

A WHITE PAPER SERIES
FROM THE COLLABORATIVE
ON ACADEMIC CAREERS IN
HIGHER EDUCATION (COACHE)

Benchmark Best Practices: Nature of Work: Research

collaborative on
academic careers
in higher education



This series of white papers is offered freely to member institutions as part of our project's three-year support and engagement plan.

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Benchmark Best Practices:

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COACHE Benchmarks

Our surveys of college faculty produce data that are both (a) salient to full-time college faculty, and (b) actionable by academic leaders. The survey items are aggregated into 20 benchmarks representing the general thrust of faculty satisfaction along key themes.

The COACHE benchmarks are:

NATURE OF WORK: TEACHING	TENURE CLARITY	DIVISIONAL LEADERSHIP
NATURE OF WORK: RESEARCH	TENURE REASONABLENESS	DEPARTMENTAL LEADERSHIP
NATURE OF WORK: SERVICE	PROMOTION	DEPARTMENTAL COLLEGIALITY
INTERDISCIPLINARY WORK	FACILITIES & WORK RESOURCES	DEPARTMENTAL ENGAGEMENT
COLLABORATION	PERSONAL & FAMILY POLICIES	DEPARTMENTAL QUALITY
MENTORING	HEALTH & RETIREMENT BENEFITS	APPRECIATION & RECOGNITION
TENURE POLICIES	SENIOR LEADERSHIP	

What is measured in this benchmark?

NATURE OF WORK: RESEARCH

Satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with:

- The portion of your time spent on research
- The amount of external funding you are expected to find
- The influence you have over the focus of your research/scholarly/creative work
- The quality of graduate students to support your research/scholarly/creative work
- The availability of course release time to focus on your research
- Institutional support (e.g., internal grants/seed money) for your research/scholarly/creative work
- The support your institution has offered you for:
 - engaging undergraduates in your research/scholarly/ creative work
 - obtaining externally funded grants (pre-award)
 - managing externally funded grants (post-award)
 - securing graduate student assistance
 - traveling to present papers or conduct research/scholarly/creative work

Why Support for Research Is Important

Faculty satisfaction with research is a function not just of the time faculty members have to commit to research, but importantly, of the clarity and consistency of institutional expectations for research productivity and the resources colleges and universities provide faculty to meet them. When faculty are criticized for falling short of others' expectations for research, consider the demands, obstacles, mixed signals,

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and lack of meaningful support that may be undermining their ability to do their best work.

The challenge for every faculty member is to strike a balance between institutional expectations for each aspect of work—teaching, research, service, and at many universities, outreach. Time is the common denominator; if faculty do not have time to adequately perform in any of these areas commensurate with expectations, dissatisfaction can occur, and morale and productivity will suffer.

The COACHE instrument invites faculty to assess the environmental qualities conducive to research productivity. The questions are designed to be agnostic on institutional type (e.g., research university, liberal arts college) and research area (in the disciplines, creative work, the scholarship of teaching and learning). It is in the analysis where participating colleges and universities can determine whether faculty feel they are being supported in fulfilling the expectations of them.

Getting Started

All institutions featured here offer liberal travel and professional development funds; offer research grants; and have an active grants office to help faculty secure research funding. Most of the institutions with exemplary results on this benchmark also had the following qualities in common. Consider these characteristics a foundation for improving faculty satisfaction with research.

- Provide leadership from the top. Presidential and provostial leadership in stressing the importance of excellence in research is critical substantively and symbolically. This means that resources directed at supporting faculty work—across the creative lifecycle—are crucial, as is the messaging that goes along with the financial support.
- Establish formal offices and programs to support faculty research. Visibly dedicating resources to support faculty work clearly demonstrates how important faculty members are to institutional success. This study identified the following areas of focus for full-time college staff:
 - *Grant support.* Many universities offer pre-award support to faculty preparing proposals for outside funding. What is less common, but equally important, is post-award support.
 - *Internal grants.* Faculty are grateful for internal funding, even in small amounts. Well-designed programs can foster interdivisional collaboration, extramural mentoring, and other innovations.
 - *Research institutes.* Such institutes may be a source of internal grant support, but beyond that, they are places where faculty can find collaborators and engage in interdisciplinary work—something many find fulfilling.
 - *Colloquia, workshops, and seminars.* All faculty, and especially pre-tenure faculty, appreciate opportunities to present their research at colloquia on campus, receive feedback, and fine-tune their work prior to presenting at a national conference. Workshops and seminars for writing grants, running a lab, getting published, mentoring undergraduates and graduates, getting tenure and “getting to full” are all programs that support faculty collaboration and engagement in fulfilling work.

What’s Working

COACHE researchers interviewed leaders from member institutions whose faculty rated items in this theme exceptionally well compared to faculty at other participating campuses. While several of the highest ratings were found at baccalaureate institutions, the lessons derived from our interviews with their leaders are transferrable to universities at the school-, college-, or division-level.

Hamilton College

Hamilton offers discipline-specific start-up packages but has made a conscious effort in recent years to ensure that non-STEM fields are also funded for faculty to establish their scholarship early and strongly. “We also had a fund that matched external grants for pre-tenure faculty,” added the Dean of Faculty, “which was being used mostly in the sciences for facilities and equipment. That left humanists with little funding. Now,” he went on, “having consulted on ways in which faculty members across the disciplines could be best supported, we distribute funds more broadly.”

Hamilton also supports an Office of Foundation, Corporate, and Government Relations, which maintains relationships with sources of external support for projects consistent with the College’s mission and priorities (www.hamilton.edu/ofcgr). Grant application resources online include Proposal Writing Tips; Guidelines for Submitting Your Proposal at Hamilton; Getting to Know Your Government; and a Grant Proposal Endorsement.

Hobart and William Smith Colleges

At Hobart and William Smith (HWS), the Office of Grants provides assistance with policies, funding resources (e.g., with subscriptions to FoundationSearch and Grant Advisor Plus), funding opportunity summaries, and tips and advice for proposal writing. The office’s support “takes away a little bit of the drudgery or the difficulties that people might encounter,” explained the Provost and Dean of Faculty. Financial support comes in the form of funds for scholarship, professional travel, prizes, and summer support either in grants or student research support. According to the Provost, the tone is set at the start of a new faculty member’s career at HWS: “When we hire new faculty, we give them a very distinct kind of fund to help them continue what they were doing prior to coming here and also to help them start new projects.”

The College of the Holy Cross

Through the Office of Grants and Corporate and Foundation Giving, the Associate Dean at Holy Cross identifies grants for individuals’ projects, and the Dean of the College helps to secure these grants. The office provides access to subscription databases, government funding agencies, and other grant-related resources, including a “Grants Handbook” of explicit information and support for grant resources, policies, and procedures (see offices.holycross.edu/grants/handbook). Holy Cross administrators also remarked on the Faculty Scholarship Lunch Series, open to all faculty members to talk about their important, recently-published research and to share their experiences as they transition to new research projects.

Kenyon College

At Kenyon, all full-time faculty receive an Individual Faculty Development Account (IFDA) of \$2,250 per year, the balance of which may be carried over from year to year as long as it does not exceed \$6,750. This support is provided in addition to research grants such as the Dr. Newton Chun Award; Faculty Development Grants; Kenyon Summer Stipends; Labalme Faculty Development Grants; Whiting Teaching Fellowship; Whiting Research Grant; and the Whiting Summer Scholarship Stipend. Furthermore, in communications with faculty about tenure and promotion expectations, Kenyon emphasizes the quality over quantity of publications.

Loyola University Maryland

Loyola University Maryland (LUM) supports scholarly activity with “as liberal travel funds as any institution I know,” remarked the Vice President for Academic Affairs. “I don’t know of a person who has been denied travel since I’ve been here, and that’s six years.” He explained the reason for such a commit-

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ment is that “our faculty may be the loner in their field [within their department], so we really want them to be able to get out and share the goods and learn.” LUM’s faculty also receive a reduced teaching load and guaranteed summer support (grants or student research support) in the first year of their appointments.

In addition, all assistant professors are entitled to a research leave. To be eligible, they must apply for a grant, but importantly, they do not have to win the grant to earn the sabbatical. The leave consists of one semester at full pay or one year at 70 percent of pay, as are the University’s typical sabbaticals, for which all faculty are eligible every seven years. And for grants earned, LUM’s 20/20 policy sends 20 percent of the indirect costs back to the department and 20 percent to the Dean.

Like Kenyon, LUM takes care to emphasize the quality of publications over quantity.

Middlebury College

There is a strong emphasis at Middlebury on involving students in research. “There’s an ‘all in it together’ feeling,” explained the Vice President for Academic Affairs, who continued:

“Our president has been very interested in fostering creative work outside the classroom and, for instance, established a grant for faculty to work with science students on an entrepreneurial project the students developed. A student team also participated in the 2011 Solar Decathlon competition sponsored by U.S. Department of Energy—with significant support from faculty and the institution. We did well in the competition, placing fourth, but more importantly, the experience was a great opportunity to bring together interests in architecture, the environment, and climate change.”

In addition, faculty members are entitled to a full year sabbatical after five consecutive years of full-time teaching. They can increase their pay if they apply for a grant, even if they do not win the grant. As part of faculty development initiatives, faculty have access to development funds for travel to research sites and professional conferences, and to purchase materials needed for research. A website ([see middlebury.edu/academics/administration/funding](http://middlebury.edu/academics/administration/funding)) describes these and other resources, including several funding opportunities for projects expected to continue for more than one year and up to five years; for faculty who need to engage undergraduates in their research; for student assistant wages for faculty scholarship or course development; and for faculty who require assistance with production and reprint costs for scholarly publications. Supporting all faculty research activities are the Offices of Sponsored Research, of Corporate & Foundation Relations, and of Grants Accounting.

Stonehill College

Stonehill provides start-up funding and annual (\$1,500) contributions to faculty research accounts. The College also offers summer support either in the form of grants or student research assistants. Stonehill’s Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) provides opportunities for collecting resources related to the latest scholarship on teaching and learning (SOTL), in addition to supporting faculty in their own SOTL research, such as annually awarding \$2,500 to support a faculty member or faculty team engaged in this work. In addition, Stonehill offers a summer retreat for faculty interested in working on a SOTL research project.

Tulane University

At Tulane, focus groups with junior and senior faculty determined specific actions that could positively impact research. “We found that what matters depends on the discipline,” observed the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs. “For instance, we’ve implemented grant writing workshops, particularly in response to the folks in the STEM fields and especially the sciences. We are currently tracking the impact of this by measuring the receiving of grants.” Tulane’s Office of Research provides a variety of support, notably “Bridge Research Support,” which sustains competitively-funded research projects that have temporarily lost extramural support, and the

Oliver Fund Scholars Award “to stimulate outstanding faculty research initiatives, to sustain such projects and to increase their competitiveness for national research support” (*see tulane.edu/asvpr*).

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

An array of resources at UNC Chapel Hill aim to support not just faculty, but other contributors to the University’s research enterprise, including staff, postdocs, professional librarians, and students. From training new researchers (and simplifying access to available workshops), to pre-award support, to award management and publicizing research (through an Office of Research Communication), UNC considers the full life-cycle of both the research project and the researcher. Programs like “Partnering with UNC” look beyond the typical funding sources to support collaboration between UNC researchers and corporation partners. The Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (*see research.unc.edu/researchers*) provides startup and matching funds to support new programs and initiatives with foundations, federal agencies, and the state and federal government, as well.

University of Saint Thomas

The Executive Vice President and Provost at the University of Saint Thomas recognizes the research of faculty with an honorary reception, with wine, cheese, and posters highlighting faculty research projects. “Faculty members submit their research to the Faculty Development Center in the Office of Academic Affairs for display at the reception,” she explained. “They create posters that display faculty research--the faculty can hang them in their offices after the reception. We also present an ongoing slideshow and pictures of the faculty and their research at the reception.” The Faculty Development Office also organizes a number of writing support activities and opportunities, including on-campus week-long retreats, workshops, individual conferences, and help establishing or joining a writing group.

Meanwhile, the Grants Research Office (GRO) helps faculty, students, and staff find sources of funding among governmental agencies; access and use online submission engines that state and federal agencies commonly use; understand and interpret complex agency guidelines and solicitations; develop accurate and appropriate budgets for grant proposals; create more effective project designs with “more compelling narrative texts”; secure and document the commitment of internal resources in support of sponsored projects; navigate the internal review and approval process that is required of all proposals before their submission to external sponsors; and conduct follow-up communications with state and federal agencies, interpret reviewers comments, and help applicants position themselves to re-apply when proposals are not funded. The GRO also connects stakeholders to internal funding opportunities from, for example, the International Programs Office and the Luann Dummer Center for Women.

Resources

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COACHE Benchmarks

This benchmark report is part of a series of white papers available through COACHE. The complete list of white papers includes:

APPRECIATION & RECOGNITION
DEPARTMENTAL ENGAGEMENT,
QUALITY & COLLEGIALLY
DEPARTMENTAL LEADERSHIP

INTERDISCIPLINARY WORK &
COLLABORATION
MENTORING

NATURE OF WORK: RESEARCH

NATURE OF WORK: SERVICE
NATURE OF WORK: TEACHING
TENURE & PROMOTION

About COACHE

The Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) is a consortium of more than 200 colleges and universities across North America committed to making the academic workplace more attractive and equitable for faculty. Founded in 2002 with support from the Ford Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies, COACHE is based at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and is now supported by its members.

Designed to generate not simply “interesting” data, but actionable diagnoses, COACHE’s suite of faculty job satisfaction surveys have been tested and continuously improved across multiple administration sites and cycles. Institutional reports and executive dashboards provide college leaders with a lever to increase the quality of work-life for their faculty; to advance a reputation as a great place for faculty to work; to provoke better questions from and more informed decisions by prospective faculty; and to generate ideas and initiatives from faculty that enrich and expand the range of possible improvements.

COACHE also brings academic leaders together to advance our mutual goals of maximizing the impact of the data, with many opportunities to meet with counterparts from peer institutions and to discuss COACHE findings on faculty affairs.

Call (617) 495-5285 to request your invitation to participate.

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