School of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Faculty and Staff at MSU Denver were asked four open-ended questions on the 2013 Campus Climate Survey. Listed below are the major themes found in the responses to these questions.

Employees appreciate and value:

- The diversity of students in economic status, race and age, and their incredible work ethic
- Sense of community created by relationships with colleagues and the strong connection to MSU Denver’s mission
- Flexibility in the work environment and the enhanced sense of autonomy particularly on department levels

Areas warranting attention:

- Raising academic standards by modifying open enrollment
- Improved work/life balance, especially in relationship to changing tenure expectations
- Utilizing community resources through partnerships and engagement efforts
“We have a diverse and driven student body who, for the most part, want to learn although they do not always have the skills to do so. Working with these students is a pleasure and a joy. My department chair is very able and professional who is committed to educating our students, to the advancement of our field and the protection of its integrity. My department colleagues are supportive of my efforts and provide an intellectual and professional atmosphere in which to work.”

“Working with a diversity of first generation, diverse students (ethnicity, age, gender, etc.) in a positive learning environment to promote the interests of all students”.

“I like the sense of community and the active role senior administration takes.”

“I appreciate our mission as "a school of second chances". There's something noble about helping people who've had hard luck. Also, I'm very glad finally to get a good job.”

“The caring and supportive attitude of the people I work with, and their concern for all students. Metro appreciates the contribution of affiliate staff members and their life experiences.”

“The flexibility to go to all online when I had to move out of state”

“Flexibility of courses and their variety. Opportunities to expand current learning and explore new areas. Support of department chair. Flexibility with course schedules. Students. Mission.”

“The relationships with my colleagues. I love that we all are concerned about our students and the way we teach our classes. I agree with our mission.”
“I believe the culture and climate of MSU Denver is being hurt by the continual changes to the tenure process- specifically adding service and scholarship expectations without any changes in the work load. I support the expectations of service and scholarship but am getting discouraged and angry that the same expectations of a 4-4 load for teaching is expected. It seems the administration and climate of the university is to do more, more, more without flexibility or ability to meet the changing demands for tenure or for the needs of a department that may be experiencing tremendous change and growth. This factor alone in our department is damaging morale... people are burning out and becoming negative and disgruntled.”

“By enforcing higher academic standards. Better pay for affiliates. Health insurance for affiliates.”

“Consistency in how departments manage their student bodies with initial advising, faculty advising, and a clear understanding of admissions/records processes policies and procedures, and university administrative policies and procedures. Additionally, departments need to begin moving towards higher academic standards for applicants and increase rigor of programs”

“I feel like MSU is going through a bit of an identity crisis. It seems like there is a disconnect between what our values, criteria for evaluation (including promotion/tenure), and mission are on paper and these things play out in practice. Specifically, there is a distinct impression that the guidelines for RTP developed by the department are being implemented and followed at the departmental level of review, but that these are not being adhered to at the school or university (especially faculty senate) committee levels. This leads to a distinct feeling of anxiety for faculty who are planning to seek tenure and/or promotion in knowing what criteria will be used in those decisions and how they will be implemented. It feels like a moving target to know what is expected and how to achieve goals for success. It seems like the only way to be "safe" is to be exceptionally good in all aspects of the job, so that you're covered no matter how you're being evaluated. This, then, directly challenges work-life balance and ends up requiring faculty to make choices that are probably not in their best interests in terms of self-care. Fundamentally, if faculty perceive they have to do more and more with less and less (time, resources, support), it will compromise the quality of their work in all domains.”
“I believe that the institution needs to impress upon the state government, the importance of the Arts programs here to the point that they create more full time teaching, staff and professional staff job opportunities in these programs. As a member of one of these departments, I put in hundreds of hours more than what my contract calls for because my job MUST get done on strict deadlines and also because I love what I do and the people I do it with. However, it is often exhausting and impacts my work/life balance negatively. Furthermore, I am not amply compensated and need to find work during summers and holiday/semester breaks in order to keep my financial stable/improving. This institution could not function without its affiliate faculty, yet many who have been here for years are still being left out of many of the benefits of the full-time faculty and staff. Only recently has health insurance been offered but there is a long way to go yet. Tenure track positions are not necessary or desirable for everyone and non-tenured positions do not necessarily imply a lack of loyalty or stability on the part of the faculty member. This is a good area in which the institution can be a pioneer and start some new initiatives. It would also help attract more talented and creative people to the institution. I believe this institution and many across the U.S. are relying on underpaid yet highly educated affiliate faculty to help educate our future citizens. Something is deeply wrong when students and their families are forced to pay ridiculously high tuition and the thousands of affiliates who are teaching these students are working for lower pay and few or no benefits.”

“MSUD spent too many resources on incompatible technology systems instead of people that the technology should be serving. Breakdowns in technology have been blamed on IT staff not correctly on Jordan and administrators who down-sized classified employees and out-sourced the installation of unusable systems. The computer, electrical, water problems experienced in the construction of the Administration’s "Student Success Building" led to cost over-runs that our students are paying for. Decision making is not transparent and students, faculty, and staff comments are ignored as Jordan, AHEC, UCD, and CCD spend student and state money on projects that drag down enrollment and destroy faculty and staff participation.”

“Continuing to live up to our mission, including engagement with the community. Bringing in the community to help us remain relevant to the needs, including career preparation.”

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“I think one way would be to have more full-time tenure track or tenured faculty. By relying so heavily on affiliates, you can lose a sense of community and consistency.”