage."

Diversity: Faculty members expressed concern about the level of diversity within faculty and administration as well as cultural diversity in the community.

Community: Faculty members frequently noted that Terre Haute is not a desirable city in which to live, although many faculty seem satisfied with the area.

Student body: Our institutional commitment is to students from very different backgrounds and with very different levels of preparation, all of whom need and deserve our institution's intense focus on their success. Still, faculty members often lamented that students were not adequately prepared for college level work and that fact directly affected their satisfaction as educators.

Recommended Actions:

Hiring

- Move the approval for most searches to September 1 (with an earlier date for particular disciplines), and engage tools and processes to manage the search process to meet expectations for efficient and timely completion.
- Increase funding to a level that would allow departments to fully advertise positions and vet qualified candidates with robust campus visits.
- Improve efficiency of ATS workflows and offer "hiring consultants" to guide and assist search committees.
- Require training for search chairs and committee members.
- Implement a web conferencing capability, spousal hiring programs, and other tools that can bolster our chances of hiring the best candidate.
- Change our advertising to reflect our institutional values and culture, and ensure that training of search committees emphasizes these elements in order to ensure candidates have the best, yet realistic picture of ISU.
- Allow searches to be extended to the subsequent academic year if a hire is not made despite a search committee's good faith efforts.

Retention

People:

- Address any leadership issues directly and decisively to ensure that departmental work environments are professional and productive. Provide personalized professional development for department chairs in needed areas.
- Develop mechanisms to deal with collegiality problems among the faculty.

Process:

- Review workload for instructors and tenure-track faculty related to teaching, service, and research, across departments and colleges, to identify opportunities for change and alignment to our values.
- Review P&T guidelines and evaluation processes to address imbalances in workload/expectations across teaching, service, and research and ensure that they demonstrate institutional values and operational success.
- Review compensation (salary and benefits) at appropriate peer institutions and communicate those results broadly and thoroughly; make our situation (which we believe is good) more visible.
- Create reward programs and recognition processes that are more visible and align to our values (e.g., recognition of teaching excellence).
- Implement additional programs to enhance quality of life (opportunities exist for social programs as well as spousal/partner hiring programs).

- Review allocation of professional development funds for equitable and meaningful distribution and overall use and ensure that professional development opportunities and funding are well communicated both broadly and deeply.