Report on the Qualitative Portion
Of the Faculty Survey
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"To strengthen institutional effectiveness, collegial governance
and our sense of community we will:
Provide a good work environment with effective development and training programs
Review the multiple roles of faculty and staff through …their careers
Integrate advances in information and communication technologies
into work environments"
(Missions, Goals & Strategies, VII. D., E., F.)

Introduction

California State University, Fullerton is in the midst of an intensive Self-Study in accordance with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accreditation process. A key component of this Self-Study is the creation of a culture of evidence, which documents that actions and strategies undertaken by the University are commensurate with the Mission and Goals Statement of the campus.

In an effort to compile and continue this culture of evidence, faculty members of the University were asked to participate in a survey during the 1998 Fall Semester. This survey instrument was designed by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), and is also distributed to faculty across the country. The purpose of the survey is to provide a form of measurement concerning faculty perceptions of the University.

Three qualitative questions to be answered by the CSUF faculty were added to the national survey instrument. These open-ended questions are:
1. "When you think of yourself as a faculty learner, what activities come to mind?"
2. " In what ways does the campus provide support for what you've described as faculty learning?"
3. "What have you learned in the last five years that has enhanced your ability to understand and promote student learning?"
The responses to these three questions are the focus of this report.

Methodology

Survey instruments were distributed to _____ faculty members via _____. Of these faculty, 181 responded to the qualitative portion of the survey. Responses to the open-ended questions were received in two waves. The first wave produced 141 surveys returned to the WASC office in the latter part of the 1998 Fall Semester. After Sandra

Sutphen, Director of the WASC Self-Study, put out a request for more responses a second wave of 40 surveys was received in the middle of the 1999 Spring Semester. The analysis offered in this report, uses the combined responses of the 181 faculty members. However, there are some differences between the "first wave" and the "second wave," and these variations will be noted in the following pages. In particular, a statistically significant distinction was found in response to the second question and will be discussed in that section.

Many respondents offered more than one reply to each question. So, for each question there are many more answers than there are total number of respondents. The tallies of faculty who responded with one answer, two answers, etc. for each question are included in the appendices. What is important to note is that the categories under each question are based on the number of *responses* rather than the number of *respondents.* Responses that mentioned technology several times were counted as one answer for technology. An exception to this is when a specific technology (such as internet research) was mentioned in addition to technology, and as such would be counted as two responses.

Responses are grouped into broad categories as a means of interpreting the faculty responses. When one of these broad categories is referenced it will be in italics. Additionally, frequencies for individual answers for each question are listed in descending order in the appendices. Individual responses referenced in the text will be within quotation marks as will quotes from faculty members. The complete set of responses for the first and second waves, as well as the combined totals are included in the appendices.

Defining the Faculty Learner

Faculty member had many answers to the first question "when you think of yourself as a faculty learner, what activities come to mind." The 181 respondents gave a total of 575 answers. However, these responses were grouped into categories with a somewhat narrow focus.

The greatest percentage of responses falls under the category of *scholarly activities* (42.8%). This category includes such pursuits as "research", "reading journals", "keeping current within one's field", "scholarly dialogue", "writing", and "collaborative projects" (see Appendix A). Another important activity defining a faculty learner is *faculty development*, which accounts for 20% of the responses. This category covers "attending and/or participating in professional seminars or conferences", "attending workshops and classes", and "attending campus forums".

Faculty learning encompasses other activities such as *teaching/pedagogical activities* (11.5%), learning and using *technology* (10.1%), and *helping or learning about/from students* (5.4%). Under the category "teaching/pedagogical" activities, many respondents stated that learning new methods of teaching or communicating to students, preparing for

or updating courses, and researching new pedagogical methods are activities that define a faculty learner. Additionally, learning and using technology are viewed as avenues of learning, as is helping and learning about students.

While the above listings are culled from imposed categories, it is sometimes useful to look at individual response frequencies. The answer with the highest frequency was "research/reading journals, etc./keeping current within one's field" with 159 responses or 27.7% of the total number. Receiving the second highest number of answers was "learning, truly understanding, and using technology," a response listed 58 times, or 10.1% of the total number. Following closely behind with 55 responses was "attending/participating in professional seminars and conferences," or 9.6% of the total.

Some of the faculty members did not recognize what this question was attempting to measure as evidenced by one respondent who stated "I'm not sure that I understand the intent of the question." Others took umbrage to the question itself with one respondent stating "this is an inelegant term that I would not use" and another writing that "this question is unnecessarily ambiguous – learning occurs in everything I do!"

There was a difference found between the two waves of responses. Respondent of the first wave listed *faculty development* (20.6%) as a category with more weight in defining faculty learning than *teaching/pedagogical activities* (11.5%). However, faculty members responding in the second wave gave equal weight to these two categories (17% to each category).

University Support for Faculty Learning

There were 411 individual responses to the question "in what ways does the campus provide support for what you've described as faculty learning." These responses produced a wider array of categories than did the first question, with no category containing more than one-fifth of the responses.

The category receiving the highest percentage of answers is that the University provides *opportunities/support for scholarly activities,* accounting for 20.9% of the total answers. Responses under this category include "grants," travel funds," and "release/assigned time." Following closely behind is the category of *opportunities for faculty development* (19.5%). This category encompasses "workshops and seminars," "sabbaticals," and "Academic Affairs forum and lecture speakers."

Technology, the category with the third highest percentage of responses (15.1%), includes answers such as "computer training and support," "the computer rollout," and "updated electronic access to web resources and data bases." The category of *other specific programs and centers,* which includes the responses of "grants and contracts office" and the "Faculty Development Center" had the fourth highest percentage of responses (9.7%).

Response frequencies of individual answers mirror the categories listed above. The single answer with the highest frequency is "workshops and seminars" followed by "computer training and support," "grants," "travel funds," and the "Faculty Development Center."

Not all of the responses to this question were positive, though. There were enough negative answers that separate categories were listed under "negative responses." These categories include *minimal funding/support*, *workload too heavy*, *in no way*, *very little support offered*, and *poor/inadequate facilities*. Negative answers account for 19.0% of the total while positive answers account for 78.6% of the total. (The remaining percentage of responses are categorized as *not otherwise classified*.)

Upon receiving the responses from the second wave of faculty members, it appeared that this group was much more negative than the first wave. Answers from the first wave were divided as such: 80.8% positive responses and 17.1% negative responses. The second wave of respondents produced 69.2% positive answers and 26.9% negative answers. (For both waves, the remaining percentage of responses are categorized as *not otherwise classified*.) To determine if the variation was statistically significant, the raw number totals were entered into SPSS to produce "goodness-of-fit" test statistics. Utilizing both the likelihood ratio chi square test and the Pearson chi square test, the difference between the two waves was found to be statistically significant at a confidence level of .05 (Appendix B).

What is not so easily ascertained is the "why" behind the statistical significance. A possible theory is that the first respondents were still in the "honeymoon" period of Chancellor Reed's tenure when they turned in the surveys in Fall 1998. Continuing with this thought, it may be that faculty members who responded during the 1999 Spring Semester had become disenfranchised with Chancellor Reed over continuing contract negotiation problems. There are other possibilities ranging from faculty members being more tired as the academic year progressed to faculty members feeling coerced as the call for more completed surveys went out. It may be that the difference can be attributed to a multiplicity of factors. However, the "why" of the variance is beyond the scope of this analysis.

Another difference between the two waves of respondents for this question is that the first placed a greater emphasis on *opportunities for scholarly activities* than did the second wave. However, the second set of faculty member placed a greater emphasis on *faculty development* than did the first group of respondents.

A couple of caveats need to be recognized when comparing the positive and negative answers. All comments relating to technology access, computer training and the rollout were of a positive nature, except for two. Also, negative comments were more than balanced by positive comments. Therefore, while 1.0% of the responses were complaints about *not enough recognition*, another 1.7% of the answers listed *recognition* of faculty members as a way in which the University offers support. As 4.6% of the responses

decried the *minimal funding/support* received, another 20.9% of the answers praised the University for offering *opportunities/support for scholarly activities*.

Understanding and Promoting Student Learning

The question "what have you learned in the last five years that has enhanced your ability to understand and promote student learning" produced a fewer number of responses than the previous questions, but stretched over a broader spectrum. These respondents (401 responses from 181 faculty members) have much to say on this topic, demonstrating their collective experiences and wisdom. Categories with the highest percentage of responses and individual answers with the highest frequencies will be reported here. However, to truly appreciate the breadth of these responses, it is recommended that the entire listing of answers be read (see Appendix C).

Faculty respondents have learned much about technology in the last five years and believe this is a strong factor in promoting student learning. In fact, *using technology* was the category with the highest number of responses (21.9%) for this question. This category includes such subjects as using "new technologies in general," "using new technologies for teaching," "utilizing internet resources," and "using/working with e-mail."

Respondents realize that *engaging students in the learning process* is an important aspect of student learning, as 17.7% of the answers were grouped under this category. One respondent states that learning "how to empower students in classrooms through choice in assignments and through the mutual development of course goals, objectives, and course materials" helps promote student learning. Another faculty member is "learning to ask for feedback from my students," while another realizes that "they [the students] learn from each other as well as from the faculty member."

It is not just important to engage students in learning, but to strive toward *understanding students.* This was the category with the third highest percentage of responses (15.0%) as faculty are gaining a better "understanding of what students do (and not do!) to learn." These faculty members put forth great efforts to "know and understand each student." Some of the respondents state that they have learned a "better understanding of diversity and cultural issues" and how to "identify student needs and incorporate into course objectives." Some have achieved a greater understanding of the competing "demands placed on students." Perhaps the most uplifting observations include "students like to be challenged" and "expect excellence" because "most students rise to the occasion." One faculty respondent states that students "need to be allowed to make mistakes without costing them in their grade. Otherwise all they care about is giving the faculty member what they think the faculty member wants to hear or see regardless of whether they learn anything in the process." Other encouraging responses are "students learn best when their ideas and thoughts are not criticized" and "students learn best when they are praised and rewarded."

The top seven individual response frequencies regarding what has been learned about student learning are especially informative. These top seven answers include:

1. "Engage students in the learning process"
2. "Conducting research or learning new theoretical developments in field"
3. "How to use new technologies"
4. "Using internet resources"
5. "Using technology in teaching activities"
6. "Learning new pedagogical techniques"
7. "Assessment strategies."

It is obvious that using technology as a tool to promote student learning is becoming an accepted practice

There were some minor differences between the first and second wave on this question, but not in the categories with the highest responses. The first wave placed a greater emphasis on *personal development*, *research in one's field of study*, and *teaching* than on the categories of *pedagogical techniques* and *assessment*. Responses from the second wave were reversed with a greater emphasis on *pedagogical techniques* and *assessment.*

Not all of the answers to this question were affirmative, though. There were complaints that "learning is not a high priority for students" and one respondent stated that "I find it almost impossible to enhance learning of the students I now get." However, on the whole, the responses about student learning were positive, thoughtful, and illuminating.

Conclusions and Implications

It is clear from these qualitative survey questions that faculty members approach their chosen profession with due thought. Five themes related to the Mission, Goals and Strategies excerpt listed emerge from this analysis. These are:

1. Faculty members define themselves as learners by the scholarly activities in which they participate. With this in mind, it is important to these respondents to be supported by the University in these endeavors. Judging by the responses to the second question, the University has been successful in doing so.
2. Participating in ongoing faculty development is another way in which these respondents view themselves as learners and support from the University in this area is deemed crucial. According to faculty responses, the University is supportive in this area, also.
3. Technology has gained an importance for many of these faculty members. Learning and using new technologies is viewed as another definition of faculty learning. The computer rollout, along with access to technology, and computer training classes are evidence of University support as indicated through the survey responses. Additionally, faculty members

    are using technology in a variety of ways to better understand and promote student learning.

4. Faculty members are very interested in engaging students in the learning process. To achieve this end, the respondents have utilized a variety of techniques. These faculty are willing to use tried-and-true methods as well as newer methods to actively engage students. Also, the responses indicate that faculty members take the time to truly understand and know the students in their classes.

5. The last theme is not so clearly defined. But, upon reviewing the responses in the appendices, the subjects of *teaching* and *pedagogical activities* are repeated as answers to the first and third questions. These categories are not those with the highest percentage of responses. However, the two categories are important and it is evident from the responses that faculty members consider these categories with utmost seriousness.

The results of the faculty survey are another addition to the culture of evidence amassed by Cal State Fullerton. This collection of data is instrumental as the University plans its future.