

ADVANCE Program for Inclusive Excellence

Advancing women, transforming the University, investing in a culture of inclusive excellence



Differences by Rank: Associate Professors

The UMD ADVANCE Grant Towards an Institution for Inclusive Excellence (UMD = TIZE), the Office of Faculty Affairs, and the Office of Diversity & Inclusion, are all engaged in efforts to improve professional growth opportunities and work environment for UMD faculty. A critical part of those efforts is research to benchmark the current status of faculty work environments and to see if there are important differences by gender, race and ethnicity, career stage, and college. This report presents findings from a spring 2013 UMD work environment survey.

The UMD Work Environment Survey assessed specific aspects of faculty work environment, such as faculty perceptions of their own professional growth, institutional and unit supports for professional growth, climate for work-life balance, fair treatment and diversity, and satisfaction, all of which have been linked to retention, advancement, and productivity. There were 784 tenure track respondents, approximately 47% of full-time UMD tenure track faculty in fall 2012. Of the respondents, 24.7% were Assistant Professors, 31.6% were Associate Professors, and 43.6% were Full Professors.

Here major findings are reported by rank. A full institutional report with all data and tables, as well as college-specific reports, can be found at the ADVANCE website: www.advance.umd.edu.

"I am an associate professor. We've been frozen, furloughed, and frozen for, I would guess, about 9 of the 12 years I have been here... It is not good for morale. One feels one is on some kind of treadmill where one runs and runs but never gets anywhere."

In 2011, findings from the UMD Work Environment Survey revealed that Associate Professors were significantly less positive than other tenured and tenure-track faculty on nearly every category surveyed and on 60 of 80 survey items. Two years later, Associate Professors were significantly less positive on 50 of 80 survey items and in nearly every category. Associate Professors report feeling less satisfied than Assistant Professors, Full Professors, or both, across a range of dimensions, including their departments and UMD overall; work-life balance; career advancement and institutional supports for career advancement; evaluation of research and creative work; management of teaching, research and service responsibilities; recognition; leadership opportunities; faculty learning; faculty networks and collegiality; and productivity.

In general, Associate Professors are more likely to lack a strong sense of agency compared to other tenured and tenure-track faculty and are less apt to feel adequately supported by their departments. They tend to feel under-appreciated, under-compensated, and over-worked at University of Maryland and within their units. For example, Associate Professors tend to perceive institutional support for career advancement to be insufficient and are less likely to be encouraged to pursue positions of leadership than either Assistant or Full Professors.

This brief features specific variables on which Associate Professors reported significantly less positive perceptions and attitudes compared to other faculty at UMD.

SATISFACTION WITH DEPARTMENT AND UMD

In general, 68% and 67% of faculty respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their unit and with UMD, respectively. However, Associate Professors were less satisfied than either Assistant or Full Professors regarding the following variables:

- Overall experience working in their units
- Assistance with research administration
- Assistance with finding grants
- Clerical/administrative support
- Time spent on research vs. teaching and service
- Access to TAs and RAs
- Expectations for committee service
- Salary and benefits
- Autonomy
- Support of colleagues
- Sense of fit between values and unit
- Priorities and vision of institution
- Leadership of college/school

WORK-LIFE CLIMATE

Overall, less than half (48%) of all faculty respondents were satisfied with their unit's culture for work-life balance. Differences emerged by rank, with Associate Professors less favorable than Full Professors on the following survey items:

- Satisfaction with their unit's culture around work-life balance
- Number of role-models in their units for how to create a satisfying work-life balance
- Support of faculty scheduling work commitments around family schedules

Additionally, Associate Professors were less likely to agree that:

- The institution does what it can to make family life and the tenure track compatible
- There is no bias against family care-giving in their unit
- Faculty can be honest with colleagues about family / life roles and responsibilities

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Most faculty perceived clear requirements (67%) and fair processes (68%) for tenure. Most respondents (71%) also agreed that faculty have the freedom to succeed in their unit if they work hard. Conversely, Associate Professors perceived less favorable conditions than either Assistant or Full Professors for institutional support of career advancement.

Open-ended comments on career advancement raised issues of stagnant salaries, lack of administrative and institutional support, and time investments that can hinder advancement.

"[There is a] lack of support from the administration to advance, and most of all I need to find other means of supporting my family financially due to the very low salary I receive as an Associate Professor."

EVALUATION OF RESEARCH AND CREATIVE WORK

Less than half of all respondents (47%) agreed that their unit supports engaged scholarship or cutting edge research (43%). Associate Professors reported significantly less favorable views of assessment regarding collaborative and cutting edge research, as well as grant work.

"I'm concerned about the way that my interdisciplinary work will be viewed by my department."

"I will die a tenured associate professor. Why? ... I've not had a raise since being tenured, and — of course—my unit has lavished money on new hires but knows it need not pay me a professional wage."

MANAGEMENT OF TEACHING, RESEARCH, AND SERVICE RESPONSIBILITIES

Ninety percent of faculty reported feeling in charge of their research, 67% reported control over teaching responsibilities, and about half of respondents reported feeling in control of their service participation (52%). Associate Professors were less likely to feel control over:

- Teaching responsibilities
- Service activities

- Direction of their research

They also perceived that there was less support for effective teaching and they were less likely to agree that it is possible to say no to additional on-campus service activities without negative repercussions.

Key themes across open-ended comments on teaching, research, and service included unmanageable workloads required by the department.

“The teaching and service load in our unit is extreme and leaves very little time for advancing one’s professional work. Teaching rarely connects with faculty interests and is inflexible. Rather than trying to assist faculty and find ways to reduce this load as other administrators on campus do, the administration creates rules that are inflexible and burdensome.”

RECOGNITION

Most faculty believed that their teaching (63%), research (70%), and service (64%) were valued by colleagues. Conversely, Associate Professors were significantly less likely than Full Professors to feel that colleagues in their unit value their research and scholarship.

PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS AND COLLEGIALITY

Compared with Full and Assistant Professors, Associate Professors reported feeling:

- More isolated
- Less satisfied with collegiality
- Less satisfied with opportunities to collaborate
- Less connected to important people in the field
- Less supported for career advancement

Key themes emerged from open-ended comments, such as insufficient mentoring and challenges within specific departments. However, these comments were variable; some faculty expressed a high degree of satisfaction within their unit.

“I have not had the mentorship I needed, nor have I been able to collaborate effectively with other faculty in my department.”

“I’m in a great unit but I don’t feel I have a lot of control over how I allocate my time... I do feel that my unit is supportive and my colleagues are invested in my success though.”

FACULTY LEARNING

Associate Professors perceived lower support for learning as compared to Full and Assistant Professors. Associate Professors were also less likely to have set aside time to advance their scholarly learning than other professors. Regarding institutional support for learning, Associate Professors were less likely to agree that their unit has financially supported their learning or helped to make room among responsibilities for immersing themselves in academic learning. They were also less likely to agree that the university or their unit provided a stimulating environment for their academic learning.

PRODUCTIVITY

Associate Professors were more likely to rate themselves as less productive compared to their peers throughout the nation. They were also more likely to report that their unit perceived them as less productive than their peers nationwide.

REFERENCE

O’Meara, K., Garvey, J., Niehaus, E., & Corrigan, K. (2013). *The Work Environment for Tenure-Track/Tenured Faculty at the University of Maryland: Results from the 2013 UMD Work Environment Survey*. College Park, MD: Univ of Maryland ADVANCE Program.

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