

Module: COACHE Data as a Voice for Underrepresented Faculty

COACHE results for most institutions, on many parameters, are not consistent across all faculty members. Some faculty subgroups on your campus are likely to be feeling less satisfied and less supported, but they worry about being “singled out” for expressing their true feelings. This module offers suggestions for engaging your faculty about differences in their experiences.

1.1. Why: Your responsibility to engage, not ignore, faculty from underrepresented groups

[COACHE studies](#) and [other scholarly analysis](#) are consistent: faculty from underrepresented groups are generally, and in many specific ways and places, less satisfied with their jobs and with their home institutions than are faculty from majority groups. The COACHE CAO Report tells their candid stories by [race/ethnicity](#) and by [gender](#); deeper dives into the unit-level data can surface the experiences of faculty at still smaller intersections (e.g., [women in STEM disciplines](#), [full-time faculty off the tenure track](#)). After all, the narrative or story of a faculty member’s professional satisfaction differs depending on that person’s *multiple* identities, including tenure status, rank, and discipline.

The sources of this comparative dissatisfaction have been widely reported. They include, variously, the absence of a critical mass of faculty like them on campus; the often-unrecognized and uncompensated racial, cultural, and/or gender tax that pervades higher education; and the very real bias that exists throughout our industry, to name just a few. In addition, faculty may feel excluded from informal networks within their departments. This exclusion can amount to accumulating disadvantages as the marginalized faculty members find themselves having less clarity about tenure processes, institutional policies, and how generally to navigate the academic landscape successfully.

To lead a more equitable and developmental institution, consider involving small groups of interest in your overall dissemination and engagement strategy. Providing a space for underrepresented groups of faculty to discuss the COACHE findings may achieve several goals. It may:

- strengthen the voices of colleagues who are often “drowned out” in data or afraid to speak up;
- give these particular cohorts access to power;
- enlighten institutional leadership about strategies that will help particular groups; and
- signal a genuine commitment to acting on institutional values of inclusion and belonging.

Based on our observations of and interviews with COACHE partners, this module briefly describes how to work closely with such cohorts *separately* from the faculty as a whole, yet *concurrently* with institution-wide COACHE activities. You can provide opportunities for underrepresented faculty to come together, in small groups, to discuss the data. If you approach these collaborations openly and transparently, then you will inform *all* faculty of your plan to gather various cohorts together—while still protecting their confidence.

1.2. When: Engage underrepresented faculty from the start.

Engagement with faculty from underrepresented groups should be an ongoing enterprise at every college and university, but it is particularly important to plan in Year 1 for conversations that will take place in Year 2 of the COACHE partnership.

Sample email communicating a plan to engage underrepresented faculty:

Dear colleagues,

As you know, we continue to partner with COACHE to try to improve the professional lives of our faculty. Most of you took the COACHE survey last spring and we remain very grateful for your time and effort. When COACHE delivered the data and reports to us this past summer, the COACHE Advisory Team (and/or the Provost's office) worked with the Faculty Executive Committee to review and update our comprehensive strategy to disseminate and discuss the findings.

As part of this effort to engage faculty in understanding and acting on the results, we will be holding a series of meetings. We will, of course, present and discuss the COACHE data with the entire faculty. It is important that we gather together, as a collective group, to "sensemake" about the data and to explore the possibilities for implementing change. We will also convene meetings with specific groups on campus, including faculty of color, women faculty, pre-tenure faculty, associate professors, and non-tenure-track faculty. We believe it is critical that we provide a forum for smaller cohorts of faculty like these whose voices might be muted among a larger group. They, like all faculty, have an important role in the future of our institution.

The details of those meetings are being worked out. By design, the conversations will be confidential. For now, I wanted to keep you up to date on the overall plan. As always, your suggestions may be directed to the Advisory Team email address, coache@university.edu.

Very truly yours,

COACHE partners suggest disseminating the COACHE data and reports to the *entire* faculty in the fall of Year 2 because it maintains the momentum of the survey and it signals a commitment to transparency and collaboration.

Unpacking all of the stories from the COACHE data takes time. Typically, the dissemination of the reports is followed by meetings and conversations about what the data reveal. Those

meetings are then followed by invitations to various constituencies to further interpret the results and to brainstorm ideas for implementing change. It is here that partners typically will encourage faculty from underrepresented populations to share their perspectives in safe ways. This gives them a special voice in the conversation.

1.3. How: Promising practices for engaging your faculty from underrepresented groups.

Several COACHE partners have successfully provided a forum for underrepresented groups to explore and discuss the data. At Loyola University Maryland, the Vice President for Academic Affairs organized a series of conversations with the faculty during the spring semester of Year 2. As part of that effort, she convened separate meetings with faculty of color, non-tenure-track, faculty, and women faculty, to dissect and discuss the COACHE findings. Importantly, she shared tables of basic demographic data about the entire faculty to provide context for the related COACHE results. Those conversations led to the resurrection of certain affinity groups and ultimately informed the recommendations that emerged from Loyola's Faculty Affairs Committee.

Other approaches have worked, as well. [Skidmore College has established a working group](#) that meets monthly to explore ways in which the COACHE data can help bring about concrete climate change. The "COACHE Collaborators," as this working group is called, are made up of one member of each academic department/program carefully selected to maximize broad representation

among the faculty. They have a wide mandate, but they have been charged by the Dean of the Faculty to pay particular attention to the ways in which the College might further support faculty from underrepresented groups. To date, the COACHE Collaborators have helped create model personnel procedures, proposed expanding the family leave policy, modified the (problematic) mass email use policy, and shared best practices for building inclusive departments, among other initiatives.

Involving your Chief Diversity Officer in the entire process is recommended. The CDO could participate as a member/moderator of your cohort conversations. At a minimum, sharing the COACHE data with the CDO and encouraging her/him/them to help define institutional priorities and solutions can be a key perspective on and component for success. Additionally, it might be difficult to incorporate perspectives in cases where the number of minority or female faculty in certain departments is too low. The CDO's overarching grasp of these issues may be even more valuable then. However, you might also consider including emeriti faculty from the underrepresented groups.

1.4. Who: The critical importance of confidentiality.

Faculty from underrepresented or marginalized groups often look for the pledge of confidentiality—or at least an assurance that the meeting will be a safe space in which to discuss sensitive topics—to commit to meeting with CAOs and/or COACHE Advisory Teams. There are real power differentials in that room. Acknowledging the power and privilege in the room is the first step in establishing trust.

Moreover, the conversations that emerge typically focus on the myriad challenges faced by faculty from underrepresented groups and the comparatively less challenging professional experiences of faculty from majority groups. Such sensitive topics require confidence on the part of the speaker that she/he/they can be open and frank. At a minimum, ground rules for difficult and potentially emotionally-charged conversations should be set prior to the commencement of the meetings. In the end, encouraging open and candid conversation is key, so establish an expectation of confidentiality prior to scheduling the gatherings.

A strategy to consider here would be allowing the CDO, a respected emeriti faculty member, or a facilitator of these group discussions, to exclude the concerned senior administrator(s) (i.e. Provost, chief faculty affairs officer or others). The senior administrators can be assured that the meeting facilitator will provide detailed and unfiltered, but anonymized, notes from the meeting to them. This would help encourage more frank discussions without attributions to individual speakers. In such cases, the fact of the senior administrations' recusal must be clearly communicated when invitations to participate in the meeting are sent to the faculty groups.

1.5. What: What is easy, what is hard: planning for the unanticipated issues that may arise.

It is impossible to anticipate every possible development in these sensitive conversations, but keeping in mind a few things will help.

- It is easier for these conversations to start with a focus on the survey results and other institutional data (e.g., faculty demographics), then on comparative trends in higher education nationwide and/or in your sector. COACHE data can serve both purposes, but even though other schools are experiencing many similar challenges, your COACHE results are never generally true—they are always unique to your institution. While connecting campus circumstances to a broader narrative should be encouraged, the participants' focus ultimately ought to be turned back to the institution-specific findings.
- It will be hard for some faculty to accept or understand the perspectives of faculty who experience the same campus in markedly different ways than they do. Recognizing—and preparing for—that reality at the beginning of the process will help you navigate these sometimes-difficult waters. Take time learning how to manage “[difficult conversations](#)” and “[hot moments](#)”; consider enlisting the expertise of your teaching and learning center and CDO.
- As we suggest in 1.2 above, success may depend on how early your faculty are brought into the process. COACHE encourages partner schools to engage faculty from underrepresented groups early in Year 1 (e.g., on your advisory group, to set goals, to inform custom questions). If these faculty members feel invested in the entire COACHE process, and from the very beginning, the chances of anticipating your results and making progress toward shared initiatives is dramatically improved.

1.6. Resources and readings from partners and scholars

a. Understanding the Unique Challenges faced by Underrepresented Faculty:

Laden, B. V. & Hagedorn, L. S. (2002). Job satisfaction among faculty of color in academe: individual survivors or institutional transformers? *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2000(105), 57-66. Link: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/ir.10505>

Jayakumar, U., Howard, T., Allen, W. & Han, J. (2016). Racial privilege in the professoriate: an exploration of campus climate, retention, and satisfaction. *Journal of Higher Education* 80(5), 538-563. Link: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00221546.2009.11779031>

Tack, M. W. & Patitu, C. L. (1992). Faculty Job Satisfaction: Women and Minorities in Peril. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*, 4. Link: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED353885.pdf>

b. Supporting the Success and Satisfaction of Underrepresented Faculty:

Piercy, F., Giddings, V., Allen, K., Dixon, B., Meszaros, P. & Joest, K. (2005). Improving Campus Climate to Support Faculty Diversity and Retention: A Pilot Program for New Faculty. *Innovative Higher Education*, 30(1), 53–66. Link: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs10755-005-3297-z.pdf>

Fryberg, S.A. and Martínez, E.J., eds. (2014). *The Truly Diverse Faculty: New Dialogues in American Higher Education*. Link: <https://www.palgrave.com/us/book/9781137456052>

Gasman, M., Kim, J. & Nguyen, T. (2011). Effectively recruiting faculty of color at highly selective institutions: a school of education case study. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 2011, Vol. 4, No. 4, 212–222. Link: <http://psycnet.apa.org/record/2011-20029-001>

Mission possible: Empowering institutions with strategies for change for women of color STEM faculty. Jovanovic, J., & Armstrong, M. A. Source: *Peer Review*, 16, 21–24, (2014). Link: <https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/mission-possible-empowering-institutions-strategies-change>

Moreno, J., Smith, D., Clayton-Pedersen, A., Parker, S., & Teraguchi, D. H. (2006). *The Revolving Door for Underrepresented Minority Faculty in Higher Education: An Analysis from the Campus Diversity Initiative*. James Irvine Foundation Campus Diversity Initiative Evaluation Project. Link: <http://hdl.handle.net/10244/50>

c. Other critical perspectives

Harper, S. R. (2012). Race without racism: How higher education researchers minimize racist institutional norms. *Review of Higher Education* 36(1), 9-29. Link: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/486184/summary>

Patterson, K., Grenny, J. McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2011). *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes are High*. McGraw-Hill Education.

1.7. Sample agenda

Topic: Provost/VPAA Conversation with Faculty of Color

Ground rules: One COACHE partner had this advice: Do not take formal notes during such affinity group sessions. This keeps the conversations more open and distinct from official recommendations from a faculty governance body (like a Faculty Affairs Committee) that typically follow this phase. Before sharing any summary of these discussions with the institution at large, consider sharing back to the group first. This assures that any summary is accurate and it gives faculty the chance to redact any comments that they might worry will divulge their identities.

Meeting objectives:

- (1) To get acquainted with the COACHE data and what it reveals about faculty experiences here
- (2) To begin the work toward a shared understanding of what might be done to improve the experience of all faculty.

To prepare for this meeting, please:

- (1) Review the COACHE data/reports
- (2) Reflect on what’s worked and where we’ve fallen short at this campus concerning our work in faculty development, diversity and inclusion, work/life, and other faculty affairs.

Schedule [90 minutes]

# min	Activity
15	Introductions, goals, and mutual expectations
15	<p>What is COACHE?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A diagnostic and comparative management tool; a snapshot, not report card. • A beginning, not an end: Opportunity for rich conversation and informed actions. • Underlying premise: Improving the faculty experience (by faculty <i>and</i> administrators) improves the student experience, institutional climate, and educational quality. <p>What does our COACHE data tell us?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of strength (“bragging rights”) and areas of concern (room to grow) • Areas of concern: Group differences (women, faculty of color, midcareer, NTT) • Closer look: Faculty of color <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Top reason to leave institution Best and worst aspects Where experiences differ most

<p>15</p>	<p>What does our own data tell us?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demographics overall, by rank, and hired in last 10 years <p><i>Conversation:</i> Distribution of faculty of color across curricula / departments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty retention: Turnover Quotient (TQ) (See “Revolving Door,” 2006) Best practice to track replacement rates, not just departures (net change/new hires); accounts for big hiring years. <p><i>Conversation:</i> Retention: faculty who stay or faculty who stay thriving? High profile departures versus overall landscape (perception/local experience)?</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>Possible areas of inquiry and action: What we’re thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on midcareer professors [or insert other areas of focus here; place this conversation in context of other issues] Faculty salary equity study Chair workshop on faculty evaluation best practices, implicit bias, hiring <p><i>Conversation:</i> How best to create cross-department networking and support?</p>
<p>20 or more</p>	<p>Conversation</p> <p>What do you think? Are we reading the results correctly? What have we missed, what more can we understand?</p>
<p><i>adjourn</i></p>	<p>Review next steps from this meeting. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to the offices, committees, etc. who could partner to advance priorities Follow up with COACHE about connecting with other partner institutions to explore promising practices, including any questions raised. <p>Plan for next meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What questions need to be addressed? Who is missing from the conversation and how should we go about inviting the absent voices? Assess what worked well about this meeting and what we would have liked to change, on reverse.

	<i>What we liked (plus)</i>	<i>What we'll change (delta)</i>