



# collaborative on academic careers in higher education

## Recognizing Faculty with Disabilities

Data, insights and considerations from the COACHE Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey

The Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) seeks to better understand the experience and perceptions of faculty in the workplace. The annual COACHE Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey provides insights into a number of themes, and since 2018 COACHE has included questions related to disability status.

The insights from these questions can help institutions gain a better understanding of the perceptions and experiences of faculty who have a diagnosed disability and how it differs from faculty who report no disability. The insights also uncover questions that administrators should be exploring to improve resources and supports for faculty at their own institutions.

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**2,568 or 7.2%** of the cohort of faculty who participated in the survey between **2021 and 2023** reported having a diagnosed disability.

### Types of disabilities reported by faculty:

- Sensory impairment - 18%
- Mobility impairment - 21%
- Learning disability - 23%
- Mental health disorder - 28%

*of those who reported being diagnosed with a disability*

*\*Respondents could report a disability in one or more of these categories.*

### Disclosing disability status

Participants who reported they have a disability were asked a follow up question: To whom at the institution have you disclosed this disability?

- **~1 in 7** faculty who reported having a diagnosed sensory or motor disability — a “visible disability” — who indicated that they had not shared their disability status with anyone on their team.
- **~1 in 3** faculty who reported having a diagnosed learning impairment or mental health disorder — an “invisible disability” — who indicated that they had not shared their disability status with anyone on their team.

This disparity we see in disclosure status has led COACHE to inquire about whether and how faculty members' perceptions and experiences of their workplace might differ by disability status.

### **Insights from the COACHE data on disability status**

Faculty with invisible disabilities were *less* likely to report feeling like they had been able to find:

- **balance in their teaching and related academic activities**
- **work-life balance**
- **a sense of belonging in their departments**

A closer look at the data from the questions that indicate these disparities can prompt further questions to help administrations examine their approach to supporting faculties with disabilities.

- ***I am able to balance the teaching, research, and service (and clinical, if applicable) activities expected of me***
  - *Of people with a visible disability:*
    - 45% disagreed with this statement
    - 10% neither agreed or disagreed with this statement
    - 45% agreed with this statement
  - *Of people with an invisible disability:*
    - 55% disagreed with this statement
    - 8% neither agreed or disagreed with this statement
    - 37% agreed with this statement
  - *Of people with no disability:*
    - 35% disagreed with this statement
    - 10% neither agreed or disagreed with this statement
    - 55% agreed with this statement
  - **Questions to ask from this data:**
    - *How might increased expectations for hybrid or online teaching impact these faculty's ability to balance responsibilities?*
    - *What additional challenges do faculty with disabilities face in their day-to-day work?*
- ***I have been able to find the right balance, for me, between my professional life and my personal/family life.***
  - *Of people with a visible disability:*
    - 47% disagreed with this statement
    - 8% neither agreed or disagreed with this statement
    - 45% agreed with this statement
  - *Of people with an invisible disability:*
    - 58% disagreed with this statement

- 8% neither agreed or disagreed with this statement
    - 34% agreed with this statement
  - *Of people with no disability:*
    - 37% disagreed with this statement
    - 10% neither agreed or disagreed with this statement
    - 53% agreed with this statement
  - **Questions to ask from this data:**
    - *How might faculty's non-disclosure of a disability affect their access to work-life resources meant to support them? What can be done to mitigate any gaps in access?*
    - *Why do the majority of faculty with invisible disabilities struggle to achieve work-life balance?*
- **I am satisfied with how well I fit in my department (e.g. sense of belonging).**
  - *Of people with a visible disability:*
    - 28% disagreed with this statement
    - 15% neither agreed or disagreed with this statement
    - 57% agreed with this statement
  - *Of people with an invisible disability:*
    - 36% disagreed with this statement
    - 16% neither agreed or disagreed with this statement
    - 48% agreed with this statement
  - *Of people with no disability:*
    - 19% disagreed with this statement
    - 16% neither agreed or disagreed with this statement
    - 65% agreed with this statement
  - **Questions to ask from this data:**
    - *How can your campus community improve how faculty with disabilities, visible and invisible, feel about their sense of belonging in their department?*
    - *For institutions with their own COACHE data, how do these disparities play out across your divisions and disciplines?*

For more information on how COACHE data can be applied on your campus, contact us today.  
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