

## Appendix A

### ISU College of Arts & Sciences Faculty Retention Committee

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Total responses: 73 of 197 A&S tenured & tenure-track faculty members (~37%)

#### A: What factors make you excited to be on the faculty at ISU?

*General comments:* This was by far the easiest of the open-ended questions to analyze because the responses fit into fairly neat categories. Also, there was less editorializing about the state of ISU and its future prospects, and they were usually the shortest of the three questions...often by far. Overall, the faculty see their talented colleagues as the best asset of the college. Most comments were about the location and colleagues, whom many respondents seemed to consider friends, mentioning that the loss of these would lead them to reconsider staying at ISU. Frequently cited factors:

*Nice people/good colleagues* —43 mentions— Most spoke of collegiality in general terms. Those who were more specific tended to concern faculty collegiality (and talent) though one or two included the administration and staff, too. (This response is by far a minority to those who expressed extreme frustration with the administration in parts B and C.) Also, some specified colleagues in their department, and a small number specified junior/young faculty.

*Location* —30— Most surveys were fairly general about questions of geography. Those who were specific mentioned outdoor opportunities, cost of living, being in the West, or a small town.

*Autonomy* —27— Respondents were happy &/or grateful that they are able to teach & conduct creative activities in their fields, which seems to speak to a fear about other jobs available to them. Some mentioned support in this area, such as release time opportunities and support offices (ITRC). This autonomy may also be a positive spin on those who may feel isolated or unsupported in their specific endeavors (see “lack of positive feedback” and “marginal work environment” in part C). Several respondents wrote that they were excited about being a professor, but not at ISU. Another said they found the division of labor (teaching/research/service) in their position to be reasonable.

*Nice/good students* —20— Answers that were specific vacillated between nice or hardworking/diligent. One respondent liked the open enrollment policy at ISU.

*Perceptions of improvement: “ISU on the verge”* —14— More than a couple respondents used the phrase “turning the corner.” In general, this seems to speak primarily to perceptions of or aspirations for improvement in the area of research and reputation. This is an important aspect to pursue further since it appears that there is a window of opportunity for ISU to deliver on this perception, lest the perception lead to despair or demoralization since the excitement describes aspirations, not the current state of ISU.

*Programs and facilities* —8— Several respondents mentioned various programs and facilities (e.g., ELC, Stephens Performing Arts center) as appreciated benefits.

#### B: What factors at ISU detract from your experience in your position?

*General comments:* Most responses fall in categories (listed below), but there seems to be a general frustration with the lack of a coherent institutional identity, and that the administration/SBOE/Idaho legislature don't value the arts & sciences as the core of our university. There were other comments relating to poor opportunities for upward mobility (I presume in administration (but see comments regarding cronyism), lack of communication (mentioned frequently), and a general lack of interaction between faculty from different disciplines & departments (interesting, considering the high esteem faculty feel for their colleagues). Frequently cited factors:

*Low salaries* —42 mentions— There was much despair that there is no compelling administrative plan to correct this. Across the board, faculty feel the pay is out of whack, including considerations of the region and peer institutions. (There were no mentions that lower cost of living offsets this sentiment). A number of people mentioning low salaries complained that a significant part of the problem was the lack of a specific salary schedule or scale (as most other universities use, including UI) to map out where a person can expect to be after a given period of service. Others suggested that this was exacerbated by a lack of consideration of merit, which must be integrated into any such scale or schedule.

*Unaccountable &/or disrespectful administration; cronyism &/or favoritism in administration* —38— This includes primarily upper administration, but also down to the Chair level. One used the term “intractable” while another identified a very male population in the upper ranks. One respondent stated that “the attitude [among local administration] seems to be ‘well, you’re working aren’t you?’” Other comments cited a lack of trust between faculty and administration, disrespect for faculty by both administration and students, and an overly bureaucratic or outdated infrastructure.

*Crushing workload* —25— “Balance” is off, leaving little/no time for research. Sense that tasks/duties are piled on incrementally, but workload is never adjusted. And some reported a related diminished appreciation for teaching. One respondent noted that the pressure to bring in outside money “means that no one can afford to be interested in teaching.”

*Conservative culture, lack of a "university town"* —23— Generally, respondents had concerns about Pocatello's lack of a "college-town feel": those factors that draw people to places like Boulder, Missoula, and other classic mountain college towns. While it may appear that this committee and the College has little control over the constitution of our community, we should recognize that the raw material is already in place (a ski area, beautiful setting, etc); it may well be that we can shape the long term development of our town. Comments included concerns about a lack of pride in the university, that ISU doesn't provide sufficient venues for faculty to interact, and a lack of community support for ISU. Many respondents included the legislature, the SBOE and inadequate advocacy of ISU in Idaho in this category.

*Lack of support for research/professional activity* —22— A significant number of respondents had serious complaints about extra-departmental support for creative and scholarly activities. Many specifically singled out the Office of Research (and/or Sponsored Programs, Grants & Contracts), using terms such as "unresponsive bureaucracy" and "abysmal" to describe the assistance from those offices for granting and research efforts. For some respondents, this created a sense of isolation and despair that scholarly production goes unvalued and unremarked. Many connected this to the crushing workload where teaching and service bully out research time.

*Lack of incentives for merit, low & uneven tenure standards* —21— Several respondents expressed frustration that this system creates demoralized/unproductive faculty; some praised faculty for pressing on anyway. One called tenure standards "uneven to embarrassingly low".

*Quality of student body: lack of diversity, preparation, or "life of the mind"* —17— Several respondents expressed concern that the quality of students was losing out to an enrollment push for more warm bodies. High attrition rate among students was noted as a drawback for one respondent.

*Lack of perks, poor benefits for faculty* —15— Respondents mentioned many issues with the ISU faculty perquisite package, including comments about: retirement, health, emotional support structures, tuition remission for children, parking, insurance coverage, and child care. Respondents who mentioned child care were very positive about raising their children in Pocatello and using the ELC, but expressed distress at the low faculty priority on the ELC waiting list.

*Partner accommodation* —8— While not found in a majority of responses, the respondents who mentioned spousal or partner accommodation highlighted this issue. One respondent wrote, "spousal accommodation will soon become the primary issue that determines my retention at ISU." For these people, this issue seems to trump other considerations.

### **C: What factors motivate you to look for a position elsewhere?**

*General comments:* Most responses referred to answers for question B, then highlighted, reiterated, or added a few heartfelt comments. Many of these responses can be parlayed into ideas for focus group discussion items and eventual suggestions. Frequently cited factors with some quotes (we could not tally responses since many respondents wrote "see B"):

*Low wages* — This was frequently repeated three times in the same survey for emphasis. Some listed salary compression as a related phenomenon. One person noted being qualified for low income housing. Another mentioned that "I am still making over \$10,000 less per year than a competing job offer I had in hand when I came to ISU." This is the single most frequently cited factor driving our respondents to the job market (or contemplating entering the market).

*Lack of transparency/communication/respect in administration* — Some respondents were frustrated by a perceived inability to break into administrative ranks. For some, this is the tipping point between being tempted and actively seeking a post, especially in the Fall 2005 administrative scandals (but not exclusively). One respondent said that they didn't like the "administration's top-down style" while another cited this as contributing to a general "culture of mediocrity."

*Marginal work environment* — In addition to crushing, out-of-balance workloads, faculty cited more daily concerns about the quality of resources and infrastructure to support research and teaching, such as the library or research travel support. Other concerns included a general sense of mediocrity, marginalized female professors, lack of state support, lack of a sense that ISU attracts people doing "cutting edge research," and the lack of high quality students.

*No or low hope of institutional improvement, emphasis on seniority over merit* — Respondents were troubled by a certain lack of pride in the institution and low morale, and a desire for a more prestigious, nationally recognized institution. It would be interesting to see if this perception between possibility for improvement and despair is a function of the number of years spent at ISU. (That is, how long is ISU's window of opportunity to make good on this aspiration?) One notable comment was "lack of plan to increase ISU's national presence as a serious scholarly institution." Another respondent decried ISU's "good old boys club"; another noted the "lack of academics among ISU administration."

*Lack of positive feedback* — Many respondents emphasized that this is a cheap way to augment, or even substitute, some salary improvement. Many described an anti-intellectualism on campus, in town, and in the state, which may be related to lack of positive feedback. One respondent commented that the "Administration doesn't seem responsive to keeping faculty. Formation of this [A&S Retention] committee is the first evidence I've seen to the contrary."