SURVEY RESULTS - PART ONE

To share your thoughts about these results, a blog has been created at http://blogs.bgsu.edu/idealbgsu/.

Background

Bowling Green State University, along with five partner research universities in Northern Ohio, is participating in a program funded by the National Science Foundation: Institutions Developing Excellence in Academic Leadership (IDEAL). This three-year project is designed to cultivate and support collegial environments and climates for women and underrepresented groups in the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. The goal of IDEAL is to encourage career advancement of women and underrepresented minorities in science and technology at all stages, from students through postdoctoral researchers and all levels of faculty, into administrative and other leadership positions.

Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) is the lead institution for this project. Project leaders at CWRU share their research, and that of other institutions in NSF's Advance program, with colleagues at the partner institutions, which include BGSU, Kent State, Cleveland State, and the Universities of Akron and Toledo. Faculty teams at each partner institution use this information to understand and improve the local working climate for women and minorities in STEM fields.

The goals of the IDEAL project align closely with Strategy 7 of BGSU’s strategic plan: Increase institutional diversity and inclusion. As such, the BGSU Office of the Provost has been very supportive of the work that has been done by the faculty IDEAL teams.

Climate survey data collection and analysis

To gain a better understanding of the challenges facing women faculty in STEM areas, the first-year IDEAL team initiated an online faculty climate survey that was conducted by Institutional Research in Spring 2010. The survey was similar to one previously used by CWRU, and assessed institutional climate for support of teaching, research and service, job satisfaction, and perceptions of the University environment. All full time
faculty members at BGSU were asked to complete this 140 question survey. Detailed item-level results compiled by BGSU Institutional Research are available at http://www.bgsu.edu/downloads/finance/file81023.pdf

The year-two IDEAL team analyzed the data through factor analysis to aid interpretation. Through this process, related items were combined into scales. Any items that did not load onto any factor were retained as individual items. This process yielded 20 factors and 21 individual items, the results of which are illustrated below. Details about the factors and the exact wording of items can be found here.

A three-step process was conducted to analyze the data. First, we compiled descriptive information on all of the scales to understand how the faculty across the University feels about the climate at BGSU. Those results are presented here. Next, we compared men and women to understand how gender impacts perceptions of the BGSU climate. Finally, we compared faculty in STEM areas to those in non-STEM areas to understand how those in science and math related areas perceive the BGSU climate compared to those in other academic areas. Results by gender and discipline will be disseminated in the coming weeks.

**Sample characteristics**

The following table shows the number of individuals responding to the survey in different categories. The numbers in parentheses show these values as a percent of the total population at BGSU in the corresponding category in 2010. Note that totals may not equal the sum of the category values, since not all respondents answered all the questions on the survey. Overall, the high response rate across most categories suggests that valid interpretations can be drawn from these results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Minorities</th>
<th>Professor</th>
<th>Assoc. Pr.</th>
<th>Assist. Pr.</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>199 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>178 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>393 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(81%)</td>
<td>(45%)</td>
<td>(53%)</td>
<td>(48%)</td>
<td>(28%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

Satisfaction with job conditions: Faculty responses suggest a general level of satisfaction on most questions pertaining to job conditions. Relationships with fellow faculty and chairs ranked highest among these topics, and written responses to the free-response question, “Please describe any positive changes in your department, unit, or the University in the past three years,” frequently underscored the importance of these departmental relationships. For example, one respondent commented, “Our chair is a great communicator and an effective administrator. She is especially helpful to pre-tenure faculty.” Another noted, “The Department works very well. We have our quirks, and our moments of temporary frustration like everyone else, but the overall climate is excellent.”

An individual question regarding satisfaction with “opportunities for scholarly pursuits” scored noticeably lower, and mean scores on the factor that combined questions about formal and informal mentoring experiences on and off campus indicated a much lower level of satisfaction with this aspect of BGSU faculty experiences.

Satisfaction with job conditions

Note: Composite factors are in dark orange. Single items are in light orange.
Satisfaction with Resources: Overall, faculty reported that they were satisfied with staff, parking, library and computer resources and office, lab, and classroom space. The mean for each of these factors was around or above 3 out of 4, which corresponds to “satisfied.”

Satisfaction with the quality of undergraduate and graduate students was somewhat lower (2.71 out of 4, which is between “satisfied” and “dissatisfied”). Several of the open-ended comments in response to the question “Please describe any negative changes in your department, unit, or the University in the past three years,” addressed this issue (e.g., “My impression, given the freshmen I’ve taught over the past 10 years, is that we have loosened our admissions standards rather radically. If we are starting to take in many more students who are not really prepared to (or sometimes able to) do university-level work, we should put real effort into supporting them through the process. And by this I mean general, university-driven help, not simply extra office hours on the faculty members’ part.”). The lowest overall satisfaction was reported for research support and compensation and benefits. Each of these variables averaged around 2.2 out of 4 (in the “dissatisfied” range). Many of the open ended responses highlighted the dissatisfaction with salary and benefits (e.g., “No salary increases for merit and increases in health care netting a pay cut in essence.”)
**Satisfaction with life/work balance:** Overall, faculty were quite satisfied with the degree of life/work balance that is afforded by BGSU. Mean ratings for the department’s support for family leave, scheduling around child care, and balancing work/life issues were all above 3 out of 4 (corresponding to “somewhat satisfied”). Similarly, endorsement of an item asking about department meetings being scheduled outside of the 9-5 work day was very low.
Challenges faced by BGSU faculty members: None of the challenges about which the climate survey asked were endorsed at high rates by the faculty respondents. The challenge with the highest mean (2.5, the midpoint between “slightly disagree” and “slightly agree”) was the feeling that faculty accomplishments in teaching, research and service are not formally recognized by departments.

Of particular interest to the IDEAL program are reports of discriminatory attitudes and interactions vis-à-vis gender and race. Reports of this were encouragingly low among the faculty (means around 1.7 in the “disagree” range). It is noteworthy, however, that faculty were more likely to report that women with children are seen as less committed to their careers than is true for men with children. Although both of these items were endorsed infrequently, the discrepancy (significant at $p < .05$) may suggest an additional barrier for women at BGSU that is less relevant for men. Further, although such comments were relatively infrequent, some respondents did comment on this issue in the open-ended questions (e.g., “We have hired some wonderful new, young scholars but have had trouble retaining them due to lack of resources, negative attitudes toward women, overloaded schedules and too much committee work.”).
Sources of Stress: To better understand the sources of stress that BGSU faculty experience, these 13 items were analyzed individually. The two highest reported sources of stress for BGSU faculty (about 2.2 out of 3 corresponding to a mean greater than “somewhat”) were scholarly productivity and department and campus politics. It would be helpful for future climate surveys to differentiate department politics from those on the campus at large to determine more precisely the root of this stress and what might be done to alleviate it. Addressing the issue of responsibilities, one respondent commented, “We have not been able to hire any tenure track professors, which has weakened our undergrad and grad programs and hurt faculty morale. It is too hard to find time for research, when there are so many administrative responsibilities.” Personal life stressors, such as health, partner’s employment situation, care for someone who is ill, and child care were all rated lower as sources of stress (1.6 – 1.7 out of 3 which corresponds to between “not at all” and “somewhat” on average). This is consistent with the high rates of satisfaction endorsed for the work/life balance items shown above.

How much is this a source of stress for you?
What’s next?

These results provide a snapshot of how the BGSU faculty as a whole feel about the climate at the university. The IDEAL project is especially interested in differences between men and women in their perception of the climate as well as differences between faculty in math and sciences and those in other academic areas. Thus, two additional reports on the 2010 faculty climate survey will be released shortly. In Part II, the IDEAL team explores gender issues by documenting statistically significant differences in the responses of male and female faculty. Part III will address differences between STEM and non-STEM faculty. Please look for these reports!

Our hope is that these results can serve as a starting point for discussions about the assets and needs that BGSU has going forward in the challenging area of recruiting and retaining highly qualified and diverse faculty. To share your thoughts about these results, a blog has been created at http://blogs.bgsu.edu/idealbgsu/. Log on to this site and click on “comments” to share your thoughts about this important topic.

The IDEAL project at BGSU consists of:
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  Dr. Andrew Layden (Physics & Astron), Dr. Dara Mush-Eizenman (Psychology), Dr. Margaret Yacobucci (Geology)
First Year Team:
  Dr. Laura Leventhal (Computer Science), Dr. Helen Michaels (Biology), Dr. Sheila Roberts (Geology)
Co-Director: Dr. Deanne Snively (Chemistry)
Team Coach: Dr. Deborah O'Neil (Management)