

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY FACULTY ASSOCIATION STRATEGIC PLAN SURVEY

FALL 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Fall 2016, the Executive Council of Portland State University Faculty Association (PSUFA), the union of adjunct teaching and research faculty at PSU, conducted an online survey open to all faculty who worked .49FTE or less. The main purpose of the survey was to explore the priorities and concerns of adjunct faculty. The findings are guiding PSUFA's strategic planning process. Seventy-four participants responded during the two-week period that the survey was open. The central themes are summarized below. An in-depth version will be released on our website psufa.org in January 2017.

Understanding adjuncts' rights under the current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA)

Under the new CBA, adjunct faculty gained new provisions, including opportunities for advancement, wage, and benefits increases. In the survey, adjuncts noted they wanted succinct information about the CBA and opportunities to talk with knowledgeable people about how those specific provisions could apply to their circumstances. Adjunct faculty wanted PSUFA to:

- Create an online summary of contract provisions (91% of participants who responded to this question);
- Support with individual questions about their contract (52%).

Promoting and strengthening the visibility of PSUFA

Within the university community, adjunct faculty are largely invisible. For example, students typically do not know whether their professor/instructor is adjunct, full-time or tenure track faculty. In many departments, adjuncts are not included in departmental activities such as governance, curriculum and instruction development, and/or planning, yet they are essential to their department and to the academic mission of the university. Many have an interest in increasing their contribution to the life of the PSUFA, PSU, and community-at-large, given the opportunity and support for doing so.

Visibility is important for two practical reasons: (a) To obtain recognition and respect for the contributions that adjunct faculty make to university life and; (b) To strengthen the bargaining position of the union heading into future negotiating sessions.

Adjunct faculty were willing to:

- Wear a union button on designated days/weeks (75% of participants who responded to this question);
- Participate in events/rallies when needed (70%);
- Attend a university function as a designated PSUFA representative (58%);
- Talk with others about joining PSUFA (42%).

Increasing networking and informational events/opportunities

Like any other community, the union is stronger when members feel they belong and have the individual and collective agency in making decisions and creating solutions. Building this type of community is challenging because members are on campus at different times, teach online classes remotely, have other jobs, and/or teach at other institutions. Nevertheless, interest was expressed in the following kinds of events:

- Late afternoon happy hour (65% of those responding to this question);
- Brown bag lunches (58%).

In addition, there was a suggestion that PSUFA have different activities that could accommodate a diversity of schedules and remote participants (e.g., In person and virtually meetings about the new CBA).

Expanding opportunities to step forward and contribute to the mission of PSUFA

Different strategies of engaging adjunct faculty (e.g., Facebook, twitter; new website, email blast, 1:1 coffee/tea meetings, and membership meetings) are important in keeping the union strong over the long haul. The survey provided an opening for people to step up and have their voice heard. Here's how they responded:

- Eleven respondents asked that union leadership follow up with them and provided contact information.
- Twenty respondents said that they would be interested in becoming a department steward.
- Other ways of contributing were also mentioned, including:
 - Clearly defined, close-ended tasks;
 - Help with creating a stronger online presence serving those working remotely;
 - Website and graphic design.

Raising wages and increasing funding for all three benefit funds

In descending order, survey respondents identified the following economic priorities:

- Improving wages;
- Increasing funding for the three benefit funds: health, education and professional development;
- Funding for course development;
- Matching pay for PERS/IAP contributions.

Additionally, the following issues and ideas were identified for future collective bargaining topics:

- Opportunities for advancement within PSU, including fixed term contract positions with benefits (.50+FTE);
- Involvement with department governance, especially if remunerated;
- Free/reduced parking;
- Opportunities to apply for research grants and engage in research;
- Increased respect from tenured/tenure track faculty so that there is less social exclusion and marginalization.

About Survey Respondents (*n* = 74)

Here's a quick snapshot of who responded to this survey:

- 43% identified as early-career academics; 31% identified as mid-career and 15% identified as late career;
- The majority (57%) said that their work at PSU was central to their professional identity; 41% said it was secondary, and only 2% said it was not important;
- The survey captured participants with a wide spectrum of experience with working at PSU: 43% said that they had worked at PSU for 2 – 4 years; 22% for 5-9 years; 20% said it was their first year, and 15% had worked at PSU for 10 years or more;

- As their highest level of educational attainment, the majority (56%) identified a master's degree and 34% had a doctorate. Others had a variety of professional degrees, such as J.D., EdD, and PsyD;
- The majority (91%) identified as white non-Hispanic/Euro-American; 7% as Latino/Hispanic; 4% as Black/Afro-Caribbean/African American; 4% as East Asian/Asian American, and several additional races/ethnic identities. (Percentages exceed 100% because respondents could choose multiple backgrounds.);
- 58% said that they were female, 39% identified as male, and 1% as transgender;
- Seven colleges/programs represented: CLAS 30% of responses; COTA 19%, CUPA 12%; GSE 9%, SBA 5%, SSW 5%, and UNST 1% .

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