University of Florida
University of Florida Faculty Survey 2004
LIBRARIES

Verbatim Comments
Number of Respondents Making Comments
35

Data Collected 2nd quarter of 2004
INTRODUCTION

The comments in this report are grouped by category, and the categories arranged in descending order of frequency.

When reading these comments, it is important to bear in mind that they do not necessarily represent the views of the majority, but rather serve to shed light on some of the statistical findings from the main part of the survey.
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Question 1

What specific changes, if any, would you suggest to improve the University environment for faculty?

55 Comments
Compensation & Benefits (17)

Could we possibly have at least one year in which a substantial across-the-board raise takes place for all faculty (e.g., 4 to 5 percent) with the support of the administration? Merit pay is usually limited, and despite even the best of intentions in its allocation, usually leads to disgruntlement. I have seen people in my own department put in a wonderful year's work and get no more than 2 percent across-the-board. Bonus awards not affecting base pay are ridiculous.

The extensive salary gap between long-term, productive faculty and new hires is a bad situation, producing discontent and low morale. The lack of even decent across-the-board raises for a number of years has been disconcerting. For faculty not in the top 10% of salaries, it is very difficult when you have excellent evaluations but your salaries are consistently below comparable positions at other U.S. universities. It is even worse to see undergraduate institutions and community colleges paying their faculty more than one who teaches and produces research level. One does not become a faculty member to make much money. However, you have to be really dedicated to remain at UF when year after year the legislature does not value your service enough to give you the basic cost-of-living increases that other government employees are receiving. It is no wonder we lost so many qualified and productive faculty members to the DROP program this year. This train of talented people is seen as an efficiency measure by the Florida State Administration. Actually it is a brain drain that will seriously erode the level of education UF students will receive. If the state is not careful, they will get the level of education they deserve instead of the level they have been funding. We have a lot of dedicated people at UF working with outdated equipment at minimum salaries who are providing the student a quality education. If we are not careful, only those close to retirement will remain.

Please address pay compression.

Basic benefits are okay but the costs are high - and I make much more than my staff do. We need to do more for working families, especially for after-school and summer care for school-age children.
My only real beef, as it were, is the imbalance in travel funding for travel/conference attending that exists between higher-level administrators and the average faculty members. I am not exaggerating when I write that every conference trip I've made as a faculty member representing the University of Florida (and in my association, a minimum of two such conference trips a year are expected for those who serve on committees), most of the travel expenses paid for came straight out of my pocket. Of course, these trips are held in larger cities, and the expenses one faces to attend conferences include: expensive downtown hotels, restaurants, etc., plane/taxis/train fares, and the conference registrations (which are not cheap believe me), so the small reimbursement one receives from the university does not begin to cover such costs. In my opinion, if faculty members are traveling and attending conferences in their field, and are representing the university serving on committees, networking with other professionals, attending/giving workshops and seminars and presentations, among other conference duties, the university should cover more of the expenses of the faculty.

The issues of stagnated and compressed salaries are crucial for any real change in the attitude of faculty to the new central administration and to quality of life here at UF. Gainesville is a community of educated individuals who have very little opportunity, outside of UF, for meaningful employment. Trailing spouses or others who do not have the freedom to change to another university are representative of the cheap labor who have helped UF improve in national reputation over the last 20-25 years and at such a low cost to the taxpayers of Florida and to those who pay (or don't pay due to Bright Futures) the incredibly low undergraduate tuition. Please don't spend all your time thinking about the stars or the bright, young, new faculty. Give a little consideration to the large group of faculty who have provided the backbone for UF for so many years.

You should work on improving the amount of coverage for you health insurance. The amount that is paid by the employee out of pocket should be less. I have worked at another university that had outstanding medical coverage (with little out-of-pocket expense) and it can be a really big factor in job satisfaction/evaluation (for some people). I think it isn't very good to be limited to only two choices in health insurance: in-state only or anywhere in the country. Perhaps have more choices in health providers and it is essential to
have nationwide coverage for any health insurance plan in this day and age.

It is important for the university administration to make every reasonable effort to improve the levels of compensation that both faculty AND staff receive. While the faculty emphasis may be on faculty salaries, in my opinion it is equally important for the administration to improve the levels of compensation for staff because the faculty depends on staff. Better-paid staff might just mean better quality of service, which in turn could lead to better working relationships, which then could have a positive impact on every member of the academic community's quality of life, including, of course, the faculty.

I think efforts need to be made to get the pay scales of faculty in line with colleagues at other institutions. Hoping the legislature will provide enough funding for meager 2 percent cost-of-living raises every year is ridiculous and alternatives to that scenario need to be acted on.

It is great that efforts are being made to bring starting salaries for new faculty up to more competitive levels, and it's great to reward stellar teachers, but what about the nonteaching faculty and Teams employees who have been here for awhile and continue to perform outstanding service and research but slip further and further behind in the job market due to pathetic raises and little or no cost-of-living adjustment?

Low salaries have been a major complaint for years. There is a widespread feeling that teaching and service faculty members are not important and only those who do research are of value since they bring in the money. Those engaged in research will get the bonuses, certainly be promoted and certainly be given tenure. You must either publish extensively in quality publications or bring in large sums of grant money. Just how do you do that on a 12-month contract with full days on the job?

Lack of resources of all kinds has seriously hampered this university from realizing its potential. I don't know how the new administration can do the things it seems to want to do, given the statewide resources problem. As for compensation, that has been a continuing problem throughout my 30-plus years
here. We have to have some kind of an inflation-related salary step plan in place if we can have the hint of a chance of retaining excellent faculty.

Benefits for life partners.

As someone who has worked under the last 4 presidents, I can certainly say that the atmosphere is different with this one so far. Under [NAME] it was not safe to criticize anything the administration did, and if one did so, one didn't get a salary increase thereafter. As far as I can tell, no effort is made to help colleges maintain reasonably comparable salaries with other institutions nationwide. And some colleges seem to be deliberately picked out to be among the lowest in the country, because some faculty are well paid vis-à-vis their national peers.

Additional retirement options with matching contribution from employer.

Flexible, personal days instead of so much sick time.

More opportunities for paid research/sabbatical leaves and more financial support for attending and participating in conferences.

Quality of Life (8)

Better travel support is critical for faculty.

I would like UF to get serious about wellness for its faculty and staff. The students have better workout facilities - far better than faculty. Wellness keeps people healthy and on the job. The faculty wellness program is barely funded and the facilities are a dump. No one seems to care and it sends negative messages. Comments like well putting state monies there is not possible because the other SUS schools would be jealous or it's against state policy. Fine, use private monies to build a first-class facility and staff it with quality-trained people for 80-90 hours per week and weekends. Care about your faculty. A strong pitch to alumni to develop a place for faculty health and
socializing should be a top priority. After all, we are the people who trained them and it would be nice to be recognized so that we can continue to train them in first-rate fashion. Maybe a faculty friends of the alumni for the alumni and a little less emphasis on buildings, which are important, but so is the faculty. It would be a great selling point to attract new faculty, retain who is here and I think a lot of great project work and creativity would result from a large well-appointed health center with a swimming pool and latest work-out machines. Please give it strong consideration. Some of the impersonal atmosphere would go away. Thanks for listening. It would also keep faculty on campus longer for good reasons.

How about a real faculty club where we can entertain and meet and share reciprocal privileges to other faculty clubs in the country? You have a huge new Taj Mahal for alumni and a new visitors center. Where is the center for the faculty that would speak loudly of their status? All I know of is Keene Faculty Center - and what's that?

Faculty raises are poor. The union is the only way we have received anything. That will be [NAME]'s challenge. If you eliminate the union, you will not ever have a great university. New faculty hires will not come to UF and that will be sad. The Board of Trustees may see itself as the plantation owners and we are the workers and our wages are very poor. The state legislature does not value the faculty and all we accomplish for the young men and women within this state. We attract no first-rate students as good as at Ann Arbor and better than University of Utah. In the south it is now us UF, UNC, and UVa. But we rank last in faculty salaries and appreciation in terms of the state caring about the men and women who work so faithfully and creatively in the teaching of the best and the brightest in Florida. Our UF student SAT average is 100 points higher than the average student at FSU. We do not expect miracles but we do expect respect, understanding and support in real shared governance. Best of luck.

Help solve transportation, traffic and parking issues to promote better involvement in on-campus activities and better balance of personal/professional life.

Faculty here seems to be overlooked when it comes to some basic perks that
many other institutions offer. Paying $200 a year to have the opportunity to try and find a parking place is sad. Other small things matter too. People are always incredulous when they find out we have absolutely no kind of priority or benefit for getting tickets to sporting events - that seems to only go to people writing checks to the athletic department or the booster club.

Parking on campus is terrible. Steps need to be taken to evaluate areas to build additional parking lots and/or parking garages. I basically have to take the bus every day because I don't want to put up with the hassle of parking (and I sure don't want to pay all kinds of money for a parking permit when it doesn't guarantee me a spot - just aggravation).

The administration needs to immediately certify the faculty union. In one breath the senior administration endorses shared governance while forcing faculty to join a collective bargaining unit without due process protected by federal law. Can't the senior administration see how hypocritical and contradictory this is? Every chair, every college dean and every senior administrator needs to revisit how to communicate well, especially the missions and values of this institution, and to act as if they believe in the mission of shared values and governance. The administrators need to act as if every employee of this university matters, from the custodian to the deans of colleges. They need to work for fair labor practices, adequate pay and empowering working conditions. The university needs to do better at working with the Gainesville and Alachua County community for increasing our quality of life. Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback and comments.

Faculty - Administration Relations (7)

Please allow a vote regarding union presence and specific representation among eligible faculty in just the historic faculty collective bargaining unit (not adding IFAS, Law and HSC) to take place. Perhaps the results of such a vote would once and for all settle the status of a forum enabling faculty voice in issues that would never be dealt with adequately in shared governance, as I perceive it (salaries, benefits).

In my opinion, and I say this both as an alumni and an employee of UF, the
University needs a major reorientation in terms of its principles. It needs to cultivate a true respect and appreciation toward faculty and the public, something that shows in everyday deeds and not just in speeches and press releases. Heaven knows we've heard enough talk about shared governance. Yet administration attitudes and actions continue to reflect an adversarial stance toward the faculty. I do not believe the administration or the Board of Trustees truly wants to share authority with faculty. I think they want faculty to accept their definition of shared authority but find it offensive and distasteful if faculty pushes for things that administrators don't happen to value. By the same token, the University often promotes itself as providing major public services to the people of Florida. Yet, I find that these much lauded services are often done to improve UF's public image and not from a true dedication of service. Take Gainesville as just one example. Certainly I would say that UF is a good partner for business and government interests in town, but to the inhabitants of Gainesville? How much do we do to help the local school system or the young people here? Do we work closely with the churches and synagogues, or with public and private charities? I don't see it. It would be nice if the university truly behaved according to the standards and public integrity it so loudly espouses, instead of constantly undercutting its stated principles with ulterior or self-serving motives. Unfortunately, I think faculty members are more likely to behave in accordance with personal standards, and that administrators are more likely to behave in accordance with private agendas, and that this has created a huge gulf between the two groups and has led to the historic and now well-entrenched level of distrust.

Please, I strongly urge Senior Administration to recognize the faculty union. It's as simple as that.

Self-governance in the library setting and truly collegial relations with fellow library faculty are severely limited by library administrative policies and practices. No important decisions, such as the hiring of new faculty, are made by library faculty as professional. Instead, we only participate in committees appointed (never elected by our peers) to make recommendations to the administration. There is no cultural expectation that these recommendations will be treated seriously or generally accepted, and these often appear to be dismissed out of hand with no response or even any opportunity for dialogue.
The way the Faculty Union has been treated is shameful and appears to be very manipulative.

I would like to believe there really will be some change but I need convincing.

I think there needs to be more give and take between faculty and administration regarding policies that affect the university. The current move toward shared governance is a good step in that direction if we can make it work!

Resources & Efficiency (5)

Libraries are severely underfunded and marginalized.

It seems that a lot of resources are wasted by misdirection or miscommunication of needs.

Budgets and expenses are complex enough, but when Internet port fees are added it can cripple us. We're already funding our own building improvements. Since this is the last comment box, I need to submit all my remaining comments here. Physical Plant Services, particularly housekeeping: The Libraries need more attention than they are getting. Due to long hours, particularly in the Marston Science Library (and West when it reopens), there should be a second shift of cleaning done, especially for the bathrooms. Trash absolutely cannot be taken out every other day and ignored over the weekend. This affects our image as well. Quality of life is affected by pay, having the basic resources necessary to do the job, and working relationships. At least in the Libraries, faculty pay is extremely low compared to most other universities in North America. As a Chair, I do not have clerical support and must spend much of my time on tasks that I should be able to delegate, but we don't have enough staff in the libraries to dedicate to these and still provide optimal patron service. Working relationships are good. Tenure and promotion opportunities are good and expectations are clear. More support for professional development should be provided to tenure-track professionals who aren't making enough to cover travel expenses, etc., on tenure-track activities. We're waiting to hear the new strategy and direction of
the new administration.

Examine apparent gross inefficiencies in physical plant, cleaning and maintenance.

Faculty and staff parking should not be a monumental issue, but it is. I think it is completely asinine that my only recourse in lieu of parking at the stadium is to arrive at 6:45 in the morning to get one of the 8 or so orange parking spots within a half-mile of my office (located near Criser Hall). Adhering to the early-bird schedule does not guarantee a spot, it just increases one's chances to slightly better odds than the Florida Lotto. The free exercise I get every day is not the problem, but completing the hike during Florida summers is. By the time I arrive for my first meeting, I look like I have just finished a triathlon. Any additional spaces for faculty with offices in the Northeast corner of campus would be greatly appreciated. I understand that this is a daunting task because this area of campus is highly congested with buildings already, but I feel like the Administration does not care about this issue - they have their reserved spots, right?

**Leadership (4)**

Newer faculty should be given more opportunities to serve on university committees, task forces, working groups, etc. Even if serving as nonvoting members of committees, the new faculty is given a chance to participate at the university level, can establish relationships with diverse faculty, and can prepare for leadership roles on these committees in the future.

Leadership to articulate and communicate a vision for quality education and resources, even if that means advocating cutting undergrad enrollment (or at least not increasing it). We need strategy and direction, distributed empowerment, good quality of life at the university and in the community. UF tries too hard to be all things to all people, doesn't have the resources to be good at all of them, then continues to make compromised resource commitments while wondering why it's not acknowledged as an all-around excellent institution.
There is a dearth of leadership in the libraries which is severely hampering our abilities to meet the needs of the students and faculty. Decisions are largely reactive rather than proactive. Morale is at an all-time low, not just because of the closure of Library West, but rather because of the lack of direction and mission. The University administration needs to help the libraries get back on track.

It is long past time for a change in leadership in the university libraries, especially in regard to the current director. She should be encouraged to retire or be removed from her position. There are excellent individuals who could be identified as possible replacements who have appropriate academic credentials for a research institution, have the ability to do the outreach and fundraising now so important for this position and who are able to lead effectively in a 21st century library/university environment. Other senior library administrators should be encouraged to return to the ranks of faculty.

**Strategy & Direction (3)**

Please help empower students while in school and as graduates by requiring they learn library and information skills. This will enable them to better find, evaluate and use information for a specific purpose as needed in their careers and lives.

Please do long-term surveys about the impact of an education at UF, among UF graduates, and share the results with faculty and policy makers. These surveys should include: What is the long-term impact of a college education at UF? Did it provide the knowledge and skills for graduate school and/or your career? (E.g., do you hold a job in the field you majored in? Salary at or above the median for your field?) Did it provide the basis for life-long learning? (E.g. What books have you read lately? What leisure activities do you participate in? What service activities?)

In general, and there are notable exceptions, the Libraries' administration is out of touch with the needs of its constituencies and its faculty. The administration does not enjoy the confidence of its senior faculty and is so removed from the
day-to-day running of the library that it is blind to serious deficiencies. The library faculty are not part of the decision-making process.

**Tenure & Promotion (3)**

How can we maintain excellent service to the profession when travel budget does not cover costs?

There needs to be more of an emphasis placed on regularly monetary promotions (as well as other means of recognition) based on exceptional job performance. Also, annual raises or cost-of-living raises need to be of an appropriate/acceptable level. Some of the past raises have been pitiful. And the past administrative decision to give faculty the lower of the two choices on the last raise is ridiculous. That’s just a stupid cost-cutting tactic (which will only cause resentment). Bottom line: If you want good people who will produce quality work, you have to reward them well (both monetarily and with recognition.

Librarians should not be required to work 40 hours a week and do everything a regular faculty member does to obtain tenure. FSU has tenured librarian positions which are different from teaching tenured positions. It would be a good idea to look into how they are set up. Different types of faculty should be judged on their own merits and not have a one-size-fits-all method of evaluating performance.
University of Florida: Verbatim Comments

University Image (3)

I know that sports is very important to this university, but I think if the university wants to take a step to becoming top tier, it has to improve its image as an intellectual institution. And I mean image. The close association with the Gator image seems to me to reduce the stature of the university as a place of intellectual endeavor. I would like to see the seal of the university used more often. For example, why do university vehicles so often have the Gator on the side? The Athletic Foundation is in fact a totally separate corporate entity from the university, isn't it? Why is the speaker at the annual Spring Faculty lunch usually someone from one of the sports schools or departments? I think those two mascot alligators outside the Alumni hall are silly. The emphasis on the Gators is like a sledgehammer.

I am concerned a little bit with the new strategic direction of the university. I can see and understand that [NAME] wanted to build on the university's strengths in the sciences and agriculture, but I also sense an active disempowerment of the humanities. It might be a trend nationwide, but I don't think it's a good one. It is just once again the rather lopsided nature of American education and its tendency to emphasize money and GNP over the arts and humanities and what is wanted now as opposed to what is good in the long term. I have heard in passing that Florida's once strong creative writing program has been pretty much dismantled. If this is true, it is one example. Both sciences and the humanities/arts should have equal billing. I know you have strong humanities and arts. But if students are failing to perform adequately on writing and thinking by the time they have graduated (as was stated in the Sun recently), then I believe it is due to a failure to emphasize the cultural value of the humanities - because it is in those classes that students are most likely to learn these skills, not in classes that lead to their first job in any specific field.

I really hope that you can make UF into more of the power-house academic institution that it could be. Not that I'm ashamed of where I work or anything, but I believe we are capable of being very much more. And I seek the day in which I would be proud of our outstanding (academic) national reputation.
Diversity (2)

Too much emphasis is being placed on diversity recruitment. I think better qualified faculty applicants are not being considered. This has definitely been the case in the Libraries in a few past searches, because I have seen the applicants' packages and know who was brought in for interviews. Perhaps a broader view of diversity should be adopted: white male students from underprivileged backgrounds bring diversity of experience, too.

Better diversity is needed in faculty and higher-level staff positions. Also, I believe we need more support services for Asian students similar to those for Black and Hispanic.

Communication (1)

myUFL portal is an excellent step forward for communication; top administration has done an excellent job setting this as a priority.

Empowerment (1)

Better supports for faculty would result in higher creativity.

Working Relationships (1)

There is a real need for leadership and direction. There is a real need for taking an honest look at how employees are treated and valued.