

Excerpted From: Final Report, May 11 1998, Review of the College of Human Environmental Sciences

Staff and lab assistant support has been reduced since the last College review. This reduction in instructional support has created excessive hardships for faculty. Long term effects include a lowering of faculty morale which in turn may affect instruction, advising, and overall productivity.

Recruiting faculty is a critical function of both faculty and administrators and one that requires clarity and open communication among the faculty, search committees, and administrators responsible for hiring new faculty. There is a perception that the role of Search Committees within the College has changed. Specifically, some perceive that the role of search committees has become that of a review committee. Other perceptions include a change in the role of the faculty in developing position qualifications and in providing input during the final selection process. Related to this is the perception that faculty views are not considered when decisions are made to reallocate positions among programs.

Faculty surveys and interviews indicated a lack of clarity regarding merit evaluation processes. A number of faculty believe their efforts have not received recognition. Last year, a subcommittee of faculty in the College proposed a revised process for conducting the Annual Performance Review (APR). The College faculty approved this proposal in April 1997 and voted to implement the process during the next review cycle (Fall 1998). One criticism of the previous annual performance review process was the lack of written qualitative information for faculty use in improving performance. Over half of the faculty surveyed did not view the evaluation process as beneficial for professional growth and development. The new system will include written assessments by the Dean and the Department Chair and may serve to increase the usefulness of the process in faculty professional development.

Faculty surveys indicated that fifty-five percent of those responding believe there is a collegial environment in the College but 61% feel that communication is lacking and 71% believe that faculty morale is not high. Staff members also noted that morale was not high although greater numbers of staff indicated that communication and collegiality were good.

Increased undergraduate enrollment (tripled in some areas) coupled with a shortage of teaching faculty and staff has put pressure on faculty responsibilities in the areas of teaching, research, and extension. From the faculty survey, it was pointed out that the loss or lack of adequate staff support has placed an extra workload and responsibility on faculty, thereby reducing their quality time for teaching and research. This has had an effect on morale.

Some faculty members expressed skepticism toward the process of strategic planning. They expressed a reluctance to fully participate in the process because it was difficult for them to recognize substantive changes. There is a lack of clarity on the part of some faculty regarding the role of the current strategic plan in the overall planning process. The College has undertaken several planning efforts in the past few years that are not clearly understood by all faculty. Their congruence with the strategic planning process may need clarification.

Faculty expressed concerns that there were no clear guidelines for sharing salary savings and indirect costs from grants. Department chairs indicated that fiscal support seemed discretionary.

The College is underfunded in the area of operating expenses. The limited budget support and the process of allocating limited resources affect faculty morale. Confidence in the ongoing availability of funding

to do one's job is an important component of the morale equation. Even the seemingly simple tasks of asking for and justifying basic funding needs takes time and psychic energy.

Recommendation: Consider adopting the enabling strategies aimed at pursuing a climate of integrity, openness, trust, and mutual respect for all members of the University community;

Recommendation: Review the administrative structure of the College and clarify administrative and faculty roles in decision-making.

Clarify the roles of College administrators and faculty in regard to participatory management and decision-making through a specific, time limited effort such as a retreat or workshop. Discussions could identify problems and surface strategies for resolving problems. Consider opportunities to decentralize decision-making in the College, when appropriate and within University guidelines. The goal of such activities would be to improve relations within the College and enable the College to grow and develop into a stronger unit.