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SYDNEY FREEMAN, JR.

FACULTY GOVERNANCE AND SATISFACTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A SPECIAL ISSUE

In higher education today, there is a persistent feeling of devaluation among faculty members with regard to their roles in faculty governance. Many faculty members, especially new ones, do not understand what faculty governance entails, particularly as the primary focus of professoriate is on teaching and research. Some faculty also become frustrated when they face the pressure of needing to produce more research and secure external funding in the form of grants and contracts so that their universities may move up the prestige ladder.

Faculty morale is such a serious problem that when I asked a senior academic official at a mid-sized research university in the inland Pacific Northwest to share the biggest university challenge he would like to see solve, he mentioned that faculty morale and engagement were at the top of his list. As I began for the first time to teach a course in Theoretical Applications and Design of Qualitative Research in the spring of 2016, I assured the official that I would work with my students to craft a research project to address these issues. In order to do so, I first required students to develop an abstract and research proposal on the topic of faculty governance and engagement in higher education. I then asked students to interview five faculty members from different disciplines, including education, the hard sciences, art and architecture, liberal arts, and more, to discover their perceptions and opinions regarding the ways in which faculty could feel better supported and represented in their institutions. Their interviews focused on what could be done to maximize faculty job satisfaction, especially in non-financial ways. From these interviews, my students developed in-depth case studies for use by academics, professionals, and other students. I am proud to present the fruits of their labor here.

The first case study, by Helen Brown addressed the effectiveness of the governance process on a mid-sized Northwest university and the utility of exploring effective governance using an organizational culture theoretical framework. Based on in-depth interviews conducted with six faculty members within the college of the education at the university, the study found that faculty climate perceptions were negatively impacted by trust and transparency issues, competing expectations, lack of faculty influence, and hierarchical decision making.

The second case study, by Marcis Fennell, sought to explore how trust could be built between faculty and administrators in light of the increasingly business-like structure of the modern university. Based on a qualitative case study of five faculty members within the same college of a mid-sized university, this study found that mutual trust, camaraderie, and transparency were key aspects to a healthy faculty climate.

The third case study, by Lisa Senecal Brown, addressed the relationships between faculty and university presidents and provosts—administrators whose average tenure has grown shorter within recent years. Brown concluded, based on her interviews of five faculty members within an college of business at a mid-sized Pacific Northwest university, that a healthy, mutually respectful academic environment could be promoted via building relationships, allowing faculty autonomy, and maintaining shared objectives.

The fourth case study, by Matthew McDaniel, addressed the question of how to create a healthy, shared faculty governance structure in the modern university. Via in-depth interviews with six faculty members in the college of

engineering at a mid-sized university in the Northwest, McDaniel concluded that a shared system of faculty governance could be achieved by increased communication of expectations and desired program outcomes.

The fifth case study, by Erin Stutzman, examines collegial relationships between faculty and administrators, focusing on how administrators can retain highly trained professionals and minimize both faculty and administrative turnover within the university. Based on interviews with faculty members at a mid-sized university in the Northwest, Stutzman concluded that administrators could promote community by actively, humbly, and confidently listening to the concerns of faculty members.

The sixth case study, by Jessica Savage, explores the struggles of non-tenured faculty and their relationships to university administration. Via a case study of five faculty members within a college of law s, Savage determined that healthy relationships between junior faculty and administrators could be promoted by transparent communication.

I am proud of the work that these students have done. Several of these individuals were not necessarily students within higher education studies, yet all of them were potentially interested in becoming professors. One student was also a professor at the institution where the research was performed; this individual gained unique insights, given the exposure to the concept of faculty governance. We are excited to present our findings and we hope that they are helpful in assisting other faculty and leaders to think about ways in which they can increase the satisfaction of faculty members. We are thankful to Stephen Petrina and Wayne Ross, co-editors of *Workplace: A journal for academic leadership*, for their support and assistance in this endeavor.

AFFILIATIONS

Sydney Freeman, Jr., Ph.D., is an associate professor of Adult, Organizational Leadership, and Learning Department at the University of Idaho, where he specializes in higher education as a field of study, higher education executive leadership preparation, faculty development and HBCUs. He serves as the managing editor of HBCU Research + Culture and Senior Editor-in-Chief of the Journal for the Study of Higher Education (jspte.org).