

# Executive Summary

## Preliminary Results: Quality of Work Life (QWL) Survey 2012

### 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."

This year a total of 5,988 employees were contacted across seven job categories 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 for survey 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%

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 Basketball Tournament, 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. The assessment of all comments is still ongoing and will be included in the Final Report for the 2012 Quality of Work Life Survey.

Interestingly, the cultural themes referenced above also 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 Mason’s recognition has varied over the five years, it has received recognition each year for “Respect and Appreciation” and “Work-Life Balance.” In four of 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. Accomplishments**

The QWL survey process has been responsible 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.

<http://qwl.gmu.edu/accomplishments.html>

## **D. Next Steps**

Both preliminary and final results from the Quality of Work Life survey will be shared with the entire Mason community for further assessment and discussion. Analyses of data regarding the three components of the Diversity Climate will be reviewed by the Minority and Diversity Issues Committee of the Faculty Senate; these include a sense of inclusion and policies & procedures (separately at the organization and direct supervisor level).

The results will also be incorporated into the assessments underway within the Mission, Vision, Values and Mason Graduate Working Group as part of the President's strategic planning process.

Further, additional analysis of the data is underway including comparisons of results by:

- Campus
- Ethnicity and gender
- Age
- Employee type

Once the analysis is complete, the Task Force will assess the results and make recommendations for areas of concern and improvement.

A full report is expected in the spring of 2013.

November 2012

## 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, Assistant to the President/Director, Equity and Diversity Services

## **Members**

Rizna Ahmed, Director, Benefits, Wellness, and Work/Life, Human Resources/Payroll

Heather Aleknavage, 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, The Volgenau School of 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, Associate Dean for Administration and Student Affairs

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Mary Zamon, Associate Director, Institutional Assessment