

General Considerations / System Issues / Observations (from 1st Annual Report)

1. Faculty perceptions of administration and leadership - as may be expected, some faculty members bring concerns about “not feeling connected” to University leadership. It is both interesting and perhaps not surprising that even though from leadership perspective, much information about activities and developments is shared; however, a faculty member may not “feel” directly engaged.

Thus, it may be helpful for leadership to think of ways to create direct connections with faculty. These methods might include video or pod casting from leadership shared directly with faculty or some type of “Town Hall” meetings around campus (in addition to the General Faculty Meeting each semester) to provide updates and allow direct interaction.

While email and websites are indeed helpful and important avenues of information it is also sometimes difficult for faculty (as it may be for all of us) to sift through the inbox to read another note. Thus, expanding use of digital platforms should be considered.

Note - this consideration is also part of my thinking as the Faculty Ombuds seeks to educate about its office and services. Look for some short videos describing the office to be added to the office website.

2. Training and support for Leadership - a number of faculty members have brought concerns around perceived “leadership” issues and I’ve also had occasion to work with various leaders including Department Heads and Deans. One aspect stands out (and it’s not a surprise) is the significant workload of leaders across campus. I characterize much of my work with faculty members as being an “issue/conflict coach” and as I’ve heard a range of concerns expressed it might be helpful to explore and develop “management executive coaching” resources for faculty leadership in addition to services already available in Organizational Solutions in the Human Resources office. This may be particularly helpful for Department Heads, especially those that are transitioning into the role for the first time or serving as an interim Head. Some type of “checklist” may be especially helpful for an interim leader.

3. Reappointment, Promotion Tenure (RPT) issues concerning the interplay between SME’s and Departmental and now College standards - encourage/remind department heads to be clear and direct with faculty members that solely meeting an SME is only part of RPT and attention to Department and College standards must also be considered.

4. Equity issues in compensation particularly where new market hires intersect with long term faculty including concerns of implicit gender bias - review compensation data and practices and determine how to communicate with faculty.

5. Decision-Making Communication - a number of issues have come to the office as a result of a faculty member believing that s/he was not part of a discussion and decision-making process that impacted their work. The “fix” to these situations is to encourage leaders/decision-makers to do a stakeholder analysis, i.e., who will be impacted by this decision and what sort of communication and/or input is needed. A mantra I learned from an organizational consulting company, when change is contemplated, is to “go slow, to go fast.” Take time early in the process to determine who needs to be informed and who needs to be involved in the process. Involving necessary stakeholders, whether as part of the process or just to inform, creates the opportunity for more complete buy-in at the end of the process. Creating such buy-in usually generates decision support and prevents people from blocking implementation.

6. Managing Faculty Transitions - several faculty members have shared issues around either continuing with or leaving the University. The issues are generally about the work environment (treatment of the faculty member) versus other opportunities or retirement. While the University provides significant resources and clear structure and direction for new faculty, it might be worth exploring how to also support transitions - specifically retirement planning. While phased retirement certainly provides one tool, developing additional structure and guidance for faculty members and faculty leadership in this area may be helpful.