SPRING 2004 ROUNDTABLE – FACULTY RETENTION

The Spring 2004 Roundtable on Faculty Retention was held at the Hunter Henry Center on March 27, 2004. Due to the Honors Program Awards Ceremony being held that same afternoon, the roundtable discussion ended at 1:30 pm. The following is a brief summary of the topics covered and a list of supplemental materials referred to during the discussions. The goal of this roundtable was to address items relevant to the participants, so the discussion section simply contains a compilation of comments made by the participants. Although this roundtable may have generated more questions than answers, the goal was to initiate discussions on this topic. Hopefully, these discussions will continue.

Nancy Reichert, Vice President (2003-2004), Robert Holland Faculty Senate

Participants:
Albert Allen – Agricultural Economics / CALS
Jack Blendinger – Education / EDUC
Cody Coyne – Veterinary Medicine / CVM
Kay DeMarsche – Art Department Head / A&S
Walter Diehl – Biological Sciences / A&S
Sara Freedman – Business & Industry Dean / COBI
Jerry Gilbert – Office of Provost
Doug Goodman – Political Science / A&S
Mark Goodman – Communication / A&S
Ray Hayes – Finance & Administration Vice President
Carlen Henington - Counselor Educ. & Educ. Psychology / EDUC
David Huddleston – Civil Engineering / ENG
Charles Lee – President
Jeff Lindner – DIAL
Richard Maiers – Forestry / FOR
Kelly Marsh – English / A&S
Phyllis Miller – School of Human Sciences / CALS
David Nagel – Plant & Soil Sciences / MSU-ES
David Peebles – Poultry Science / CALS
Ruth Prescott – Office of Provost
Peter Rabideau – Provost
Nancy Reichert – Plant & Soil Sciences / CALS
Elizabeth Urbanik – Library
Anthony Vizzini – Aerospace Engineering Department Head / ENG

Supplemental items included in the binder provided to participants prior to the roundtable:
- Data from MSU Office of Institutional Research (OIR) indicated the average rate of faculty leaving MSU was 5.8% (1999-2002), not included were departures due to retirement, US work ineligibility, terminal contract or death
- Faculty Retention Toolkit, ADVANCE Center for Institutional Change, University of Washington, Summer 2003, Seattle, WA
  (http://www.engr.washington.edu/advance/resources/Retention/index.html)
  (*copies of this were later shared with the deans at Deans Council*)

- Principles of Good Practice: Supporting Early-Career Faculty, American Association for Higher Education, 2000, Washington, DC
  (http://www.aahe.org/ffrr/principles_brochure2.htm)
- Final Report from the University Faculty Compensation Committee for FY03, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS
  (http://www.ku.edu/~unigov/faccomp03fr.html)
- Faculty Work Life Satisfaction Survey 2001, Executive Summary, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX
  (http://hr.tamu.edu/working/wlss/2001/faculty/FAC-2001-ExecSummary.html)
- Ministry of Learning Working Group on Attraction and Retention, 2002, University of Calgary, Canada
- The Tuition Exchange, a reciprocal scholarship program
  (http://www.tuitionexchange.org)
- Salary data for MSU faculty and administrators, 2002-2003
    - -- Collected from: OIR, College of Veterinary Medicine, USDA, Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station
    - -- Faculty data listed by rank within colleges and departments for 1998-2003

Opening remarks by Nancy Reichert:
Welcome to the roundtable. As we begin, I would like to read from Lou D'Abramo's statement made at the first roundtable on campus morale:
(http://www.facultysenate.msstate.edu/fall2000Roundtable_summary.PDF).

> "Thank you for your time, interest, and your faith in the power of bringing people together for the good of all. Today there is no agenda and no goals or plans will be established. However, the dialogue will hopefully lead to positive action. I ask that communication with respect be the power that fuels this roundtable....No specific endpoints will be developed. Hopefully, today's discussion will be based upon a mutual respect and cooperation whereby understanding and trust can be achieved. These are really the foundation of building and maintaining a strong morale within the campus community."

Discussion:
Each participant introduced themselves, indicated how long they had been at MSU, and what retention topic(s) was/were most important to them. The length of time participants had been employed at MSU ranged from six days to 26 years. Participants indicated the following topics were important to them. They have been organized into two main areas, although some cross-over exists. Relevant discussion points are listed under each area.

Budget and Administrative Management
Topics:
allocation of resources
recruitment
senior level faculty under-valued
how to prevent faculty from looking - preemptive
departmental resources
disparities within/between units

fiscal reporting
grants-in-kind
flexible benefits
health of land-grant institutions, MS economics

Discussion:
New hires are brought in at market-level, then quickly lose ground. Faculty salaries are below the SUG (Southern Universities Group) average. Data also showed salary compression at the higher ranks. The department heads should look at, and address, this salary compression as its his/her responsibility. The deans should also take a role in fixing disparities between salaries of individuals with comparable abilities. A successful example was of this was given: The department head of English recognized salary inequities and made a proposal to the administration to address them, which they did.

The long-range plan is to propose a 4% salary increase per year for three years. However, the legislators don't want to make cuts elsewhere. President Lee indicated a 2% raise would cost the university $2.8 million (includes the Division of Ag.). The first proposal for raises would address increased health care costs. There was consensus that it was important to fully fund the rise in health care costs for lower paid employees. Are there other sources of university funds to address faculty raises? Possibly. The administration believes that continued annual raises, even if small, are important and will be a goal. Would departments be willing to cannibalize positions in return for increased faculty salaries?

There are numerous lost faculty and staff positions that have not been replaced due to continued budget cuts. Will any be replaced? It is hard to build while cuts are taking place.
The university should be run with a good and consistent business plan and a balanced budget based on projected student enrollment. President Lee indicated the need for a performance-based budgeting system.

Historically, there has been a decentralized set of operational, and budgetary, structures within the university. Can we continue to operate this way?

There should be transparency in the budgeting process. This should include transparency in criteria used to give raises to faculty within units, and in regard to resource allocation. Budgetary information should be available and open for discussion. Traditionally, faculty input has not been requested in developing the budget. The new Planning Committee chaired by the Provost may help address this. The Faculty Senate could also offer workshops on the budgeting process.

Suggestions to provide non-salary benefits: Enroll in a tuition exchange-program to provide scholarship opportunities for children of faculty/staff. Let spouses of faculty/staff pay the one-half tuition rate their children receive. Assist unemployed spouses of faculty with job placement including finding jobs within the university.

<u>Work Environment and University Community</u>
Topics:
ethics, communication, transparency/clarity in working environment
rise of bureaucracy and micro-management
diversity in the workplace
faculty workload
annual review process
mid-career development
promotion and tenure (P&T) process, and is it attainable
mentoring and retention of junior faculty
graduate student programs and protecting advanced degree programs
cultural life of community
no inter-departmental interaction
intangibles

Discussion:
At times, there seems to be extreme mis-communication between faculty and administration and among faculty. There appears to be authoritarian vs. authoritative leadership. There is extreme micro-management in some units. Faculty are not listened to as professionals. An example of these perceptions: Interior design faculty in the School of Human Sciences heard of their possible transfer to a different college, but none of the affected faculty were consulted. Although requested, an open discussion between the faculty and administration has still not taken place, although it appears their transfer is imminent.

Department heads need increased visibility. They should walk down the halls of their buildings and talk with their faculty. Do department heads need management sessions? New heads may benefit from this type of seminar. There should be scheduled department meetings. Administrators (deans...) should be invited to departmental meetings. Administrators should also plan to meet with faculty by scheduling, perhaps, brown-bag lunches with invited faculty picked at random.

Faculty are expected to do more for less. Are we spread too thin? Should we selectively reduce marginal programs, and reduce the number of programs? Last year, the course offerings were reduced by 8%, but the President only received two complaints.

How many of the university's problems are related to an increased focus on research and development in past 10 years? Should the deans play a greater role in managing research?

There should be correlation of the annual review with the promotion and tenure process. In the annual review process, how can faculty compare their performance with colleagues in the same unit? Some units, such as COBI, provide faculty with all merit rankings of colleagues (blind) for teaching, research and service. Without such information, how do we know the merit increase policy (HRM 60-316) is being followed? How do we handle discrepancies?

Mentoring of junior faculty is important. There are approx. 60 new faculty members this year.   Should the Provost's office designate faculty within those departments to be mentors?   Will faculty respond?   Are the best mentors from inside or outside the department?   The promotion and tenure document specifies the departmental P&T committee is responsible for mentoring. Perhaps seminars should be given to new faculty on time management and how to set their goals, and the faculty orientation program needs to be improved. We should also help graduate students learn about what's entailed in a career in academia so they're better prepared.

Suggestions to enhance the university community environment: Have a place for faculty to meet each other and develop professional collaborations, such as a faculty lounge. President Lee indicated we are early enough in the student union renovation that a faculty lounge could be added. Have a private dining room for faculty. There could be an art gallery in the student union or a centralized area on campus. The administration could schedule informal meetings, perhaps over lunch, with faculty picked at random to discuss pre-arranged topics and/or topics of importance to the invited faculty. Also suggested was initiating a campus-wide speaker series.