April 29, 2014

Kenneth D. Dean, Interim Provost
114 Jesse Hall
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO 65211

Dear Provost Dean:

The Faculty Satisfaction Committee (members listed below) has extensively studied results of the MU Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) survey conducted from October 2012 to January 2013. We are hereby fulfilling our charge to provide recommendations regarding how the COACHE survey results should be shared with the campus community and specific areas to address for improvement.

The overall response rate to the survey, 51%, was good (39 to 82% among colleges). We should take pride in being among the national leaders in including non-tenure track faculty in the survey. Unfortunately, being at the forefront of institutions collecting data from non-tenure track faculty members has resulted in not having comparative data with peer institutions. It is reassuring that our non-tenure track responses were similar to those from our own tenured and tenure track faculty, especially to those from tenured faculty.

There are a number of areas which we should celebrate as successes (for example, satisfaction with teaching and reasonableness of tenure expectations) and a number of areas that deserve action to potentially improve faculty satisfaction (see below). Action in these areas will occur mostly at the college level, thus effective communication with Deans and faculty leaders within colleges is critical for the survey investment to yield return. Variation among colleges presents an opportunity for colleges and schools to learn from each other, as some are clearly doing certain things right. Thus, communication between colleges and schools will also be critical to greatest benefit to come from the survey. Finally, it will be essential for the Provost to hold Deans accountable for taking action to improve their colleges and we suggest that these improvements become part of the metrics for evaluation of the Deans.

In general, we recommend that the results of the survey be shared broadly across the campus community. We specifically recommend that a Dean’s Report be produced for each college. The Dean’s Report should contain information specific to their college, and comparison data that will show where that college ranks among all colleges at MU, but without identifying other colleges. The respective Dean’s Report should identify areas of relative strength and weakness in their college.
We recommend that the results of the survey be shared in three ways. First, recommend that a Dean’s Report be produced under the guidance of the committee for each college. The Dean’s Report should contain information specific to their college, and comparison data that will show where that college ranks among all colleges at MU, but without identifying other colleges. The respective Dean’s Report should identify areas of relative strength and weakness in their college.

Second, we also recommend that the results of the survey be distributed broadly via a more general report (the faculty report) to be shared with the faculty through the Faculty Council. That report should show the variation present among colleges, but again, should not identify specific colleges. The Faculty Council should be informed of the type of information that has gone to the Deans. The faculty report should be posted on the Provost’s website and the Faculty Council Website. It should also be discussed at a general faculty meeting or a specific faculty forum on satisfaction, and publicized through the appropriate media.

Third, we recommend that specific items from the survey be brought to the attention of individuals and committees with responsibility for those areas. For example, the Campus Promotion and Tenure Committee should be made aware of concerns regarding promotion and the Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Studies should be made aware of concerns regarding support for improving teaching.

Three areas were identified by the committee as being of special concern and most deserving attention. They were: 1) promotion; 2) mentoring; and 3) professional development. Each of these may be broken down into more specific items for action; for example, tenure expectations may require action in one college, whereas clarity of tenure policies may require action in another. Promotion may be an important issue for women, but less of an issue for men and more of an issue for NTT than for tenure-track faculty. Professional development may be adequate at the Assistant Professor level, but less than adequate for mid-career faculty members. Again, these details can be brought out in the respective Dean’s Reports. We recommend that a committee including faculty at all levels be formed within each college to review the Dean’s Report and make recommendations appropriate to their school’s own strengths and weaknesses.

As a committee we appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the betterment of the campus. We look forward to continued dialog on these issues and, most importantly, to action which will result in improvements in the workplace and greater faculty satisfaction and productivity.

Committee members: Noor Azizan-Gardner, Steven Ball, Julie Brandt, Mardy Eimers, Rob Hall, Jeni Hart, Michael Misfeldt, Pat Okker, Katherine Reed, Bethany Stone, Karen Touzeau, Gregory Triplett, and Tara Warne.

Sincerely,

William R. Lamberson  Deborah L. Huelsbergen
co-chair  co-chair
Professor of Animal Sciences  Professor of Art