G14 Survey Results: Final Report

In the spring of 2019, SMU faculty members, along with faculty from some of the other institutional members of the G14 (formerly known as the Colonial Group), participated in a survey intended to evaluate faculty attitudes toward their institutions. The survey covered a wide range of topics, including research, teaching, service, governance, quality of students, and work-life balance. There were 392 SMU faculty who completed all or part of the survey, which was approximately 50.3% of the SMU faculty. Of the faculty who completed the survey, 51.5% were tenured faculty at the university, 13.2% were tenure-track faculty, and 35.2% were non-tenure line faculty.

At the request of the SMU Faculty Senate, then-Provost Steve Currall and then-President of the Senate, Dayna Oscherwitz assembled a joint committee to review and analyze the survey responses, and to communicate the results to the SMU community. The members of this committee are as follows:

- Michael Braun (Associate Professor, Cox School of Business)
- Jaime Clark-Soles (Professor, Perkins School of Theology)
- James Coleman (Associate Professor, Dedman School of Law)
- Jennifer Dworak (Associate Professor, Lyle School of Engineering)
- Tom Fomby (Professor, Dedman College)
- Ed Fox (Professor, Cox School of Business)
- Akihito Kamata (Professor, Simmons School of Education and Human Development)
- Jill Kelly (Associate Professor, Dedman College)
- Derek Kompare (Associate Professor, Meadows School of the Arts)
- Fred Olness (Professor, Dedman College)
- Dayna Oscherwitz (2018-19 Faculty Senate President, currently Assistant Provost for General Education)
- Doug Reinelt (Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs)
- Tim Rosendale (2019-20 Faculty Senate President)
- Michael Tumeo (Director of Institutional Research)
- Paige Ware (Professor, Simmons School of Education and Human Development)

All analyses and summaries for this report were independently conducted and prepared by the faculty on the committee. The committee requested that the results should be presented to our colleagues in the most transparent way possible, while protecting individual respondents' privacy. To that end, an online web app (https://shinyviz.smu.edu/shiny/FacultySurvey2019/) was created that displays complete and uncensored numerical summaries of the raw survey data. This app lets the user view the actual number of responses for each answer to every question, along

with tabular and graphical summaries. For both the analysis in this report, as well as the data included in the web app, none of the data were removed or censored (other than specific instances described below to ensure that no individual identifying data could be extracted). This report is a high-level overview of the committee's interpretation of those results.

The report groups findings into four categories. First, we identified areas of overall satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Second, we classified results by issue or theme, clustering faculty responses to series of related questions, such as research, teaching, and governance. Third, we provided a comparison of aggregated responses by the SMU faculty and by those of faculty at other participating G14 institutions. Finally, we provide an analysis of the themes generated by the open-ended comments.

We offer a number of caveats in presenting these findings. Although the survey results provide an overview of the attitudes of approximately half of the SMU faculty in the spring of 2019, they do not allow us to discern underlying reasons, causes, or motivations behind these attitudes for any given issue. Also, the number of responses to a given question, at the level of school, rank, or demographic group, was in some instances quite low, so we are recommending against generalizing isolated responses to an entire entity or group of faculty, and would extend that recommendation to the institution as a whole. Finally, only seven schools in the G14, including SMU, participated in the survey, and not all institutions gave all questions to their faculty, although SMU did administer the full survey. Therefore, in some cases, it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons between attitudes of the SMU faculty and the faculty at other institutions.

Methodology

The survey was created by representatives of the seven G14 member universities, including SMU, that participated in the survey. The survey was administered to faculty at SMU (and the other institutions) from March 6, 2019 through April 5, 2019. All full-time faculty were invited to participate.

Response Rates

Of the 779 full-time faculty at SMU at the time the survey was conducted, 392 (50.3%) responded to at least one question on the survey. The committee suggests that this response rate is reasonably satisfactory and is sufficiently representative of the SMU faculty that the results are meaningful, when interpreted thoroughly. It must be noted, however, that not all respondents answered every question. The online data summary includes both the number of responses to each question, as well as the number of "blank" answers.

Summary data was computed from individual survey responses. Each completed survey is indexed by an encrypted key, so the identity of each respondent was

concealed. The only connection between survey responses and personally identifying information was through a merge with official demographic profiles using this encrypted key. Identifying information was not used in any other way, and the committee did not match responses to individuals.

Thematic Organization of Survey Questions

There are 251 discrete questions on the survey (exclusive of demographic questions), grouped into 58 clusters. These clusters, in turn, are grouped into 16 topics. A question is a single statement asking for a single response. A cluster is a group of related questions with a common structure, common answer choices, and, in most cases, a single introductory phrase. Clusters pertaining to a single "theme" are grouped together into a topic. A topic is a group of clusters relating to a common theme.

For example, the *Balance* topic contains five clusters related to impressions of work-life balance. One of these clusters asks the following question:

"Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:"

The three questions in this cluster are summarized as follows:

- SMU creates support structures to make personal/ family obligations and academic career obligations compatible.
- My department/unit is a place where individual faculty may comfortably raise personal and/or family responsibilities when scheduling department/unit obligations.
- Timing of work-related meetings and functions takes into account personal/family needs.

All questions in a cluster have the same set of possible responses. In this example, there are five possible answers, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

Demographics

Each respondent is associated with a demographic profile, consisting of values across different variables. We allow for the breakdown of responses along the demographic variables. These variables are the same ones asked in the survey, and with three exceptions, we maintained the self-identified characteristics as specified by the respondent. The exceptions are the COLLEGE, TENURED, and RANK variables, which were determined by matching the encrypted identifier to the university database. We decided to use official information for these variables so we could eliminate as many missing demographic values as possible. This is the only instance in which external data was merged with the survey data.

The levels of some demographic variables were sparsely represented, and others were not well defined. Therefore, we made some design decisions as a committee that either combined some demographic levels together or removed levels from results for certain questions. These decisions were needed to either preserve confidentiality of some answers, or to facilitate the ability to summarize the data. The groups and labels were made in good faith solely to simplify presentation of results. Nothing more should be read into how some levels were grouped to together, or the names the committee assigned to these groups.

Specifically, the ranks of Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Clinical/Technical Professor, Professor of Practice, and Instructor, as well as ranks modified by "visiting" or "in-residence," are grouped together as a single rank: Not Tenure Track. Responses for the six respondents (out of 27 total faculty) whose COLLEGE affiliation is Guildhall, Interdisciplinary, Other, or University, or the six respondents (out of 15) whose highest attained degree is "Bachelors," are not reported separately. The number of respondents in these groups was too small to preserve confidentiality, although their responses are included in results displayed by other demographic variables.

In all of our analysis, and in the web app, we limited the data breakdowns to a single variable at a time. Cross-tabulating across more than one dimension would lead to summaries computed from a very small number of responses, which would risk identifying answers from individual faculty members (i.e., there may be only one faculty member of a certain race or rank in a particular school). Before drawing inferences about individual responses, even when counts for a single dimension are small, one should note that only about half of the faculty completed the survey, and their identities are not known, even to the committee.

Overview of Areas of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

In general, faculty expressed some degree of satisfaction with their experience at SMU. For example, 81% of those who responded said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with being a faculty member at SMU. Similarly, 75% of faculty reported being generally satisfied with the experience of teaching at SMU and with the quality of the students at SMU. Faculty, in general, also seem satisfied with the level of institutional support for teaching.

Faculty, in general, also expressed some degree of satisfaction with shared governance in their departments. For example, 68% of those who responded said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with departmental leadership. Faculty also expressed a relatively high degree of satisfaction with their relationship with their departmental colleagues. Faculty also rated library staff and library facilities highly. Concerning libraries, 88% of faculty surveyed said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with

the library staff, and 82% of faculty surveyed expressed satisfaction with library facilities. Finally, tenure-line faculty who responded to the survey reported that they were satisfied that the standards for promotion and tenure at SMU are clear and clearly communicated.

There are several areas in which faculty expressed dissatisfaction. Although faculty expressed satisfaction with shared governance at the departmental level, they were less satisfied with shared governance at the school/college and university levels. Faculty reported dissatisfaction with the overall process of shared governance at the university, and specifically with communication between the administration and the faculty at SMU.

Faculty also expressed a high degree of dissatisfaction with how service responsibilities are assigned and rewarded. For example, faculty expressed concern about the lack of weight given to service in promotion cases and raises, and they expressed concerns that service is not distributed equitably. Faculty also expressed general dissatisfaction with the equity and fairness of overall workloads.

Although tenure-line faculty indicated the standards for promotion were clearly expressed, there was some dissatisfaction about the application of those standards. In some areas, there was a clear divergence of opinion between tenure-line and non-tenure line faculty. For example, higher levels of non-tenure line faculty felt that the standards for promotion were not clear and were dissatisfied with their salaries.

Some faculty indicated sufficient dissatisfaction such that 25% of the respondents indicated they were "somewhat" or "very likely" to consider leaving SMU. The top three reasons were seeking better professional opportunities (n=51); better fit (n=45); and better compensation (n=43).

Results by Category or Theme

Space constraints keep us from providing a complete analysis, so we encourage faculty to explore more detail by using the web app. Unless otherwise indicated, percentages refer to the faculty who responded to a particular question.

Shared Governance

Questions related to this topic were unique, in that the answer to one question determined whether subsequent questions were offered. An initial screening question asked, for example, "Are you aware of a shared governance system at SMU at any level?" Only 61% answered yes to this question, while 20% said they were unaware of a system of shared governance at the university, and 19% said they were unsure if such a system existed. Only those faculty who answered "yes" were given the remaining questions about shared governance, so the number of responses is lower for these questions than for the rest of the survey.

Of that group of 61% who answered "yes" to the question about shared governance, there appeared to be wide variance in attitudes, and many expressed dissatisfaction with at least one aspect of shared governance. Although 48% of the faculty who responded expressed satisfaction with their ability to provide feedback on institution-wide policies, 36% expressed dissatisfaction. Similarly, 47% of faculty who responded agreed that SMU has clear rules about the roles and authority of faculty and administrators, but 31% disagreed with this statement. Only 30% of the faculty who responded said they believe there exists an open system of communication between faculty and administrators, while 45% said they did not believe there was such a system of communication.

Attitudes toward shared governance as expressed in the survey varied across schools; in some cases, faculty within a school reported different experiences. Relative to SMU faculty overall, respondents from Dedman II and Perkins indicated shared governance in their schools was effective, while Cox, Lyle and Simmons indicated it was ineffective. However, it is important to note that averages can obscure variation in attitudes within a school. For example, although 46% of faculty in Cox thought shared governance was effective, another 46% thought it was ineffective. Interestingly, despite their dissatisfaction with shared governance at the school level, Lyle and Simmons faculty assessed shared governance at the university level more favorably.

Also, in all schools except Perkins and Lyle, more faculty disagreed than agreed that faculty and administrators have an open system of communication for making decisions. Many schools also had a substantial proportion of faculty who disagreed that governance structures offer sufficient opportunities to provide input on institution-wide policies.

University Service

In general, faculty seemed satisfied with the opportunities for service and with their ability to choose the service opportunities that are of interest to them. There were 64% of faculty who reported being satisfied with administrative and committee and assignments and 19% expressed dissatisfaction. However, these attitudes varied substantially by rank. For example, 24% of Associate Professors expressed dissatisfaction with their ability to choose the committees on which they serve, but only 6% of Full Professors expressed such dissatisfaction. Similarly, 46% of Associate Professors said they were dissatisfied with the equity of service distribution, whereas 32% of Full Professors expressed dissatisfaction.

Research

There were 49% of the faculty who expressed satisfaction with the conditions of research at SMU, and 36% expressed dissatisfaction. There were relatively high levels of dissatisfaction with funding, with the amount of time faculty are given for research, and with the quality of graduate assistants. In general, faculty expressed some stress about research. Overall, 41% indicated that they found research or creative productivity to be a significant source of stress.

Funding for research is one clear source of stress for SMU faculty. There were 32% of faculty who responded that securing funding to conduct research was a significant source of stress, and 36% of faculty expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of internal research support available at SMU. There were also 32% of faculty who reported dissatisfaction with both the level of support SMU provides for securing external grants and with the administration of grants once faculty receive them.

Faculty also expressed dissatisfaction with other types of research support offered by the institution. For example, 36% of faculty expressed dissatisfaction with the time available to conduct research, and 26% of faculty expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of research assistants on campus. It is worth noting that the levels of dissatisfaction were highest among the disciplines that rely on research assistants (i.e. STEM fields).

Another area of research support that faculty were asked about was the library support available on campus. There was a relatively high degree of satisfaction expressed by faculty about the library staff and facilities, including 82% of faculty who expressed satisfaction with the campus library spaces, 71% who expressed satisfaction with the print resources available through the SMU libraries, 77% who expressed satisfaction with the library's digital resources, and 88% of faculty who expressed satisfaction with SMU library staff. Another area of research support where satisfaction was relatively high was faculty satisfaction with academic computing support (70% of faculty expressed satisfaction with the computer resources available to them at SMU).

A key component of research productivity is the nature of the relationship faculty have with their colleagues. Faculty reported varying degrees of satisfaction with collegiality and collaborative opportunities. For example, 72% of faculty felt their colleagues valued their scholarly contributions, and 63% said they were satisfied with opportunities to collaborate with their departmental colleagues. There are indications, however, of faculty feeling "siloed," but the nature of this isolation varies by school. Overall, only 47% of faculty reported satisfaction with their ability to collaborate with colleagues who are within their own college/school but outside of their home department. At Cox, there was more satisfaction with interactions within the school, but high dissatisfaction for collaboration opportunities across other colleges/schools.

Teaching

Overall, faculty reported satisfaction with the support for and experience of teaching at SMU. In fact, many of the responses to the questions concerning teaching had the highest overall rates of satisfaction of any group of questions on the survey. For example, 84% expressed satisfaction with their teaching assignments, 75% expressed satisfaction with the resources available for teaching on campus, 71% expressed satisfaction with their individual teaching loads, and 72% expressed satisfaction with the quality of undergraduate students at SMU. Faculty were also satisfied with the support given for teaching at SMU: 56% expressed satisfaction with the institutional support for teaching and only 15% expressed dissatisfaction.

In terms of the perceived value and weight given to teaching at SMU, results were mixed. The percentage of faculty that felt teaching was appropriately valued in tenure and promotion cases was 57% and the percentage that felt it was somewhat or very undervalued was 33%. Results concerning institutional support for teaching were similarly fairly positive with 56% of faculty reporting satisfaction and only 13% of faculty expressed dissatisfaction.

The greatest areas of dissatisfaction relative to teaching had to do with resources and support. For example, 39% expressed dissatisfaction with access to teaching assistants and 21% expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of graduate students at SMU. One related question about teaching that registered relatively high areas of dissatisfaction was the question about compensation for teaching additional courses or courses in overload, with 30% indicating being dissatisfied at the level of compensation for courses taught in overload.

Despite the generally positive evaluations of teaching and support for teaching at SMU, faculty nevertheless reported relatively high degrees of stress related to teaching. Fifty-three percent of faculty who responded reported at least some level of stress that was related to teaching, and 27% of faculty reported that they spent half or more of their time working on teaching.

Climate and Support

Another area with high degrees of satisfaction were the questions that had to do with the overall climate, environment, and support at SMU. Eighty-one percent of faculty overall that reported satisfaction with working at SMU and 82% said they felt that SMU was a good place to work. There was also general satisfaction with faculty relationships with 74% reporting that they felt there was a climate of mutual respect among their colleagues, 72% reporting that they felt their research was valued by their colleagues, 81% reporting that their teaching was valued by their colleagues, and 72% reporting that their service and administrative contributions were valued by their colleagues. A majority of faculty (68%) also reported that they felt included in the informal networks

in their departments. It is worth noting, however, that this number is lower than the overall satisfaction rates in other areas of departmental climate.

Despite these generally high satisfaction ratings at the departmental level, however, there are some areas of concern relative to climate and support at the institutional level. Only 56% of faculty, a bare majority, expressed satisfaction with university leadership and the strategic direction of the university and only 46% of faculty expressed satisfaction with the level of faculty involvement in university decision-making. Moreover, while 61% of faculty report satisfaction with their compensation, only 47% of faculty report satisfaction with administrative stipends. The results also reveal a degree of faculty concern about equity in the workplace. For example, 39% of faculty stated that they believed that female faculty were treated as well as male faculty, whereas 41% of faculty said they did not believe that statement. Similarly, 32% of faculty reported that they believed that faculty from under-represented minority groups were treated as well as white colleagues, whereas 40% said they did not believe that was the case.

On many questions, perceptions vary across race and gender lines. Relative to female respondents, a higher percentage of men than women believe SMU offers good advancement opportunities, feel that criteria for promotion are fair and equitable for all, and have an appropriate voice in the decision-making that affects the direction of my department. A higher percentage of women than men believe that they have to work harder than some of their colleagues to be perceived as legitimate scholars. Although the number of Black/African American respondents is small, there was a significant percentage that disagreed with these statements: a) SMU is a good place to work (30%), b) I feel comfortable at SMU (30%), and c) my chair actively promotes an environment of mutual respect and support (44%).

Moreover, although many of the departmental climate questions reflected high degrees of satisfaction, there were other areas where satisfaction was lower. Only 47% of faculty reported that they believed their colleagues had a shared vision for their department and 35% of faculty reported that they had to work harder than their colleagues to be viewed as a scholar. In addition, only 43% of faculty indicated that they believed that workloads in their departments were distributed fairly and only 46% of faculty stated that they believed the criteria for promotion are fair and equitable for all.

Comparison of G14 Survey Results with Other Institutions

Seven institutions participated in the G14 Survey: SMU, Boston College, Brandeis, George Washington, Northeastern, Notre Dame, and Wake Forest. Most of the questions on the survey were asked at all institutions, but some institutions chose not to ask some questions. For many of the questions, the answers from SMU faculty were either very similar to the other institutions or in the middle of the range of percentages at the other institutions.

The percentage of time faculty spend on teaching, research, and service is similar at all the institutions that asked this question. The percentage of the faculty at the seven institutions that said their workload was "about right" ranged from 52% to 62% and the percentage that said their workload was "too heavy" ranged from 30% to 40% (not much variation between institutions). Fewer than 10% thought their workload was "much too heavy" and very few faculty members thought their workload was "too light" or "much too light." Approximately 40% to 50% of faculty at all institutions think their workload is "heavier" or "much heavier" than other faculty in their department, college or school. Very few faculty members indicate that their workload is "lighter" or "much lighter" than other faculty. Results are similar when faculty are asked to compare their workload with faculty at comparable universities.

In this section, we highlight a few areas where there was significant variation between institutions and indicate how SMU compares with these institutions:

Quality of Undergraduate Students. Compared to faculty at other institutions, SMU faculty had a lower opinion of the quality of undergraduate students. Only 24% of SMU faculty indicated that they were "very satisfied" with the quality of the undergraduate students and 47% were "somewhat satisfied." Among the other three institutions who asked this question, 59% were very satisfied and 30% were somewhat satisfied. The next closest school had 44% of faculty that were "very satisfied" and 43% that were "somewhat satisfied" with the quality of undergraduate students.

Compensation. In terms of faculty satisfaction with salary, SMU is in the middle of the seven institutions. Faculty satisfaction with retirement benefits and tuition remission for dependents is substantially stronger at SMU.

Library Resources. Faculty at three of the institutions are much more satisfied with print resources (56% to 65% at these institutions are very satisfied) than faculty at the other four institutions (30% to 35% are very satisfied). The percentages for digital/online are similar (63% to 70% are very satisfied at the three institutions and 30% to 46% at the other four). SMU is in the lower group (35% are very satisfied with print resources and 39% are very satisfied with digital/online). Satisfaction with library staff support is high at SMU with 64% being very satisfied, which is slightly higher than all but one of the institutions.

Facilities for Research and Scholarship. 5 universities asked this question – 14% and 26% of SMU faculty were "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with facilities for research and scholarship. Two other schools had a similar response, one was moderately higher, and one was much higher.

Grants. In terms of faculty satisfaction with institutional support for securing grants and managing grants, faculty at one institution had lower satisfaction than SMU, another one is close to SMU, and the other four institutions had higher satisfaction.

Opportunities to Collaborate. The survey included a series of questions about whether faculty members engaged in research or creative collaboration with faculty outside the department, outside the school, and outside the institution in the past 12 months (5 of 7 institutions asked these questions); and about satisfaction with opportunities to collaborate within the department, outside the department, outside the school, and outside the institution (4 of 7 institutions asked these questions). The percentage of SMU faculty who engage in research or creative collaboration or are satisfied with opportunities to collaborate tended to be at the lower end of the range of percentages at the other institutions. SMU faculty wish they had more opportunities to collaborate.

Faculty Mentors. The percentage of faculty at the seven schools that indicated that they had no formal mentor ranged from 58% to 79% at the seven universities that took the survey. The percentage of faculty that indicated that they had no informal mentor from within and/or outside the university ranged from 27% to 34%. At 70%, SMU had the highest percentage on both questions. Among faculty who did receive mentoring, satisfaction with this mentoring was comparable to the other universities. The weakest area at SMU as compared to the other universities was understanding the promotion process.

Stress. The level of stress experienced by faculty at SMU as reported is similar to the stress experienced at the other institutions. Three areas in which SMU faculty experience less stress is the number of meetings they are expected to attend, managing a research group or grant, and balancing work and home life responsibilities.

Qualitative Analysis of Open-Ended Comments

To analyze the open-ended comments from the survey, we imported all comments into the qualitative data analysis software, NVIVO. 100 out of 392 faculty who participated in the survey provided comments. We grouped the distribution of comments into 5 categories based on the overarching question of their overall satisfaction with SMU. The comments were distributed in the following ways, with the majority of comments coming from faculty who indicated they were either *very satisfied* or *somewhat satisfied*. Few faculty who indicated they were *somewhat dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied* provided written response to open-ended items: Very Satisfied (n=22); Somewhat Satisfied (n=50); Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (n=3); Somewhat Dissatisfied (n=18); and Very Dissatisfied (n=7).

We then conducted coded all comments from the 100 respondents and found that 20 distinct topics emerged. We grouped the comments into these 20 topics and counted the frequency with which comments on that topic were made. The total number of comments adds up to over 100 because the faculty who made comments provided more than 1 comment each. Ten of the topics were mentioned only fewer than 5 times. The 10 topics that received the most comments, however, are as follows:

Concerns:

- 8 comments about diversity
- 8 comments about workload inequities
- 11 comments about limited voice in faculty governance
- 13 comments about values alignment
- 15 comments about morale
- 17 comments about climate for non-tenure line faculty
- 20 comments about administration at the department/School/university level
- 23 comments about low salaries

Other:

- 16 comments about suggestions for areas for growth and improvement
- 17 comments about positive experiences at SMU

Concluding Comments

As a step in the process of generating this report, a representative from the Working Group provided initial findings to the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate on September 25, 2019, and offered to present at the full Faculty Senate to request input on which types of questions, from either the qualitative responses or the scaled survey items, they would like the group to ask of the data set. The Executive Committee offered suggestions for the G14 Survey Committee, including questions about variations by School/College/unit or by rank, by years of employment at SMU, or by gender or race. To help answer these questions, the app was refined to accompany this report, such that faculty can access the raw data (without drilling down into individually identifiable responses) to run queries that help provide the level of detail to such specific areas of interest.

The Committee suggests that this report is an overview of the results that can offer a basis for understanding general attitudes of the faculty at SMU in the spring of 2019 and also can suggest a number of areas of potential satisfaction as well as concern. In light of many factors that have shifted since then, including changes in leadership, the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19, and our renewed commitment at SMU to equity and access, we encourage faculty to engage with the app and explore hypotheses that are generated by each of our own, and our colleagues', unique experiences with—and knowledge of—the university and our respective areas.

Ultimately, the G14 survey is but one snapshot in time that can and should be aligned with local knowledge, new and ongoing information gathering, and actionable decision-making.