

# Final Summary Report: Quality of Work Life (QWL) Survey 2012

## Emerging Themes

- General work attitude (job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, and organizational commitment) levels remained fairly constant and moderately positive when compared to the 2006 and 2009 QWL surveys.
- Salary remains the greatest source of dissatisfaction, an attitude that appears to be intensifying.
- Substantial satisfaction continues to be expressed about intrinsic aspects of employees' jobs-meaningful work, autonomy, and access to flexible work options.
- The general themes that emerged from open-ended comments about the university are consistent with its new strategic plan.
- Responses separated by various demographics and job categories did **not** appear to reveal especially problematic differences as nearly all groups indicated generally positive attitudes with respect to organizational support and commitment. Some differences that were found:
  - Employees over 40 years of age showed significantly higher levels of organizational commitment. This may be due to the tendency of older employees to have served at the university a longer time than younger workers.
  - Gender differences were mixed with women in instructional faculty positions indicating lower levels of support and commitment but women in classified positions indicating higher levels of support than their male counterparts..
  - Minority employees indicated lower levels of agreement on scales that specifically addressed diversity policies and climate for inclusion than non-minority employees, although the means for those scales for both groups fell clearly on the positive side of the neutral point. Despite this finding, however, minority employees across all job categories actually scored *higher* than non-minorities on the more general scales of support and commitment.

## **2012 Survey Background**

For the 5<sup>th</sup> time since 2000, the Quality of Work Life Task Force conducted a triennial survey of George Mason University employees in April 2012 regarding work/life at George Mason. The Task Force is a presidentially appointed group of faculty and staff across all Mason campuses charged with gathering all employees' opinions and "making recommendations regarding the quality of work life for all George Mason University employees."

Over the years, the QWL survey process has been instrumental for a number of initiatives that are part of Mason's cultural and operational fabric. These include the flexible work policy, expansions to the Child Development Center, and the Prince William shuttle. (See <http://qwl.gmu.edu/accomplishments.html>).

For the 2012 survey, a total of 5,988 employees were contacted across seven job categories (Administrative/Professional faculty, Tenured faculty, Tenure-track (untentured) faculty, Term Faculty, Adjunct faculty, Classified staff, and Wages) on each of Mason's three campuses and the Loudoun location. Almost all were contacted via a web survey [paper surveys are provided to a small number of departments whose employees may not have ready access to a computer].

A total of 1,732 surveys were returned, yielding a response rate of 31.7%, up from 27.7% in 2009. The increase in the response rate may be attributable to the random drawing for prizes held after the 2012 survey. Among the 3,788 salaried employees, participation yielded a 39.3% response rate, with 1,487 completing the survey.

## **Survey Analysis**

The instrumentation and analysis is conducted by Dr. Louis Buffardi of Mason's Psychology Department and his team of graduate students; their resourceful leadership has been instrumental in providing data analysis since the inception of the survey in 2000.

## **Results**

### **A. General Job Attitudes: Satisfaction, Organizational Support & Commitment**

After rising over the first three administrations of the QWL survey, **overall job satisfaction** appears to have decreased somewhat since it peaked in 2006; this still stands at over 70% of faculty and staff indicating they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their jobs. The slight downward trend since the peak may be, in part, a function of the stagnation in salary over this period of time. Note: satisfaction with salary has decreased over that same time period from 2.95 to 2.66 (based on a 5 point scale where 2 = dissatisfied and 3 = neutral).

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Combined
2000	12.9%	49.5%	63.4%
2003	19.8%	47.6%	67.4%
2006	21.2%	53%	74.2%
2009	24.7%	49.1%	73.8%
2012	26.0%	45.8%	71.8%

Similarly, the levels of **Perceived Organizational Support** (the degree to which employees feel the organization values their contributions and cares for their well-being) and **Affective Organizational Commitment** (the degree to which employees feel connected to the university) remained at virtually the same levels as they were in both 2006 and 2009.

	POS*	AOC*
2006	3.24	3.67
2009	3.28	3.62
2012	3.30	3.66

\*On a 5 point scale where 3=neutral and 4=agree.

As in 2009, this “no change” finding does have some significance as the survey was conducted during challenging economic times generally and at a time when there remains considerable concern about the university budgetary situation. While the 2006 survey was conducted in the afterglow of the NCAA Final Four appearance of the Men’s basketball team , no such corresponding major event on campus occurred prior to the 2012 survey. In fact, the university was facing significant changes in senior leadership at the time of the survey.

The 2012 survey included an open-ended question regarding the impending change in the university’s senior leadership: “As the university transitions to new leadership, what aspects of the university culture would you like to see stay the same?” The major themes referenced such Mason cultural points as:

- Diversity and inclusion
- Supportive community
- Openness to new ideas
- Commitment to a quality academic environment
- Flexibility and work/life balance

Additionally, faculty and staff shared constructive observations across a broad range of topics. Please see Appendix A for an aggregate assessment by topic as well as a sample of faculty and staff comments.

Interestingly, the cultural themes referenced above also factored heavily into the University’s new strategic plan which is available at <http://strategicplan.gmu.edu>. Additionally the themes score highly in Mason’s results from *The Chronicle of Higher Education’s* Great Colleges to Work For program. Mason has participated in this annual survey of 600 randomly selected faculty, administrators, and professional staff since

2008. While there has been variation in Mason's status in some of the Chronicle's categories over the five years, it has consistently received recognition each year for "Respect and Appreciation" and "Work-Life Balance." Also, in four of the five years, Mason has been recognized for "Professional/Career Development Programs."

## **B. Satisfaction and Stress Items: Job Category Comparisons**

Generally, employees in each job category expressed satisfaction with most aspects of their jobs. As in past surveys, employees at all levels particularly valued the autonomy they have in their jobs. This satisfaction can be seen in several areas including the chance to work independently, the sense that their work is meaningful, and access to flexible work options. Additionally, employees at all levels particularly valued Mason's embrace of diversity, climate of respect, and opportunities to interact and know people from diverse backgrounds.

With respect to aspects of the job where people were least satisfied, salary was the lone item that fell below the neutral point for all job categories. This is followed by promotion opportunities which fell below the neutral point for 4 out of the 7 groups. Availability of on-campus child care also scored below the neutral point for 2 of the 7 groups. Results from the 2009 survey showed a similar dissatisfaction with salary with it falling below the neutral point for 5 of the 8 job categories. This was followed by availability of on-campus child care which was below the neutral point for 4 of these categories.

The level of stress changed from 2009 to 2012. In 2009, nearly all job categories reported concern about university and department budget issues. Similarly, workload and parking/commuting also frequently reached this 50% threshold (moderate or extreme stress, 3.0 or above on a 4.0 scale). In addition, classified staff, wage employees, and term faculty indicated significant stress with respect to personal finances.

In 2012, both workload and university budget concerns reached the 50% threshold or above. This was particularly true for all of the salaried full-time employee categories. Other significant stressors included commuting and personal finances.

Individual employee category stressors that were relatively higher than other categories include:

- Institutional procedures for tenured and tenure-track research faculty
- Fairness for tenure-track research faculty
- Student behavior for tenure-track research faculty
- Inadequate opportunity for career growth among tenured, tenure-track and term research faculty

### C. Comparison of Results by Age, Campus, , Gender, Ethnicity, and Employee Type

An analysis of several demographic characteristics was conducted regarding Perceived Organizational Support (POC) (the degree to which employees feel the organization value their contributions and cares for their well-being) and the Affective Organization Commitment (AOC) (the degree to which employees feel connected to the university). Findings include:

#### Age

Among Mason faculty and staff under age 40, POS was 3.27 while among those over age 40 POS was 3.38, a small difference that is not statistically significant. However, in reviewing AOC, among those under 40, the rate was 3.49; those over 40 showed an AOC of 3.77, a statistically significant difference. This is not a surprising finding, as older employees are more likely to have worked at Mason a longer time with less committed employees more likely to have left the organization.

#### Campus

POS by campus reflects small, but at times statistically significant differences. In general, Administrative/Professional faculty had higher rates of POS in both Arlington and Fairfax relative to Tenured/Tenure-Track faculty and classified staff. In Prince William however, Administrative/Professional faculty had a slightly lower POS than Tenure/Tenure Track faculty and classified staff (see chart below). Tenured/Tenure-Track faculty in Fairfax registered the lowest POS over all campuses at 3.10.

<u>Perceived Organizational Support (POS)</u>			
	<u>Admin/Prof Faculty</u>	<u>Tenured/Tenure Track</u>	<u>Classified</u>
<u>Arlington</u>	<u>3.79</u>	<u>3.51</u>	<u>3.25</u>
<u>Fairfax</u>	<u>3.42</u>	<u>3.10</u>	<u>3.31</u>
<u>Prince William</u>	<u>3.35</u>	<u>3.47</u>	<u>3.52</u>

In general, AOC rates were higher for Tenured/Tenure-Track faculty in both Arlington and Prince William relative to Administrative/Professional faculty and Classified staff. In Fairfax however, Tenured/Tenure-Track faculty had a slightly lower AOC at 3.5 than Administrative/Professional faculty and Classified staff (see chart below). Interestingly, the lowest rate of AOC was among Classified staff in Arlington at 3.21.

<u>Affective Organizational Commitment (AOC)</u>			
	<u>Admin/Prof Faculty</u>	<u>Tenured/Tenure Track</u>	<u>Classified</u>
<u>Arlington</u>	<u>3.78</u>	<u>3.95</u>	<u>3.21</u>
<u>Fairfax</u>	<u>3.72</u>	<u>3.50</u>	<u>3.68</u>
<u>Prince William</u>	<u>3.68</u>	<u>3.93</u>	<u>3.80</u>

### Employee Type

When looking at POS for each employee type, the highest levels are found among Administrative/Professional faculty at 3.43 followed by Classified staff at 3.34. Interestingly, Adjunct faculty, Tenured faculty, Term faculty and non-student wage employees all reported POS rates around 3.2. The lowest level is found among Tenure-track faculty at 2.99.

AOC among all employee types follows a similar trend with one notable exception. The highest AOC level is found among Adjunct faculty at 3.75 followed by Administrative/Professional faculty at 3.72 and Classified staff at 3.67. Tenured faculty, Term faculty and non-student wage employees all have AOC levels around 3.6. The lowest level of AOC is again found among Tenure-track faculty at 3.32. The lower means for Tenure-track faculty likely are due to the stress associated with the tenure process.

### Gender

POS and AOC for men and women overall were very similar. However when one reviews the data by employee type, we find that tenure track women and classified staff men show the lowest POS at 3.04 and 3.16 respectively. In AOC, levels are higher across all categories with the lowest level among women in both tenured faculty and tenure-track faculty groups at 3.46.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)							
	Overall	Admin/Prof Faculty	Tenured Faculty	Tenure Track	Term Faculty	Adjunct Faculty	Classified
Women	3.33	3.44	3.12	3.04	3.15	3.11	3.44
Men	3.30	3.45	3.32	3.26	3.29	3.37	3.16

Affective Organizational Commitment (AOC)							
	Overall	Admin/Prof Faculty	Tenured Faculty	Tenure Track	Term Faculty	Adjunct Faculty	Classified
Women	3.67	3.70	3.46	3.46	3.76	3.72	3.68
Men	3.70	3.79	3.81	3.53	3.52	3.76	3.66

### Ethnicity

Both POS and AOC were slightly higher for minority faculty and for faculty and staff overall when compared to non- minority faculty.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)					
	All Faculty	Tenured Faculty	Tenure Track	Term Faculty	All Faculty and Staff
Minority	3.32	3.35	3.26	3.32	3.34
Non-Minority	3.18	3.22	2.99	3.21	3.32

Affective Organizational Commitment (AOC)					
	All Faculty	Tenured Faculty	Tenure Track	Term Faculty	All Faculty and Staff
Minority	3.82	3.87	3.72	3.85	3.78
Non-Minority	3.61	3.63	3.41	3.67	3.67

The trend reversed itself when comparing minority to non-minority views on diversity policy, both for the organization and the supervisor as well as the climate for inclusion. This would indicate that specific diversity issues would resonate more with minorities, although not overwhelm their attitudes of general supportiveness and commitment to the organization.

Diversity Policy (Organization)			
	Arlington	Fairfax	Prince William
Minority	3.41	3.74	3.75
Non-minority	3.92	3.89	3.95

Diversity Policy (Supervisor)			
	Arlington	Fairfax	Prince William
Minority	3.42	3.67	3.71
Non-minority	3.80	3.84	3.68

Climate for Inclusion			
	Arlington	Fairfax	Prince William
Minority	3.81	4.09	4.47
Non-minority	4.36	4.20	4.28

## D. Recommendations

- There is a need to continue to address the salary issue. A continuation of the periodic open forums conducted by the Provost's and Senior Vice President's offices that discussed progress/plans in that regard is recommended. Similarly, direct communication via email to all employees may be useful for those that can't make the open forums.
- While some progress has been made in advancing females (particularly at the Deans' level) to significant positions in the Mason Administration, the same can't be said for people of color. That factor may be influencing the levels of agreement of minority faculty & staff with those scales addressing specifically diversity issues. The same is likely the case with respect to faculty recruitment.
- Attitudes toward organizational support appear to be generally low among tenure-track (untenured) faculty. Perhaps some training intervention for department chairs suggesting overt support to those in these positions from when these faculty are first hired and throughout the process. The Deans may be aware of some departments that do a particularly good job on this issue and may use them as example cases in discussing this with all of their department chairs. Similarly, outgoing Provost Stearns may be willing to share some ideas from his experience with the open forums on the tenure process about suggestions in this regard. Such attempts at providing emotional and instrumental support to tenure track faculty may help limit the inevitable anxieties that surround the process.
- While there appears to be some limited success in developing mechanisms to increase response rates to the survey, we should also try to especially encourage minorities to complete the survey and to get them to indicate their race/ethnic status so we will have better representation in our subsequent analyses. Corey Jackson, Vice President for Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics, notes this latter issue seems to be a growing problem with institutional surveys.
- Given the recent emphasis on including Wellbeing as part of the university's mission, the next QWL survey, scheduled for the spring of 2015, should include some measures of that construct in the future.

# Appendix A

There were two open-ended questions in the 2012 survey and both addressed the transition to new leadership.

1. As the University transitions to new leadership, what aspects of the university culture would you like to see remain the same?

1740 people saw this question and 924 people responded with 1460 ideas. The suggestions and comments spanned a number of themes with diversity & inclusion eliciting the most responses (250), followed by a supportive, caring climate (213), an accessible, courteous culture (103), and an openness to ideas (184).

In the area of academic reputation, 138 responses addressed the theme of having a commitment to quality in academic disciplines. In employee-related themes, 114 responded about flexible work arrangements.

Samples responses include:

- “Respect for diversity (of students, staff, faculty, academic programs, administrators, sponsors)”
- “The commitment to foster mutual respect among people with different backgrounds and beliefs.”
- “The focus on diversity and acceptance of everyone. In my opinion, Mason is very inclusive and any one from all walks of life can feel at home here. “
- “Sense of collegiality and that we're all in this together. -continued value placed on getting input from faculty and staff, via QWL survey as well as general sense of providing 'voice' to those who work here.”
- “Spirit of the place”
- “Sense of community”
- “Being able to implement new ideas”
- “The openness to new ideas and new ways of doing things.”
- “Great communication forums from top leadership shared with all campus sites”
- “Transparency - being able to understand how/why decisions were made and who was at the table guiding it as such”
- “Recognition culture - even though salary increases are not always available, the many ways Mason has to recognize employees for their work and effort add a lot to the day-to-day benefits and feeling of importance for what we do.” “Care for our Students by providing 1st class educational facilities, housing, recreation, and dining options.”
- “I would like to continue to see an emphasis on healthy eating, exercise, and healthy lifestyles. I would also like to see a continuation of 'green' initiatives,

such as support for biking to work, vegan food options, organic vegetable gardening, walking at noon and to work.”

- “Maintaining good relations with the community and the NoVA area in general.”

2. As the university transitions to new leadership, what aspects of the university culture would you like to see change?

1740 people saw this question and 958 responded with 1300 ideas. The most recurring theme, with 179 comments, centered around the relationships between levels of the organization and between individual units regarding respect, status differences, and civility. 163 people addressed funding issues including greater advocacy for state and private sources of funding; university procedures elicited 136 comments and interestingly 113 people observed that everything was OK as it was.

Samples responses include:

- As an adjunct who has recently transitioned to a more permanent position within the university, more work needs to be done to make adjuncts feel more a part of the university. If you rely heavily on adjuncts, you need to make sure they feel committed to the school and to the students. Headway is being made, more work remains to be done.
- More inclusion of members of the community from the satellite campuses in decision-making that impacts us specifically.
- Bridge the gap between faculty and administrative/professional and classified staff. We all contribute to the functionality of this university!
- More emphasis on civility- there's too much bullying that goes unchecked, either because of poor supervisors or bullies who face no consequences for their actions.
- Treat long term wage employees as valued employees.
- The University should fight harder to make sure that employees (Faculty, staff, and student workers all together) are compensated adequately for their work, and stop the notion that it is ok to pay 30 to 40% less than market value for work just because of a flexible atmosphere.
- ..I am concerned about a shift from scholarship and research to an emphasis on bringing money from external sources. Sometimes 'getting money' seems more important than the work that it might support.
- More fairness in budget distribution in various units.
- We need to operate more as a university and not just a bunch of colleges/schools co-located together. ...
- Opportunities for increased ... professional development for non-tenure-track faculty.
- More family-friendly; better day care facilities for children under the age of 2
- I would like for the Arlington Campus to be given the same opportunities and perks that the Fairfax campus is offered. More dining/seating areas, a gym, more training and free activities, shuttle to the main campus for staff activities

I would also like to see more of a campus intellectual culture. The university offers few opportunities for faculty members to exchange ideas, and few physical spaces for them to do so. There isn't even a good, central place for a grown-up lunch.

## Appendix B

### QUALITY OF WORK LIFE SURVEY CHART

Year	Response Rate	Total Population	Comments
2000	65.8%	600	First survey; paper survey
2003	35%	760	Sent to sample population; paper survey
2006	29%	5379	Sent to all employees*; web- based survey
2009	27.7%	5518	Sent to all employees*; web- based survey
<b>2012</b>	<b>31.7%</b>	<b>5988</b>	Sent to all employees*; web- based survey

\*all employees but student wage, GTA, GRA

# QUALITY OF WORK LIFE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

## **Chairs**

Linda Harber, Associate Vice President, Chief Human Resources Officer, Human Resources/Payroll

Corey Jackson, Vice President, Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics

## **Members**

Heather Aleknave, Office Manager, Office of Sponsored Programs

David S. Anderson, Professor, College of Education and Human Development / Director, Center for the Advancement of Public Health

Lou Buffardi, Associate Professor, Psychology

Don Gantz, Chair, Applied Information Technology, Volgenau School of Information Technology & Engineering

Molly Grove, Director, Campus Relations, Prince William Operations

Derek Kan, IT Project Manager, ITU Security & Project Management

Dennis Kisielewski, Information Services & Database Manager, University Information

Annamaria Nields, Assistant Dean, Academic Administration, School of Law

Stacey Remick-Simkins, Program Coordinator, English

Kerry Ross, Director of Benefits and Well Being, Human Resources/Payroll

Charlotte Strauss, Manager, Industry Advising & Employer Development

Janet Walker, Work Life Communications Coordinator, Human Resources/Payroll