



BUILDING TRUST, ENGAGING FACULTY, TAKING ACTION:

Supporting the Next Generation of Faculty at Georgia State University

Georgia State University's decision to partner with the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) was inspired, in part, by their faculty. Their **Commission on the Next Generation of Faculty** studied diversity, engagement, and inclusion among the faculty, but needed better data about how faculty assessed GSU's approach.

"We didn't have a mechanism for benchmarking our responses" to faculty surveys, said Michael Galchinsky, Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness. The search for a nationally-benchmarked survey brought GSU to COACHE's *Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey*. The option to customize the instrument was especially appealing so that the university could explore local questions about diversity, equity, and inclusion.

COMMUNICATING EARLY TO ACHIEVE A HIGHER RESPONSE RATE

Following COACHE's toolkit, the survey process began months before its launch. Provost Wendy Hensel and Galchinsky went college-by-college to speak to faculty assemblies about the administration's three guarantees: they would use the results

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for campus improvement, they wanted to hear from every full-time faculty member, and they would not receive any data that would identify individual faculty members based on their responses.

“One of the things we learned in the Commission study was that there has been some distrust between the faculty at Georgia State and the administration,” Galchinsky said. “Because we knew that going in, we decided to take that step of not receiving the raw data in order to increase the trust.”

The transparency worked: GSU’s *Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey* yielded a response rate of 54 percent, which was higher than peer institutions. “It gave the results a mandate that we wouldn’t have had” otherwise, Galchinsky said.

INTERPRETING AND ANALYZING THE SURVEY RESULTS

Hensel and Galchinsky had also committed to sharing the survey results throughout the university. Before doing so, they reviewed the data with Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs, Nicolle Parsons-Pollard; Special Advisor to the Provost, Curtis Byrd, and other members of the survey administration team. They also removed the qualitative comments from the results they would distribute to protect respondent confidentiality, and repurposed some of the results into new data visualizations along particular themes. Finally, the survey results were shared with the entire faculty through the university’s learning management system.

STARTING DIALOGUES WITH DATA

The university intended the shared data to be the jumping-off point for many conversations. Both Hensel and Georgia State’s president, Mark Becker, have spoken publicly about the results. “We had agreed as part of the Commission on the Next Generation of the Faculty process that the president and provost needed to get out front on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion,” Galchinsky said.

Two of the university’s fall **Diversity Dialogues** focused specifically on insights from COACHE. One involved disaggregating the data related to underrepresented minority

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faculty. “We could see that there are real differences” in the way white faculty members and faculty of color responded to questions about the recruitment and retention of faculty from minoritized backgrounds, Galchinsky said. “That diversity dialogue was very interesting and fruitful.”

As rollout of the data began, Parsons-Pollard arranged 17 faculty-led feedback sessions to receive additional input on the survey results. Georgia State has also established affinity groups by race, gender, sexual orientation, and other identities—another suggestion that dated back to the Commission—and Hensel and Galchinsky will meet with each of these groups to get their feedback on the COACHE report.

Ahead of these discussions, the survey team identified five key issues from the survey data for the agenda. This gives the affinity group meetings the structure needed to be able to focus on brainstorming solutions, rather than re-hashing the points of dissatisfaction. “We want to hear what should be done about the issues, and then we’re taking notes,” Galchinsky said. The discussions, alongside efforts toward departmental and divisional engagement, are part of GSU’s strategy to strengthen faculty engagement on an urban campus.

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TAKING ACTION

The culmination of the discussions will be an action plan from the provost and from each of GSU’s nine college deans. With COACHE’s **divisional reports** to guide them, the deans are identifying their top three to five actions from the survey and subsequent sensemaking. The university will then implement action plans at both the college and university levels.

“We are a data-driven university that’s dedicated to student success, so it makes perfect sense given how much we’ve been able to improve our student experience using data that we would now use data to improve our faculty experience as well,” said Galchinsky. “We’re a big ship. Between faculty, staff, and students there are about 60,000 members of our little town so it takes a lot to turn that ship, but it helps to have valid, nationally benchmarked data as a signpost.”





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