

# The Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE)

## Survey results for University of Wyoming

**What is the COACHE survey?** A web-based survey administered by Harvard's Graduate School of Education (<http://gseacademic.harvard.edu/~coache/info/members.html>). The survey asks full-time, pre-tenure faculty to rate various conditions of employment and to assess their own level of work satisfaction. Questions focus on factors important to a junior faculty member's success, especially the tenure and promotion process and expectations; teaching, research, and service assignments and opportunities; work-family balance; and university policies, culture, and climate.

**Why participate in COACHE?** The data can provide a basis for an informed discussion and appropriate actions designed to ensure UW is a place where diverse faculty members—women and men, faculty of color and white faculty--can all have rewarding and successful careers. COACHE is a tested survey; and UW's results can be compared with those of other participating institutions where the expectations that faculty members face are also high.

**Who participates?** During 2007-2008 over 7,300 faculty members responded to the survey, from 64 universities. COACHE membership expands each year, and it runs the gamut from Arizona State to Whitman and Wheaton Colleges. The list of members includes Ivy League universities, small liberal arts colleges, large public universities, and many land-grant institutions. From these, we chose five "peer" institutions with which to compare our own results: Kansas State University, University of Arizona, University of Connecticut, Virginia Tech, and Washington State University.

**How many UW faculty members were included and how many responded?** There were 159 tenure-track UW faculty members eligible to take the survey during the 2007-2008 academic year. Of those, 123 answered the survey for a response rate of 77%. The response rate among all participating institutions nationally was 59% and the response rate from our five peers was 64%. At UW, men and women, and white faculty and faculty of color all participated at approximately the same rate.

**Is participation a one-time deal?** No, we can continue to participate each year or every 2-3 years.

**Who sponsored UW's participation?** Academic Affairs and the President's Advisory Council on Women and Minority Affairs co-sponsored UW's participation in the COACHE survey. The report breaks down responses by gender and race, and highlights any statistically significant differences in the results.

**How will the results be used?** Survey results will be made available for review by all members of the university community. We will encourage colleges and departments to use the results to stimulate discussion of their work environments, and of any potential areas for improvement. Some issues raised by our junior faculty may warrant consideration and initiative at the institutional level, particularly if there are perceived inequities or barriers to success for women and faculty of color, whether due to policies, practices, or culture. The upcoming University Plan III presents an opportunity for identifying and committing to appropriate actions that may enhance faculty hiring, retention, success, and satisfaction.

**What did we learn from our junior faculty?** COACHE survey results run into the hundreds and are very detailed. A relatively small faculty size and issues of statistical significance (such as respondent bias, particularly for faculty subgroups) suggest caution in interpreting results. Also, the implications of some satisfaction ratings may be difficult to assess from an institutional perspective. For example, if UW junior faculty indicate less satisfaction than their peers with the number of courses they teach, is the implication that our faculty should teach less? Or might there be other explanations for the difference?

### Highlights

UW tenure *processes* are rated “very clear” or “fairly clear” by most UW faculty, and UW ranked first among peer institutions in this area. *Criteria* and *standards* for tenure are slightly less clear; UW ranked second among peers. Faculty of color indicate less certainty than white faculty regarding their own prospects for achieving tenure. Most faculty say expectations for performance as a teacher and scholar are clearer than for being an advisor, colleague, campus citizen, or member of the broader community.

Seventy percent of UW junior faculty members say they are very satisfied or satisfied with the way they spend their time as faculty members. There are no statistically significant differences by gender or race. Additionally, UW faculty are relatively more satisfied than their peers at other schools with the number of students they teach, but less satisfied than their peers with the number of courses.

With respect to satisfaction with *quality of undergraduates*, UW faculty fall squarely in the middle of all respondents. However, UW faculty are significantly less satisfied with the *quality of their graduate students*, and are also significantly less satisfied than their peers at comparator schools and nationally.

UW ranked relatively low on satisfaction with access to teaching and graduate assistants, as well.

Childcare and mentoring emerged as policies and practices considered “important” to success and relatively “ineffective” at our institution. Both were more important for women than men. That said, UW ranked high (in the 84th percentile nationally) on reporting by junior faculty that their institution does what it can to make having children and the tenure-track compatible.

UW was first among peers in satisfaction with balance between professional and personal or family time. That said, less than 50% of UW respondents report to be satisfied with this balance. And UW’s junior faculty members are less satisfied, on average, than their peers with the intellectual vitality of the senior colleagues in their departments.

More than 80% of junior faculty members think they are treated fairly regardless of gender or race; but men and white faculty are somewhat more inclined to think so.

The best aspects of working at UW are reported to be: the geographic location, the sense of “fit,” the support of colleagues, and the commute. The worst aspects are: the quality of the graduate students, the teaching loads, and the lack of diversity. And UW’s faculty of color listed “geographic location” among the worst, rather than best, aspects. UW ranked first among peers and in the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally as a place for junior faculty to work. There were no statistically significant differences by gender or race.