

TRANSFORMATIONS

APRIL 2009

2008 FACULTY WORK-LIFE SURVEY

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FACULTY WORK-LIFE SURVEY COMPARISONS: 2005 VS. 2008

This issue of *Transformations* will deal exclusively with the results of the 2008 Faculty Work-Life survey employed by AdvanceVT in September of 2008. We will compare/contrast these results with those of the 2005 survey. Future issues will address:

- Respondent familiarity with the AdvanceVT initiative and the implications of this data;
- Breakdowns of differences in response by gender and race; and
- The qualitative data elicited by the survey and how it compares to the quantitative data and the literature on work-life issues.



Stay tuned!

SURVEY COMPARISONS: 2005 VS. 2008

In fall 2008, AdvanceVT conducted its second Faculty Work-Life Survey, a follow up to an initial survey in spring 2005. The purpose of both surveys was to assess faculty perceptions of their overall job satisfaction and of various attributes of the work environment at Virginia Tech. A link to the on-line survey was sent via email to all full-time instructional and research faculty at Virginia Tech, with several follow-up reminders sent over the course of a few weeks. A total of 700 tenured and tenure-track faculty responded to the survey, representing a response rate of 53%. In 2005, 810 tenured and tenure-track faculty members responded to the survey for a response rate of 59%. Preliminary findings were presented at the January 12, 2009 conference co-sponsored by AdvanceVT. These findings can be found at www.advance.vt.edu.

Key Conclusions

- Job satisfaction and diversity showed significant positive increases between the 2005 and the 2008 surveys.
- Women, African-Americans and Hispanics generally have less positive views than men and Caucasian faculty.
- Women and African-Americans showed improved perceptions of diversity from 2005 to 2008.

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SURVEY COMPARISONS: 2005 VS. 2008

Most questions in the survey were answered on a 4-point scale where:

1=strongly disagree, 2=somewhat disagree, 3=somewhat agree, and 4=strongly agree. Some questions were “reverse written” such that lower ratings are desirable (as opposed to higher ratings); these questions were reverse-coded prior to analysis so that for all items and all scales, higher values are desirable. Mean responses higher than 3.0 reflect positive perceptions (“somewhat agree” and “strongly agree”).

Within the Faculty Work-Life Survey, groups of questions are combined to form “scales” representing constructs of interest regarding faculty work-life. Scales are used in order to create more valid and reliable measures of topics of interest compared to using single questions. All scales demonstrated acceptable internal consistency reliability as measured by Cronbach’s alpha (i.e., greater than 0.70), which measures the correspondence in responses across the questions in a scale.



Diversity: This scale measured respondent perceptions about equity and fair treatment regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. Sample items included (out of 9 questions):

- *In general, the Virginia Tech campus is free of intimidation, harassment, and discrimination.*
- *I have read, heard and/or seen insensitive or disparaging comments or materials in the workplace that were offensive to me.*

Departmental Climate: This scale measured perceptions of relationships in the work environment. Sample items included (out of 10 questions):

- *I am treated with respect by other faculty members in my department.*
- *My department at Virginia Tech is a good place to work.*

Job Satisfaction: This scale measured faculty satisfaction with employment at Virginia Tech. Items included (out of 3 questions):

- *Virginia Tech is a good place to work.*
- *Please indicate your satisfaction with each aspect of your job at Virginia Tech: Your job at VT overall.*

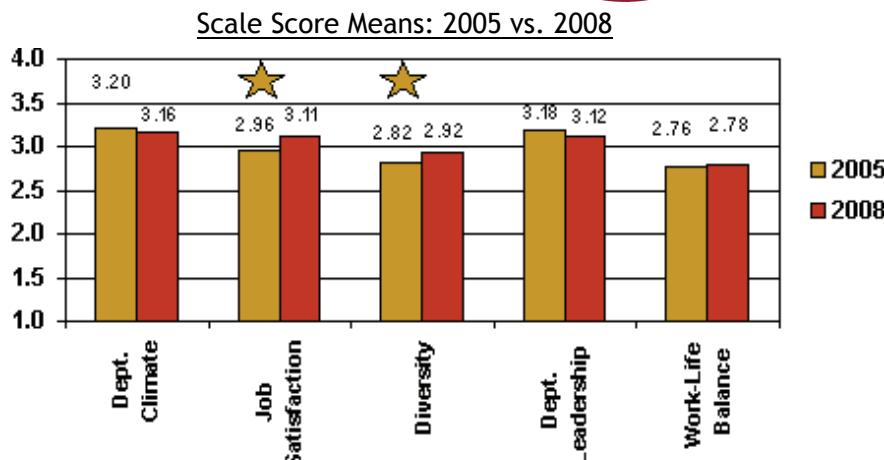
Departmental Leadership: This scale attempts to ascertain perceptions regarding the trustworthiness, knowledgeableness, and management effectiveness of leaders at the departmental level. Items included (out of 8 questions):

- *The leadership of my department can be trusted.*
- *Overall, my department is well managed.*

Work-Life Balance: The items in this scale were designed to collect data on faculty perceptions of the balance between work and personal life at the university. Items included (out of 12 questions):

- *It is difficult to have a personal life and be promoted or earn tenure at Virginia Tech.*
- *Faculty in my department respect the roles and responsibilities I have outside work.*

KEY FINDINGS: 2005 VS. 2008



Indicates statistically significant difference between 2005 and 2008 responses

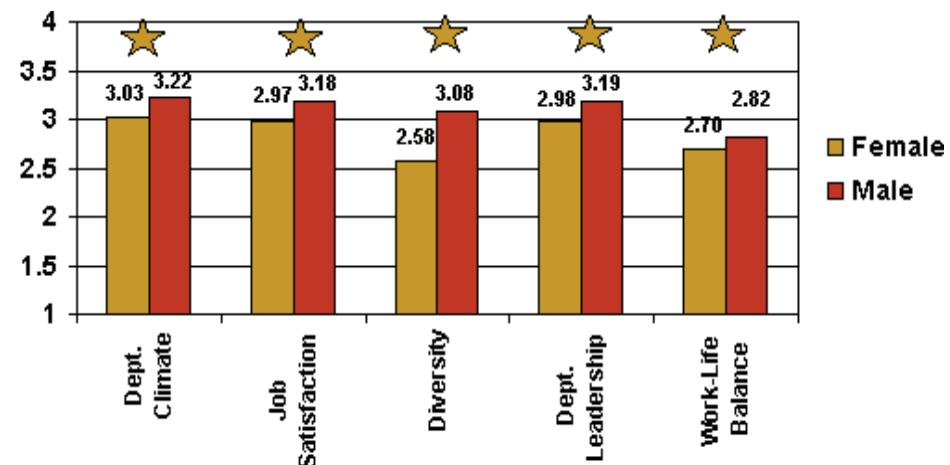
The means displayed are the average response on the scales shown above (cumulative for each item in a scale). Thus the average response for all of the questions on the climate scale in 2008 was 3.20 indicating a high level of agreement with positive statements. The slight change in climate perceptions does not, however, indicate a decrease in climate perception at the university from 2005 to 2008.

In the case of job satisfaction and diversity, there were small and statistically significant differences between the 2005 and 2008 scale means on the two sets of items. It is also important to note that the means for the work-life scale remain low despite the ongoing efforts by AdvanceVT and the university to positively impact faculty work-life though policy change and awareness.

The means on the work-life scale were lower than for any of the other scales, both in 2005 and 2008. Means below 3.0 indicate that the majority of respondents did not agree with the items in the scale. Despite multiple AdvanceVT initiatives related to work-life issues, including the creation of a Dual-Career Office in 2005 and advances in the options for university-supported child care, results indicate that work-life issues continue to represent a major challenge for many faculty members.

2008 Differences by Gender

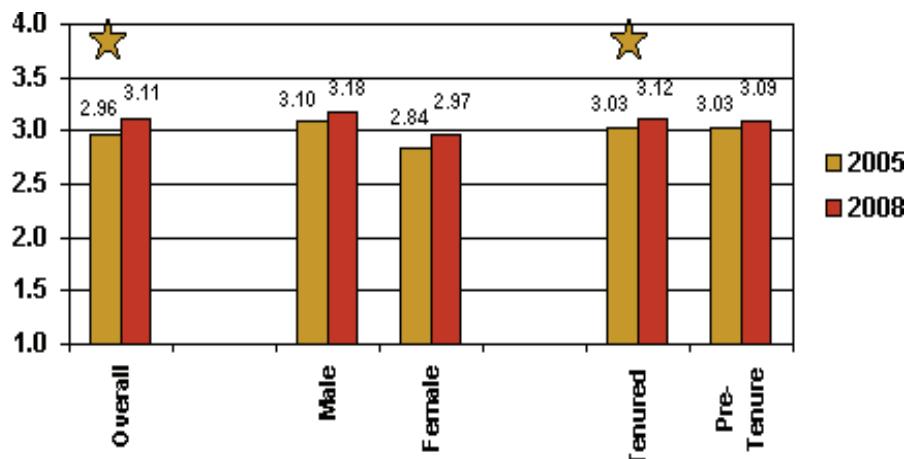
This graph underscores one of our key findings—that men and women varied significantly on their average responses to the scales. In all cases, male faculty members displayed more positive attitudes by scale.



Indicates statistically significant difference between male and female responses

KEY FINDINGS: 2005 VS. 2008

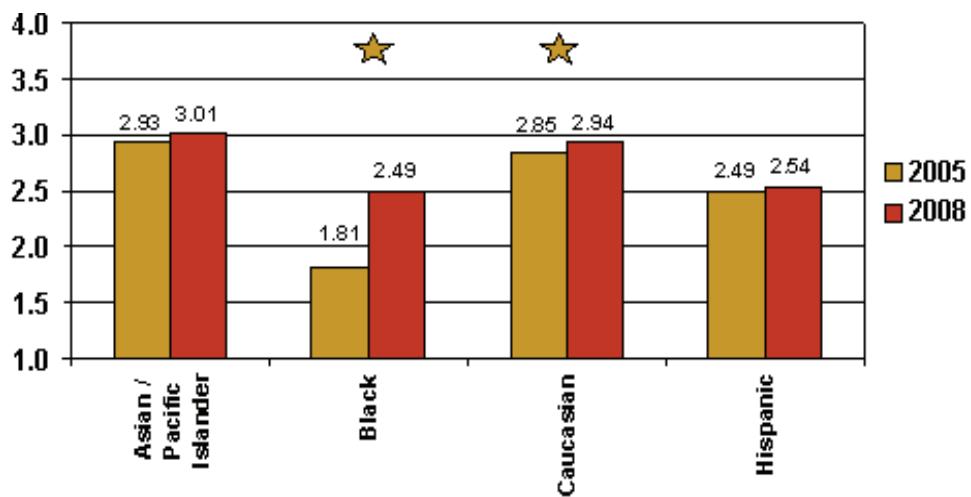
Job Satisfaction: 2005 vs. 2008



Indicates statistically significant difference between 2005 and 2008 responses

The responses received for the job satisfaction scale indicate a significant difference in overall job satisfaction from 2005 to 2008, particularly among tenured faculty. Female faculty, however, continue to demonstrate a lower overall job satisfaction than male faculty at the institution.

Diversity: 2005 vs. 2008



Indicates statistically significant difference between 2005 and 2008 responses

For the diversity scale, we see a significant difference in responses indicating an overall increase in positive perception of diversity at Virginia Tech, among Black and Caucasian faculty members. The vast difference in perception between Caucasian faculty and Black and Hispanic faculty demonstrates that efforts to impact diversity at the university need evaluation and investment if perceptions are to continue to improve.

Only small changes can be expected on this kind of climate survey. Some of the changes, such as the more positive views about diversity are probably related to other university initiatives, like the Task Force on Race and the Institution. AdvanceVT related activities that create awareness around faculty concerns such as work-life balance and dual career hiring will be sustained by the university after the end of National Science Foundation funding in 2009.

AdvanceVT is a comprehensive program to promote and enhance the careers of women in academic science and engineering at Virginia Tech through institutional transformation. Elements of AdvanceVT include:

Pipeline: Advancing Women into Faculty Careers

Recruitment: Increasing the Representation of Women

Leadership: Empowering Women as Leaders and Scholars

Institutional Change: Updating Policies and Changing Culture

Go to www.advance.vt.edu to learn more about the initiative.