

University of California, Davis
COACHE SURVEY OF FACULTY JOB SATISFACTION: 2021

Introduction and Overview of Survey Results

Introduction to the COACHE Survey of Faculty Job Satisfaction

The effectiveness, impact, and reputation of a university, while resting on many pillars, depends preeminently on the quality of faculty work – in teaching and mentoring, research and scholarship, cooperation and collaboration with colleagues, commitment and service to the institution, and contributions to society. It is therefore critical for any great university to provide and vigilantly maintain the conditions that will best enable faculty to excel in all of their professional activities.

Chancellor Gary May, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Mary Croughan, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Philip Kass, and campus leaders at all levels recognize that one of the most important conditions affecting achievement of UC Davis faculty is the way they think and feel about such aspects of their employment as work expectations, availability of resources for teaching and research, recognition and reward, opportunities for advancement and professional development, and campus equity, inclusiveness, diversity, and respect. Campus leaders also recognize that faculty job satisfaction must be an institutional priority if UC Davis is to be a place of growth, health, and personal fulfillment for all members of the university family — the place described in our cornerstone documents “A Vision of Excellence” and “Principles of Community.” In short, faculty job satisfaction is not only key to UC Davis’ excellence and impact, but also something to which all of our exceptional and dedicated faculty members are entitled.

Mindful of all of the above, Provost Hexter committed our campus to participate in the *COACHE* (Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education) *Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey* in 2012-13 and 2016-17. In 2020-21, Provost Croughan has also committed our campus to participate again. The COACHE survey is conducted annually by the Harvard Graduate School of Education and has been administered to colleges and universities nationwide since 2003.

UC Davis’ participation in the 2021 COACHE survey allows us to meet multiple objectives. First, the survey’s comprehensiveness enables us to identify our areas of strength and those in need of investment. Second, data from the survey can help us make sound investments for improving our campus environment for both existing faculty and the new faculty we anticipate hiring over the coming years. Finally, comparing the results of the 2012-13, 2016-17 and 2020-21 surveys allow us to evaluate our progress toward improving the work experience of faculty at UC Davis.

What the COACHE data reveals about faculty job satisfaction at UC Davis

The 2021 UC Davis COACHE survey was distributed online to 2,449 ladder-rank, clinical and non-tenure-track faculty. In all, 998 faculty members responded, yielding a 40% rate of response to survey items that measure degree of engagement, perception of support, and level of satisfaction with all aspects of faculty work-life at UC Davis. For more information about the COACHE Survey methodology and a list of the topic areas it covers, see the Technical Appendix [here](#).

For assessing the level of satisfaction among UC Davis faculty across the 25 dimensions of faculty work life investigated by the survey, the results provide multiple points of comparison. The UC Davis results can be compared to those among all institutions that participated in the survey, and to the public research-intensive universities identified as our “peer” institutions.¹ In addition, the results for subgroups of UC Davis faculty can be compared, as can the 2021 results to those from the 2012-13 and 2016-17 surveys.

Figure 1 presents the UC Davis mean score (♦) for all survey items within each of the topic areas covered by the COACHE survey in relation to the mean scores of our five peers (○), and the distribution of the responses of the entire cohort of institutions as signified by the green (the top 30% of institutions), grey (the middle 40% of institutions), and red (the bottom 30% of institutions) boxes. These results convey both the relative level of faculty satisfaction across the 25 domains covered by the survey, as well as the average satisfaction of UC Davis faculty on each domain compared to the peer institutions and full cohort of COACHE’s participating institutions.

¹ These institutions were selected as our peer institutions by the UC Davis COACHE 2020-21 Advisory Committee: Florida State University, Iowa State University, Louisiana State University, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, and University of Tennessee. All of these are research-intensive universities.

Figure 1. COACHE topic area means for UC Davis faculty relative to peer institutions and the full 2021 cohort COACHE's participating institutions



Compared to faculty at all institutions included in the 2021 COACHE survey, and especially to those at our peer institutions, UC Davis faculty overall:

- report high levels of satisfaction with institutional support for interdisciplinary work, opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, tenure policies and the clarity of expectations for promotion to full professor, and departmental leadership and quality;
- report high levels of satisfaction with personal and family policies, health and retirement benefits, the appreciation and recognition they receive, and most aspects of shared governance;
- are somewhat less satisfied with the research and service aspects of their work as faculty, with the facilities and work resources, senior campus leadership, and with the leadership of their divisions (schools);
- are significantly less satisfied with the teaching aspects of their work as faculty, campus facilities and work resources, the leadership of their divisions at the college level, and departmental collegiality and engagement.

Among all UC Davis faculty:

- the highest levels of satisfaction are reported for the clarity and reasonableness of the standards for promotion to full professor, tenure policies, opportunities for collaboration, and departmental clarity and quality.
- the lowest levels of satisfaction are reported for the service and teaching aspects of faculty work, campus facilities and work resources, leadership and governance at the central campus and divisional levels, and departmental collegiality and engagement.
- Tenured faculty are meaningfully less satisfied (i.e., effect size is 0.3 or greater) than are pre-tenure

faculty (see Figure 2) with the facilities and work resources, mentoring, leadership at the Senior and Departmental level, the appreciation and recognition they receive, and having a shared sense of purpose.

- Tenured faculty are also significantly less satisfied than are non-tenure-track faculty with the research aspects of their work, the facilities and work resources, institutional support for interdisciplinary work, mentoring, leadership at the senior, divisional, and departmental level, the appreciation and recognition they receive, and having a shared sense of purpose.
- Associate professors are significantly less satisfied than are full professors with the research aspect of faculty work, with personal and family policies, opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, the standards and processes related to promotion to full professor, and their departmental collegiality.
- Although women and faculty of color report slightly lower levels of satisfaction than men and white faculty, the disparities are meaningful only for four of the survey themes:
 - Female, Faculty of Color, and URM faculty members rate the standards and processes related to promotion to full professor less positively than male and white faculty;
 - Female faculty members report lower levels of satisfaction with the Service aspect of faculty work
 - URM faculty members rate departmental collegiality lower than White faculty members.
 - White faculty members report lower levels of satisfaction with the clarity of tenure expectations

Compared to the 2017 COACHE (last column of Figure 2), satisfaction among UC Davis faculty:

- Slightly increased for six thematic areas: the research aspects of faculty work, personal and family policies, mentoring, tenure policies, divisional leadership, departmental engagement and quality, and appreciation and recognition.
- Significantly increased for satisfaction with leadership at the Senior level
- Slightly decreased for 4 thematic areas: the standards for promotion to full professor as well as departmental collegiality, engagement, and quality.

Figure 2. Size of group differences by faculty rank, gender and race ethnicity among UC Davis faculty and change since 2017 in average satisfaction ratings

| | Within campus differences | | | | | | | 2017 |
|---|---------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|------|
| | ten vs pre-ten | ten vs ntt | full vs assoc | men vs women | white vs foc | white vs asian | white vs urm | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Nature of Work: Research | tenured | tenured | assoc | women | | | urm | |
| Nature of Work: Service | tenured | tenured | assoc | women | foc | | urm | |
| Nature of Work: Teaching | tenured | tenured | assoc | women | | | | |
| Facilities and Work Resources | tenured | tenured | assoc | women | | | | + |
| Personal and Family Policies | | | assoc | | | | urm | |
| Health and Retirement Benefits | tenured | tenured | | | foc | | urm | + |
| Interdisciplinary Work | tenured | tenured | assoc | women | foc | asian | urm | |
| Collaboration | tenured | | assoc | women | foc | | urm | |
| Mentoring | tenured | tenured | assoc | | foc | asian | urm | |
| Tenure Policies | N/A | N/A | N/A | women | white | white | | |
| Tenure Expectations: Clarity | N/A | N/A | N/A | | white | white | white | |
| Promotion to Full | N/A | N/A | assoc | women | foc | asian | urm | - |
| Leadership: Senior | tenured | tenured | | men | white | white | | + |
| Leadership: Divisional | tenured | tenured | assoc | | white | white | | + |
| Leadership: Departmental | tenured | tenured | assoc | women | white | white | | |
| Leadership: Faculty | tenured | | | | | | | |
| Governance: Trust | pre-ten | tenured | assoc | women | | | | |
| Governance: Shared Sense of Purpose | tenured | tenured | | | white | white | white | + |
| Governance: Understanding the Issue at Hand | tenured | tenured | | women | white | white | | |
| Governance: Adaptability | tenured | tenured | assoc | | | | | + |
| Governance: Productivity | tenured | | | | | white | | + |
| Departmental Collegiality | tenured | tenured | assoc | women | foc | | urm | - |
| Departmental Engagement | | ntt | | | | white | urm | - |
| Departmental Quality | tenured | tenured | assoc | | foc | asian | urm | - |
| Appreciation and Recognition | tenured | tenured | assoc | | | white | urm | |

Plans for more-focused analyses and responses

Faculty engagement on the findings of the COACHE survey is essential if we are to understand the realities of their job experiences and identify potential actions that build on our strengths, address issues of concern, and support faculty productivity and career satisfaction.

To help focus and support discussion of the key issues influencing faculty job satisfaction, the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs will disseminate a series of campuswide reports that present the results the members of the UC Davis COACHE Advisory Committee identified as most important, and the results from the campus-specific questions that committee developed for inclusion in the 2021 COACHE survey. Those campus-specific questions aimed to collect faculty perspectives on the following topics:

- the impact of the Step Plus system on the advancement process
- campus efforts to increase faculty diversity, equity, and inclusion
- the impact of the increasing prevalence of student stress on faculty
- policy changes that would improve work-life integration
- policies/practices that affect access to resources needed for scholarly activity
- changes that may improve faculty work climate
- the COVID-19 pandemic

These reports will be disseminated via the UC Davis Academic Affairs website, at http://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/tools/faculty_satisfaction_survey_reports.html. After the first stage of responses to the reports, Academic Affairs will work with the deans and others to develop the most helpful follow-up actions.

The COACHE survey is governed by standard practices and protocols for human subjects research. To protect the identities of all those responding to the UC Davis survey, access to the full dataset is restricted. Please make inquiries and suggestions to Cathy Wu and Brian Darnell, Institutional Academic Data Managers, at aadatamanagers@ucdavis.edu.