

Report on Faculty Women's Caucus 2021 Survey Executive Summary

Faculty Women's Caucus Working Group, May 5, 2021
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Abstract:

In April 2021, 108 faculty responded to a survey by the Faculty Women's Caucus (FWC) at the University of Vermont regarding the campus climate and working conditions for women-identified, LGBTQ+, and BIPOC faculty. A majority of respondents gave UVM a rating of fair or poor for climate, working conditions, and equity. A large majority reported worsening conditions for BIPOC and non-tenured faculty as well as a large negative effect from recent administrative decisions such as closing the Campus Children's School and pushing for cuts and academic reorganization in a pandemic. Of major concern is that more than half of respondents seek to leave UVM in the near future with one third attributing their plans to recent trends at UVM. Respondent comments showed clear dissatisfaction with the current university administration's failure to address campus climate, working conditions, and equity issues that impact the work and lives of faculty women and LGBTQ+ and BIPOC faculty. The FWC provides specific recommendations to correct the injustices of the current system.

Introduction

In April 2021 the Faculty Women's Caucus (FWC) at the University of Vermont (UVM) surveyed faculty about current campus climate and working conditions at the University of Vermont. In line with its focus since its founding in 1992, the FWC focused the survey on the experiences of women-identified faculty, LGBTQ+ faculty, and BIPOC faculty. This summary shares the survey methodology, the major findings of particular concern to the Faculty Women's Caucus, and selected recommendations.

Methods and Sample

Designed by faculty with expertise in survey research, the survey of 45 questions was distributed to university listservs serving faculty who identify as women, LGBTQ+, or BIPOC. Respondents included faculty from each of UVM's eight colleges with about half tenured and half untenured or non-tenure track. While the survey was only distributed to and filled out by a subset of UVM faculty, this sample captures the observations of historically underrepresented faculty.

Key Quantitative Results of Concern

Note: The survey also garnered over 20 pages of responses to the open-ended questions posed. We urge readers to consult the full report for those responses to contextualize the below quantitative results.

Current campus climate and working conditions: Asked to choose from excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor, the situation was rated the worst for BIPOC and non-tenure-track and untenured faculty, with 89% of respondents rating climate and conditions as fair or poor for BIPOC faculty and 83% rating them fair or poor for untenured faculty. 65% of respondents rated climate and conditions as fair or poor for faculty women, and 48% rated them as fair or poor for LGBTQ+ faculty.

Change in campus climate and working conditions: 66% of respondents reported that climate and conditions have worsened for faculty women in the past two years. 85% of respondents reported worsening climate and conditions for untenured or nontenure-track faculty.

Equity: Understanding equity to include “compensation, workload, work assignments, working conditions, service expectations, recognition, evaluations, and promotion,” more than 72% of respondents rated UVM as fair or poor in equitable treatment of faculty women and BIPOC faculty. 60% of faculty rating UVM fair or poor in equitable treatment of LGBTQ+ faculty.

Effects of administrative decisions: 81% of responses rated recent university administration decisions as having a large negative effect on campus climate and working conditions. In open-response answers, respondents specifically described the impacts of recent university decisions included budgetary decisions, program cuts/mergers, job cuts/hiring freezes, staffing cuts, and restructuring/reorganization plans. Less than 3% noted on balance more positive effects.

Transparency and faculty voice: 91% of respondents rated UVM as fair or poor in transparency, defined as “sharing with faculty key information about important matters under deliberation at the university.” 72% said that faculty voice has either not or rarely been valued or respected in recent deliberations about UVM’s future with more than 80% reporting that they feel somewhat unsafe or very unsafe voicing ideas and concerns about current conditions at or future directions for UVM.

Plans to Leave UVM: Most concerning, 51% of respondents plan or will seek to leave UVM in the near future with 32% of respondents reporting that they are doing so “in order to pursue another job elsewhere due to recent trends at UVM.”

Conclusions and Recommendations

The survey results show that the university is at a crisis point with worsening conditions and negative trends in administrative decision-making driving many faculty to seek work elsewhere. To promote the current and future health of the university, UVM needs to make good on our stated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and to invest in our faculty and staff on the frontlines of teaching and research activities. Recommendations the FWC urges be put into practice include:

- **Investment in improving campus climate and working conditions** for women, LGBTQ+, and BIPOC faculty, both tenure-track and non-tenure-track;
- **Measurably improved equity** for women, LGBTQ+, and BIPOC faculty including a public review of faculty hiring, compensation, workload, and promotion practices;
- **A campus childcare facility** for faculty and staff that will not just replace but go beyond the care that the disbanded children’s school was able to offer;
- **An automatic one-year extension of the tenure clock** of all pre-tenure faculty in relation to the pandemic distinct from and additional to any parental leave owed to such faculty;
- **Improved financial and institutional transparency** including university budgetary and financial audit information, important matters under deliberation at the university, and opening more Board of Trustees meetings to the public with more detailed notes of these proceedings;
- **Alteration of the Board of Trustees’ membership to include faculty and staff** with better representation by women, BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people;
- **Recommitment to the value of shared governance and respect for faculty voice** so that the Faculty Senate as a whole is openly consulted about major deliberations before decisions are made or publicized beyond UVM and so that faculty do not fear reprisal for voicing their ideas or concerns regarding current conditions and future directions for the university;
- **Return of the Black Lives Matter flag** to the Davis Center, to be flown as a matter of course.

For a full list of urgent recommendations, we encourage readers to consult the full report.