

Report of the Salisbury University Faculty Welfare Committee
March 14, 2017

The Salisbury University Faculty Welfare Committee (FWC) was charged by the Faculty Senate to investigate the Salisbury University results of both the 2015-2016 Great Colleges to Work for Survey (GCWFS) and the June 2016 USM Shared Governance Survey (USM-SGS); more specifically, the FWC was asked to provide an "in-depth analysis of the Great Colleges to Work for Survey reports items where faculty ranked satisfaction at 50% or below," the analysis of the eight under-performing categories was to be conducted "in order to provide recommendations to address those concerns." Concerning the 2016 USM Shared Governance Survey, the FWC was to review the results to "provide recommendations to address those greatest concerns."

2015-2016 Great Colleges to Work for Survey (GCWFS)

After a review, the FWC finds the following concerning the 2015-2016 Great Colleges to Work for Survey (GCWFS):

- 1) That though the FWC was asked to report on those items where faculty ranked satisfaction at 50% or below in the GCWFS, we would like to point out that that the survey broke down the scoring in the following manner: Poor 0-44%, Warrants Attention 45-54%, Fair to Mediocre 55-64%, Good 65-75%, and Very Good to Excellent 75-100%. (see top p. 6) Thus, there are items that fall in the Warrants Attention category that were not listed in the charge and should be reviewed as well.
- 2) There were "relatively no changes" from 2014 to 2015 in the GCWFS, and faculty found that the "Greatest opportunities for improvement:" were 62% for Senior Leadership, 62% Faculty/Administration/Staff Relations, 62% Communication, and 64% Collaboration. (see p. 6)
- 3) It also appears that, overall, newer faculty (2-5 or in some cases 7 years of service) and long-time faculty (over 25 years of service), have a more positive view of the working environment at SU than do those with 8 to 25 years of service. (see p. 8)
- 4) On page 11, in the "scoring questions by job category" list, faculty at SU scored the institution at 50% or below on 9 of the 32 questions, but below 60% on 14 of the 32 questions, and none were above 70%. In the scoring categories, 64% and below falls in the "Fair to Mediocre" category.

Faculty ranked satisfaction at the following percentages on the following items:

- 1) Provide needed resources - 46%
- 2) Paid fairly for work - 40%

- 3) Department has adequate staff - 25%
- 4) Senior leadership direction for the future - 45%
- 5) Senior leadership interest in faculty and staff - 46%
- 6) Believe what we are told by senior leadership - 49%
- 7) Sense that we are on the same team - 45%
- 8) Recognition and awards programs are meaningful - 36%

But, as stated above in (3), it is important to recognize that, generally, the percentage scores in the 8 items above show a definite drop-off for faculty with 7 or more years of service (see p. 12-13).

For instance, concerning the item "Senior leadership provides a clear direction for this institution's future," 62% of the faculty with under 2 years of experience agree, 50% with 2-4 years of service agree, and 50% with 5-7 years of service agree; on the other hand, only 31% with 8-10 years of service agree, 21% with 11-15 years agree, 47% with 16-20 years agree, 45% with 21-25 years agree, and 65% with over 25 years of service agree. Also, 25% declined to comment.

For the item, "Senior leadership interest in faculty and staff," 75% of the faculty with under 2 years of experience agree, 57% with 2-4 years of service agree; on the other hand, 30% with 5-7 years of service agree, 31% with 8-10 years of service agree, 36% with 11-15 years agree, 47% with 16-20 years agree, 36% with 21-25 years agree, and 55% with over 25 years of service agree. Also, 25% declined to comment.

For the item, "I believe what I am told by senior leadership," 62% of the faculty with under 2 years of experience agree, 71% with 2-4 years of service agree; on the other hand, 40% with 5-7 years of service agree, 31% with 8-10 years of service agree, 42% with 11-15 years agree, 52% with 16-20 years agree, 27% with 21-25 years agree, and 63% with over 25 years of service agree. Also, 37% declined to comment.

For the item, "I am paid fairly for my work," 75% of the faculty with under 2 years of experience agree, 64% with 2-4 years of service agree, and 50% with 5-7 years of service agree; on the other hand, 22% with 8-10 years of service agree, 10% with 11-15 years agree, 52% with 16-20 years agree, 36% with 21-25 years agree, and 45% with over 25 years of service agree. Also, 12% declined to comment.

5) In the "Employee Comments Report Theme Highlights" - where faculty could provide written answers to two "Open-Ended Questions," 1) "What do you appreciate most about working at this institution?," and "What would make this institution a better place to work?" Faculty Themes

graded out as positive in the following areas: Work-life balance, Colleagues, Academic Freedom; but negative in the following areas: Senior Leadership, Salaries, Staffing. (see p. 7)

6) The survey concludes (see p. 17) that the best relationship concerning faculty at SU is generally between Department Chairs and faculty: "Department Chairs shine with ensuring expectations are clear, requesting and providing feedback, being trustworthy and a role model, fairness, consistency, and overall maintaining good working relationships." It might be good to take a look at how the chair to faculty model is different from the Administration to faculty model.

The survey also concluded that there is "an underlying dissatisfaction with pay. Additionally, there is an overwhelming dissatisfaction with adequate staffing and resources, resulting in additional workload with no recognition. The lack of recognition spreads beyond compensation as SU's recognition and awards programs scored low nearly across all job categories."

"Finally, Senior Leadership's genuine interest in campus well-being, open communication, and clear direction was the primary focus of the Faculty voice resulting in a Fair to Mediocre score."

"Faculty feedback was overwhelmingly a low Positive throughout the survey and presents the greatest opportunity for a job group engagement initiative."

June 2016 USM Shared Governance Survey (USM-SGS)

As for the June 2016 USM Shared Governance Survey (USM-SGS), the primary sources for which were "the Chair's survey (in the case of SU, the Senate president), two meetings of CUSF with the senate chairs, and the 10-minute talk given by each Senate Chair during the CUSF meeting at that campus," the FWC finds that:

Concerning the **Climate for Governance** (see Table I, Item 1, p. 2):

Item, 1, the leader of SU's Senate in 2015 "Agreed" but did not "Strongly Agree" that shared governance was "alive and healthy" on our campus.

The survey summarized (see p. 4) that many (10 of 12) institutions in the system "described their campus as one where shared governance was practiced," while admitting that shared governance took "many forms." For shared governance to work, a "rapport" needed to be established between the administration and faculty to "consistently implement, through words as well as deeds," an ongoing commitment to shared governance. When the rapport and commitment were lacking, "faculty were likely to disengage from the process and when left unaddressed over a significant period of time moral as well as productivity were most likely to suffer."

Concerning **Institutional Communications**: (see Table II, Item 2, p. 4)

Item 2, he responded "Agree" but not "Strongly Agree" that "There are excellent communications and consultation by the administration with the faculty and Senate leadership."

- he pointed out that there "are many examples of consistent communication between administration, faculty senate leadership and the faculty in general." Also, that the Senate meetings are open, the Senate officers meet regularly with the Provost, and that the Senate President is a member of the President's Advisory Team. (see p. 5)

The survey summarized (see p. 6) that "when faculty input was apparently routinely ignored, even within an established communication structure, then continued communication was viewed as useless. When faculty were informed without being given the opportunity to influence decisions, or if there was an expectation to react with limited time to deliberate, opportunities for faculty buy-in were missed and a culture of insolence was cultivated."

Concerning the **Senate's Role** (see Table III, Items 3 & 4, p. 6):

Item 3, he responded "Strongly Agree" to "The Faculty Senate plays an important role in making academic decisions at the university."

Item 4, and, "Agree" to "The Faculty Senate plays an important role in making administrative decisions at the university." (see p. 6)

On these points he wrote (see p. 7): "The Faculty Senate's role in making administrative decisions is less certain [than on strictly academic matters, such as curriculum development]. The administration asks for Faculty Senate participation on administrative search committees. However, there have been times when the administration has made decisions without significant Senate input. Related to that, it seems relevant to observe here that while the Senate President is a member of the aforementioned President's Advisory Team, that group engages primarily in information sharing (certainly important and valuable) and less in decision making."

And further (see p. 8) "Perhaps the best example of the Senate's role in making academic decisions is that the curriculum is, as it should be, the purview of the faculty. The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee is a committee of the Senate and while it does have some administrative members, they are non-voting. In addition, there are Faculty Senate committees that focus on assessment, academic policies, and general education review."

The survey summarized: (see p. 8) "Whereas the administrators at most of the institutions permit the Faculty Senate to provide input on academic and other matters, it remains unclear whether or not the input is given considerable weight in administrative decision making."

Concerning the **President's Role** (see Table IV, Items 5-8, p. 9):

Item 5, he responded "Strongly Agree" to: "Other than on rare occasion, the president seldom overturns faculty decisions and recommendations in areas in which the faculty has primary responsibility (e.g., curriculum, tenure, and promotion, etc.)"

Item 6, he responded "Disagree" to: "The President seeks meaningful faculty input on those issues (such as budgeting) in which the faculty has an appropriate interest but not primary responsibility."

Item 7, he responded "Strongly Agree" to: "The President supports and advocates the principles of shared governance."

Item 8, he responded "Agree" to: "The President supports and advocates the principles of shared governance at the subunit level also (e.g., college, department)."

The survey summarized (see p. 11): " At several institutions, there is a clear perception that the Presidents and other administrators are operating in good faith with the faculty, consistent with the principles of shared governance. Faculty at other institutions continue to perceive the President and the administration as lacking true commitment to shared governance implementation, instead adhering to it in name only. In most institutions, some concerns have been raised as to the inconsistency across units of engagement of faculty through shared governance." (See SU's answer "Disagree" to Item 6 above on p. 9)

Concerning the **Faculty's Role** (see Table V, Item 9, p. 11):

Item 9, he responded "Strongly Agree" to: "The Administration is supportive of faculty involvement in shared governance."

The survey concluded (see p. 12): "There is agreement at almost all institutions that shared governance is firmly in place at the presidential level, and less so at the level of other administrators. Subunit shared governance appears, as has been the case in the past, to be highly inconsistent."

Concerning **Joint Decision-Making** (see Table VI, Items 10-14, p. 13):

Item 10, he responded "Strongly Agree" to: "The administration utilizes faculty involvement in the area of planning and strategic planning.

Item 11, he responded "Agree" to: "The administration recognizes faculty involvement in budgeting and fiscal resource planning."

Item 12, he responded "Strongly Agree" to: "The administration recognizes faculty involvement in academic affairs and program development."

Item 13, he responded "Strongly Agree" to: "The administration recognizes faculty involvement in staff selection and hiring."

Item 14, he responded "Strongly Agree" to: "Structures and processes that allow for shared governance are clearly defined in the governance document (e.g., faculty handbook)."

(see Table VI A, Items 15-16, p. 14):

Item 15, he responded "Agree" to: "Shared governance between administration and faculty functions in an effective manner."

Item 16, he responded "Strongly Agree" to: "Joint decision making and shared governance discussed in questions 9-14 are practiced at the sub-unit levels also (e.g., college, department).

The survey concluded (see p. 15) that most Senate Chairs/Presidents that shared governance is implemented at their institutions "in at least some domains." But that the inconsistency "among domains in which they are and are not engaged continues to indicate that there is still important work to be done." Also, that "difficulties implementing shared governance were most likely to be seen in budget decision making and at the sub-unit level within the institution."

The survey finished by offering the following **Recommendations** (see p. 16):

Since lack of shared governance can negatively impact an institution's ability to function, it is recommended that when an impasse between administration and faculty is reached, "that a joint corrective action plan be developed," and that a third neutral party be "mutually selected to serve as mediator to assist" in the development and execution of the plan. This strategy can also be employed at any academic unit or subunit.

"Faculty Senates may consider initiating an internal review of units or subunits" where there has been a problem with shared governance, then disseminate the findings and develop an action plan.

It is recommended that Faculty Senates conduct annual evaluations of top administrators that assess the influence faculty has over key decisions, and issues of transparency.

Finally, the survey recommends that a Board of Regents shared governance award be instituted to underscore the system's commitment to the process; and that they sponsor an "annual system-wide workshop/trainings for subunit administrators on implementing and strengthening shared governance."

FWC Findings/Recommendations Concerning The Two Reports

1) Though there is a shared governance apparatus in place at SU, many faculty, especially those with more years of experience, are of the opinion that it does not function as well as it should, if at all, in important matters. There is a clear indication in the surveys that Faculty are dissatisfied with Senior Leadership at SU over a number of issues; especially over Pay, Resources, and Recognition, and Senior Leadership's direction for the future of the institution, its interest in faculty and staff, and the trustworthiness of Senior Leadership.

2) The Faculty Senate should take steps to identify what shared governance really means and how it should function at SU. Steps have been taken in that direction (initially by the appointing of an ad-hoc committee to begin to define what shared governance means), but the Faculty Senate should make sure that they be followed through to a conclusion.

3) Then the Faculty Senate should conduct a review of whether or not shared governance is functioning properly at SU, and, if it is found that shared governance is not functioning properly at the institution, it should take any or all of the steps suggested in the Chair's Report on Shared Governance to correct the problem, and put safeguards in place to make sure that the problem does not resurface in the future.