



# **Stop, Don't, Go, Please: Retention and How our Policies & Work Environments Shape it**

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# Source Material

O'Meara, K. (2014). Half-Way Out: How Requiring Outside offers to Raise Salaries Influences Faculty Retention and Organizational Commitment. *Research in Higher Education, 55(4)*, 1-22.

O'Meara, K., Lounder, A., & Campbell, C. (2014). To heaven or hell: Sensemaking about why faculty leave. *The Journal of Higher Education, 85(5)*, 603-632.

O'Meara, K., Niehaus, E., Bennett, J. (2014, April 5). *Left unsaid: The Role of psychological contracts in faculty departure*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Educational Research Association. Philadelphia, PA.

O'Meara, K., Fink, J. & White-Lewis, D. *Who's Looking? Examining Faculty Outside Offers*. Under Review.



# Faculty Departure and Retention

- ADVANCE focus on retention equity
- Push and pull factors
- Costs when faculty leave:
  - Loss of recruitment and start-up investments
  - Loss of ability to meet new strategic priorities and content areas
  - Morale, work environment, equity



# Research Questions

- What are some of the expectations and psychological contracts faculty hold for their positions?
- What are the dominant explanations given by administrators and colleagues for departure? vs. How do leaving faculty describe departure?
- What role do university policies and practices play in retention and departure?
- What factors predict outside offers?



# Relevant Theories

- *Expectancy Theory*: people have certain expectations for the structural properties of work
- *Constituent/Calculative Forces*: Self-Interest/Community Interest
- *Sensemaking*: how individuals work with information in their everyday environment to interpret and understand phenomena
- *Procedural and Distributive Justice*: perceived fairness of the amounts of compensation employees receive and process that decides it
- *Gendered Organizations*: mechanisms by which organizations advantage men, disadvantage women



# Half-Way Out (HWO) University

- Public research university, located close to metro area with 40,000 students (70% undergraduate) and over \$500 million in research expenditure
- High cost of living, and significant job opportunities for partners and spouses of faculty and staff
- In a five-year period HWO University lost on average about 2.6% of their faculty each year (30–52 faculty) due to resignation, not including retirement
  - Of those resignations, 30% assistant professors, 29% tenured associate professors, and 41% are full professors
- In 2013, HWO University implemented a faculty work environment survey (FWES) of all T/TT faculty to assess and measure change in work environment (784 respondents, 47% response rate)



# Methods

- HWO Case study: review of organizational retention policies and practices
- Interviews with 33 leaving faculty and 10 faculty who remained after outside offers
- Interviews with 21 administrators involved in faculty retention efforts
- Survey of tenure track faculty in 2011 and 2013 regarding intent to leave and outside offers



# Key Findings

- I. Expectations *left unsaid* (about relationships, resources, and nature of work) and *left unmet* lead to departure
- II. Colleagues portrayed leaving faculty as going to *heaven or hell*; leaving faculty report poor working environment
- III. *Policies* requiring outside offers for raises *hurt retention* and morale
- IV. The *outside offer process is gendered* but more by rank and evaluation systems



# I. Expectations and Psychological Contracts

Faculty held expectations regarding:

- Professional Relationships
- Nature of faculty work/career advancement
- Resources

Influences on these Expectations:

- Doctoral programs
- Interview experiences
- Contracts
- The faculty working in the department
- What they saw other faculty receiving—at HWO and elsewhere



# Expectations: Professional Relationships

Naomi:

*“Because of what I had seen before, the department I came from, in my PhD and my post doc, the faculty were quite close, collaborated a lot, supported each other a lot, so yeah, I definitely had expectation[s] that there would be a lot of collaboration and working together to improve the department, working together to make it a better place, that what I had seen before and that’s what I expected to see in the department I joined”*



# Expectations: Relationships

- James:

*“I think that my expectations were that, you know, to have a real kind of community of people around me and that, that would be kind of working together asking questions.”*

- Gilbert:

*“When I came to LGU, I soon found out that it’s a more of a very lonely environment....and you don’t really interact with many people at all so you’re expected to do, to work on your own.”*



# Expectations: Work & Resources

Don:

*“So they said, we just care about the top three [journals]. And that was certainly different from what it was when I entered the school....I didn’t want to be in a place where I had to only publish in the biggest three journals.”*

Amy:

*“...so I came in, and the lab facilities were not fantastic, but I assumed that things would grow and if I was successful – if I could maintain my grant funding, that the University would respond and so on”*

Marcie:

*“I found that whenever I asked for that help [from support staff], it never came through, or I guess I could say it just never was there.”*



## II. How Colleagues Frame Departure

*“Quite often after the fact that the member has left, there’s a tendency to simplify the whole argument and try to present it in terms of just a one sentence or two sentence story. You know this person left because at that place, even though it’s academically not comparable to [our university], they can avail of this thing which the physical setting of that place provides, which we can’t. It’s quite often we try to protect ourselves from feeling guilty or not getting the feeling that we didn’t do as much as we could have to retain a certain person by making statements of that sort.*”

*People look for simplistic reasons why certain people left and try to present it that way because often times when you are asked these questions you don’t have a whole lot of time to explain to somebody and you perhaps don’t even know how to explain it.”*



# Dominant Explanations for Departure

## Colleagues Assume

Heaven or Hell

- “A better opportunity”
- “The writing on the wall”

Location/Partner Employment

## Leaving Faculty Report

Work Environment & Fit



# Table 1: Participants' Reasons for Intending to Leave TTU and Perceptions of Why Others Left

Analytic Category: Reason for Departure (subcategories below)*	If you are likely to leave the University or the academic profession in the next two years, what would be the main reasons?***	Think of someone from your unit who left TTU in the last three years, who you wish had remained.**
A better opportunity		
An offer with high salary	57%	55%
An offer from more prestigious department or institution	41%	37%
An offer for a position outside academe	8%	5%
The writing was on the wall		
Not well suited to the faculty career	4%	5%
Poor likelihood of tenure/promotion or contract renewal	10%	11%
Work environment and fit		
Potential for work-life balance in a different type of position	22%	15%
Better campus climate for women at another institution	5%	3%
Better campus climate for FOC at another institution	3%	1%
Better campus climate for GLBTQ faculty at another institution	2%	1%
Lack of collegiality in unit	24%	1%



## Table 2: Participants' Reasons for Intending to Leave TTU and Perceptions of Why Others Left

Analytic Category: Reason for Departure (subcategories below)*	If you are likely to leave the University or the academic profession in the next two years, what would be the main reasons**	Think of someone from your unit who left TTU in the last three years, who you wish had remained.**
Location and Family		
To be closer to family	14%	21%
Career opportunities at another institution for spouse/partner	9%	15%
Better politics related to childcare, parental leave	3%	1%
An offer from an institution in a more desirable geographic location	16%	18%
Other		
Retirement†	15%	10%

*\*Note. the subcategory survey items were constructed prior to the analysis that led to the creation of analytic categories*

*\*\*Note. Due to the method of data collection (“select up to three”), these figures total greater than 100%.*

*† Note. the subcategory “Retirement” was not incorporated into any of the four analytic categories due to the fact that our focus for this study were faculty leaving or intending to leave for reasons other than retirement. It is useful context though to see the % of faculty using this explanation for departure.*



# A Better Opportunity

*“He only went to the University of Chicago, so you’re not going to compete against an offer from the University of Chicago. Easily, they have all the money in the world plus, you know, it’s a little bit better place than we are.”*



## A Better Opportunity (cont.)

*“Yeah, honestly I don’t think he does interpret the reasons why I left as indicative of deeper environmental challenges. I don’t think the dean does either. I think they’ll just sort of talk it up as, “oh, well [name] got called by [new institution]. He got a better offer, so it made sense for him to go where the better offer was. [. . . ]. I actually think the largest issue with [chair] and others in our department is people are really, I think, afraid of conflict. It’s a lot easier to not address when people make comments that are sexist, problematic, harmful to others, because, you know, these individuals who make these comments have a lot of clout, which is why I think I hold the department chair even more responsible.”*



# “The writing on the wall”

“If we are talking about pre-tenure cases, it’s mostly that they see the writing on the wall. So you know about the third year or something like that.”



# Location and Partner Employment

*“In every case, the three women that we lost, in every case, there was a family aspect to losing them. I think a couple was uncertain about the prospects of one member of the couple for tenure, the other member of the couple was already tenured, so the organization that was offering a position was basically offering the opportunity for the spouse to reset their tenure, to begin their tenure clock from scratch, with the promise that they would look at them fairly soon. What I'm saying is I think you can look back seven years or ten years from that point and say if we had, if the university had, worked hard to find both these faculty members jobs in [the local area], you know, we would, we could retain them for a much longer period—this situation would never have [materialized].”*



# Work Environment and Fit

*“We’ve had one woman who left to go back to where she had gotten her degree to work with her advisor, actually. She had been successful here, gotten a career award, but she never fit well with the department. She was here when I got here, and for whatever reason it almost seemed like she had personality conflicts with people. And, so, it was a surprise for me when I found out she had already accepted her offer and was going back to [institution name] and at the same time it was like, “I hope she’ll be happy,” because I do know that she just never worked well in the department.”*



# Departure framed as...

- Heaven: We could not compete.
- Hell: Their problem, not ours.
- Location/Family: Not much we can do.
- Work Environment: Not a good “Fit.”

Lack of institutional accountability in each framing



# Outside Offers

- One of the only ways to increase salary outside promotion; also can leverage greater power, resources and prestige on campus.
- Human capital, mobility, and organizational loyalty are all factors that predict whether an employee will seek and receive an outside offer.
- Often informally encouraged for early career faculty going up.
- Gender is an issue because women make less than men and are more dissatisfied with salary; gendered evaluation systems, perceptions of ideal worker, negotiation process.



# III. How Do Policies and Practices Shape Departure?

Half-Way Out University's policy of requiring outside offers in order to provide salary increases made it harder for administrators to retain good early career faculty.

Three ways the policy negatively impacted university retention efforts:

- Looking for outside offers to raise salaries led faculty to see better opportunities
- Policy opened the door to miscalculations and fumbling of the counter-offer process
- Policy led the institution into market competitions for faculty it was unlikely to win



# The Outside Offer Policy Hurt Faculty Retention, Commitment, Morale

HWO University's policy worked against institutional efforts to retain early career faculty and negatively influenced faculty organizational commitment by:

- Activating calculative forces within faculty and de-emphasizing and lessening constituent forces
- Increasing faculty knowledge of career opportunities available to them elsewhere
- Violating faculty expectations for procedural and distributive justice



# Looking Leads to Leaving

*“I think that sort of policy means that the faculty member is already out the door; before they even come into talk to you [as chair] they’re out of the door. As a fellow faculty member, you know, they’re already in bed with the other department. It’s like learning that somebody’s having an affair, it’s sort of, you know, their car’s parked outside the other house...so it’s very difficult to even the playing field from that point on.”*

*“Once somebody feels resentment enough to start looking for jobs, the door is already open and they’re halfway out. You know? So the university has essentially forced us into a situation where we cannot proactively retain people. You know, we have been able to retain a couple of people by countering, but we’ve lost probably 80 % of the cases where people have gone out and gotten offers from other places.”*



# Miscalculations and Fumbling of Counter-Offerers

*“So, at that point I let the department chair know and they basically have to make a choice. They could give me a sizeable raise; then I won’t be on the market any more...or they can see what I can get. Well I guess in hindsight, the chair was a little bit short-sighted. If the chair already gave me a big raise, I would have taken myself away from the market. So, that was playing a bit. There was some uncertainty there, but then when other schools make offers which are significantly better than what HWO University can afford, the chance for keeping me is just really small. Already been down there again for the decision visit, everyone has already kissed our [backside], supplied us with wine and beautiful food, and turned out the chair takes us hiking so we can see the area, so it is clear they’re really gunning for us.”*



# Advantaged Competitors

*“Money, money, money, money. It’s all about money. HWO University– for all of the people we’ve had offers for, I believe that every offer was met by the dollar figure. If you went through the ratio of cost of living, we could, let’s just say it is \$100,000 here. But \$100,000 in Iowa and \$100,000 here are not in the same playing field.”*



# Impact on Faculty Organizational Commitment

*“From the point of view of the faculty member, what the university is saying to them is that our university does not trust, you know, we don’t have a judgment of you. We don’t think you’re the hottest thing since sliced bread; we have to wait for somebody else to tell us that you’re the hottest thing since sliced bread, and that is, I think, immensely insulting to some. I’ve heard this again and again, not just from people who I’ve dealt with as faculty but also people who I’ve known as colleagues who’ve gone through this process of leaving. They don’t understand why the university, whatever that is, can’t look through their achievements and make a preemptive decision about retaining them.”*

*“Once they realized I was going to leave they made tremendous effort to retain me. But I just felt like I shouldn’t have had to decide to leave for them to do such a thing. I just didn’t feel this was the right way to do stuff.”*



## IV. Differences by Gender, Rank, Parental/Partner Status

- Men were more likely than women to have received an outside offer; however rank was most predictive of outside offers when controlling for gender & marital/parental status.
- Full professors, most likely to have received an outside offer, then associate, then assistants.
- Men held 77% of fulls, 66% of associates, 57% of Assistants
- Outside offers a form of recognition & power



# Table 3: Outside Offers by Gender and Rank

<i>Gender</i>	Men (n=412)	Women (n=286)	
Received outside offer	48.1%	37.8%	
Did not receive outside offer	51.9%	62.2%	
Chi-squared Value	7.269**		
<i>Rank</i>	Professor (n=307)	Assoc. Prof (n=220)	Assist. Prof (n=171)
Received outside offer	59.6%	42.7%	17.0%
Did not receive outside offer	40.4%	57.3%	83.0%
<i>Rank</i>	Professor (n=307)	Assoc. Prof (n=220)	Assist. Prof (n=171)
Received outside offer	59.6%	42.7%	17.0%
Chi-squared Value	81.304***		

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$



# Implications for Research

- No national database on outside offers.
- Likely mechanism influencing salary gap.
- Campuses & faculty should be allowed to opt into system-wide longitudinal studies of equity and outside offers.
- Need to understand what part of unexplained pay difference is from outside offers.
- Need to understand if pay equity would improve with alternate systems.



# Implications for Policy and Practice

## Do Not Leave Expectations Unsaid

- Clarity from hiring committees, deans, and chairs
- “Entrance interviews” tied to mentoring contracts and 3<sup>rd</sup> year reviews
- MOUs regarding writing venues, focus of work
- Graduate training regarding expectations, resiliency
- Exit interviews/surveys by parties outside the unit, aggregated for public knowledge



# Implications for Outside Offers

- Policy requiring outside offers for salary increases pushes early career faculty into the arms of a new academic home while lessening the organizational commitment of those they leave behind.
- Possible alternatives:
  - Require proof of the invitation to interview in order to raise salaries, not visit.
  - Create programs that financially reward faculty contributions in areas where they need faculty performance to be high but have few built-in incentives.
  - Greater transparency and shared governance in the decision process.



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**Thank You!**

*Questions?*

