

## **Appendix B: Focus Group Design**

### **February 6 – 10, 2006**

Goals of focus groups:

1. Assess extent of agreement with areas identified in the open-ended survey (November, 2005; see Appendix A) and understand meaning/reasons why these areas affect satisfaction and recruitment.
2. Generate recommendations to address identified concerns that lead to decreased satisfaction and looking elsewhere for positions, particularly those that are not determined solely by availability of funds/resources.

#### Format for groups: Structured

Pass out list of identified concerns and ask for responses.

As each group member arrives:

1. Facilitators will ask each group member to complete the *Faculty Identified Items* form that we will use to guide our conversation. We are not asking to collect this information. Participants can give it to us if they choose, but it is primarily a tool for structuring our conversation. (And it also provides individuals with a task as we wait for stragglers).
2. By 5 or 10 after group start time, ask group participants to come together as a group. Do BRIEF round of introductions: name, department, why participating? Facilitator introduces self and purpose for meeting.
3. Ask the group to discuss their individual ratings of the identified areas: How similar are their ratings, what makes the issue meaningful/significant to *their* satisfaction, and can they add any important topics or concerns that are missing. As individuals share their responses, get at *why* concerns are important, and recommendations for change. (60 minutes- 15 for first section, 20-25 for second and third sections)
5. Leave 10-15 minutes for re-cap, discussion of what issues seem most important, and additional feedback.

Group facilitators will have the information integrated from the surveys (see next page) to provide additional information to draw on as they lead a discussion of the identified areas.

Participants will simply receive the list with ratings.

For Group facilitators: Use to add information to conversation, inform possible recommendations  
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### Topics from surveys

There was significant overlap in the three areas we surveyed and the Adamcik, 2004 survey report (to which less than half of the A&S faculty polled responded). We integrated the subcommittees summaries of the issues/topics from these surveys below. You will notice substantial overlap between what leads to decreased satisfaction and looking elsewhere. We included a draft “list” to present to group members based on the identified topics. We tried to reduce overlap while not losing meaning. Nevertheless, some topics seemed relevant in both categories so we remained aware that the list could be too inclusive/exclusive.

**First, here the integrated content from the two surveys.**

#### Areas that increase satisfaction/retention

There is substantial overlap between the surveys regarding what increases satisfaction :

-- **Positive colleagues/collegiality**

--**Location**

-- **Autonomy** (of concern: when reading open-ended responses, subcommittee members noted that respondents seemed to indicate they are 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. In contrast, others said they found the division of labor (teaching/research/service) in their position to be reasonable.

Our open ended survey also elicited positive comments regarding:

--**ISU in a positive, forward moving process**—“turning the corner”

-- **Programs/facilities** (e.g., Performing Arts Center)—(n=8)

#### Areas that decrease satisfaction/detract from experience

The overlap in areas that decrease satisfaction addresses:

-- **Low salaries**- 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; lack of clear basis for evaluation for merit raises

-- **Frustration with administration-**

-- lack of coherent identity (teaching, research, what are our objectives), feeling unappreciated, lack of transparency; unreasonable expectations given the resources (also see below in lack of support), a lack of trust between faculty and administration, disrespect for faculty by both administration and students, and an overly bureaucratic or outdated infrastructure.

From Adamcik survey: Half of the respondents from A & S received a new grant, although the vast majority felt that they had received no recognition for their research, teaching, or service. A reduction in teaching emphasis and more time on research/creative activities was emphasized throughout the related questions in this section.

-- **Workload-**

-- Tasks/duties are piled on incrementally, but workload is never adjusted.

-- Three-quarters of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that faculty workloads should be changed to direct one's efforts toward primarily teaching or primarily research.

-- **Lack of support**

-- travel funds, availability of teaching assistants/graders, internal funding for professional development, and library resources were the greatest inadequacies affecting their teaching and creative activities.

*Additional points from open ended survey*

-- Conservative culture, lack of a "university town" -- 23

-- Quality of student body: lack of diversity, preparation, or "life of the mind" —17

-- Lack of perks, poor benefits for faculty —15— retirement, health, emotional support structures, tuition remission for children, parking, insurance coverage, and child care (the low faculty priority on the ELC waiting list). NOTE: More faculty mentioned dissatisfaction with perks (15) than satisfaction with perks/programs (8)

-- Partner accommodation —8

**Factors that lead to looking for a position elsewhere:** high overlap with detractors from satisfaction (integrate more? Similar enough meaning?)

-- **Salary & improved benefits**

-- **Opportunities for partner**

-- **Better position** (?unclear in Adamcik if this is regarding upward mobility, work load, etc) –

From open ended survey: (poor) quality of resources and lack of infrastructure to support research and teaching, such as the (lack of) library or research travel support. Marginalized faculty (e.g., female faculty), ISU not drawing faculty doing “cutting edge research”. Lack of high quality students.

-- **Position where they are more appreciated**

-- Lack of transparency in/communication with/respect from administration from open-ended survey

-- No or low hope of institutional improvement, emphasis on seniority over merit

-- Lack of positive feedback — Many respondents emphasized that this is a cheap way to augment, or even substitute, some salary improvement

*prepared by Shannon Lynch*

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