



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY,
AND VETERINARY MEDICINE

MID-CAREER FACULTY SUCCESS PROJECT

FINAL REPORT, 2024

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Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine: Mid-Career Faculty Success Project Report Executive Summary

The Office of the Vice President, Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine (DAFVM) at Mississippi State University, initiated a project in summer 2022 to improve the leadership's understanding of faculty success in the Division. Special consideration was given to mid-career faculty because matriculation through the critical transition phase from associate to full professor has significant relevance to unit productivity, stability, and finances.

A multi-stage approach to gain insight into influential factors related to mid-career faculty success was implemented: (1) interviews with DAFVM Deans, Directors, and Research and Extension Center Heads; (2) interviews with DAFVM Department Heads; (3) focus group discussions with select DAFVM faculty; (4) a Division-wide online faculty survey; (5) exploration of peer institutions' faculty-related programs, and (6) review of recommendations from relevant MSU Taskforces and the MSU 2022 Rankin Climate Survey. Outcomes indicate DAFVM mid-career faculty are less confident in their position than DAFVM Assistant or full Professors, and, therefore, they are interested in opportunities they perceive will improve their success and future promotion and their sense of value to the institution. A variety of support options were identified that can be considered for implementation on behalf of Division faculty.



Project activities were coordinated by Ashli Brown, Associate Vice President, DAFVM, in collaboration with Leslie Burger, Associate Teaching Professor (Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture) and DAFVM Intern. This report was authored by L. Burger.

Rationale

Mid-career faculty are those who have achieved tenure and/or promotion (P&T) from Assistant to Associate Professor. Having met P&T criteria, faculty performance after this point can follow one of several general trajectories: (1) continued upward movement in productivity (e.g., scholarship metrics) and engagement (e.g., instructional metrics, service/leadership); (2) continued success but at a more steady state of productivity and engagement; (3) reduced success and engagement from that which occurred at the point of their tenure/promotion; or exit from MSU to another career opportunity (Figure 1).

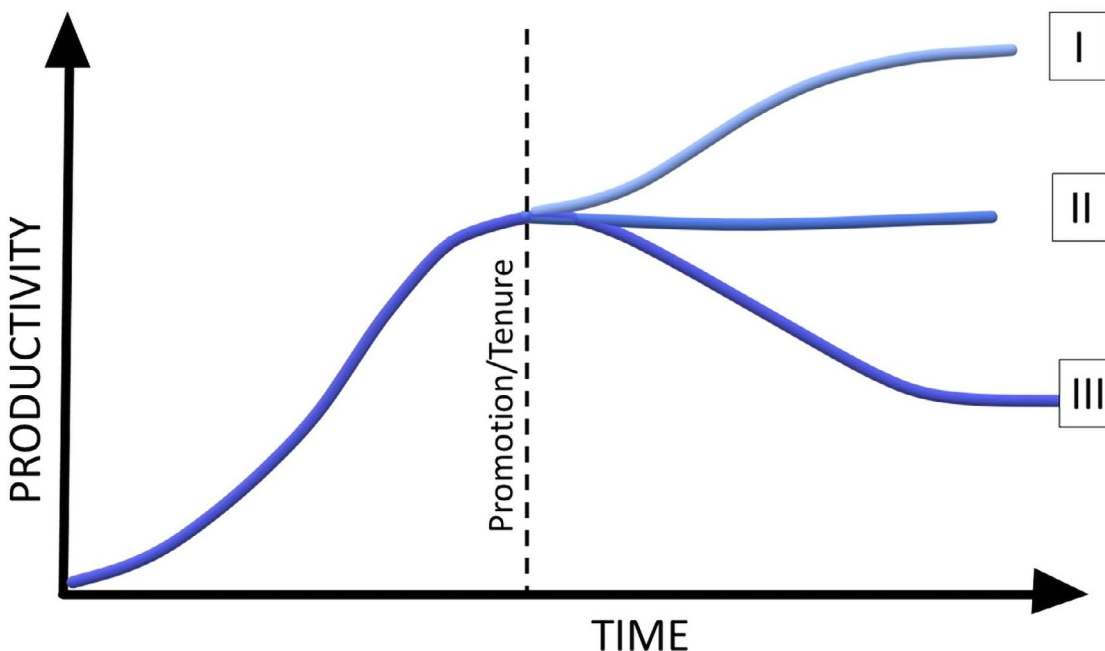


Figure 1. Hypothetical trajectories of faculty through the ranks over time.

Challenges faced by Associate Professors include exhaustion and doubt (Wilson 2012), depression (Blanchard 2012), job dissatisfaction (Mathews 2014), and gendered attrition due to stress (Spoon et al., 2023) and bullying (Tauber and Mahmoudi 2022). Matthews (2014) outlined contributing stressors associated with the mid-career stage, including increased teaching loads once tenure has been granted, increased service expectations associated with higher ranks, growing research programs, phased out early-career support programs, work-life fatigue, and recruitment by industry. Loss of Associate Professors from the institution can be financially costly (Schloss et al. 2009) and impact student retention and performance (Dwyer 2017), suggesting retention is important to university function and economics.

To assess the degree to which these factors may be impacting mid-career DAVFM faculty, an administrative intern was hired and tasked with determining the situation in the unit. This report addresses project methods and findings, as well as proposes potential solutions to identified issues.

Methods

This project used a methodology based upon grounded theory (Dunne 2011, Tie et al. 2019), an inductive approach to research where theories are derived from an iterative data collection and analysis process. This method is valuable when existing theories are absent or when data used in derivation of a theory were not collected from a desired research target; the latter situation is the reason for the use of this method in this project. Starting with initial suppositions from published literature and anecdotal information, a pool of questions was formulated and used as the basis of interviews with DAVFM upper administration. Outcomes from those discussions informed development of discussion topics for the Division's Department Heads which, in turn, influenced questions used in faculty focus group conversations and a subsequent online survey of DAFVM faculty (Figure 2).

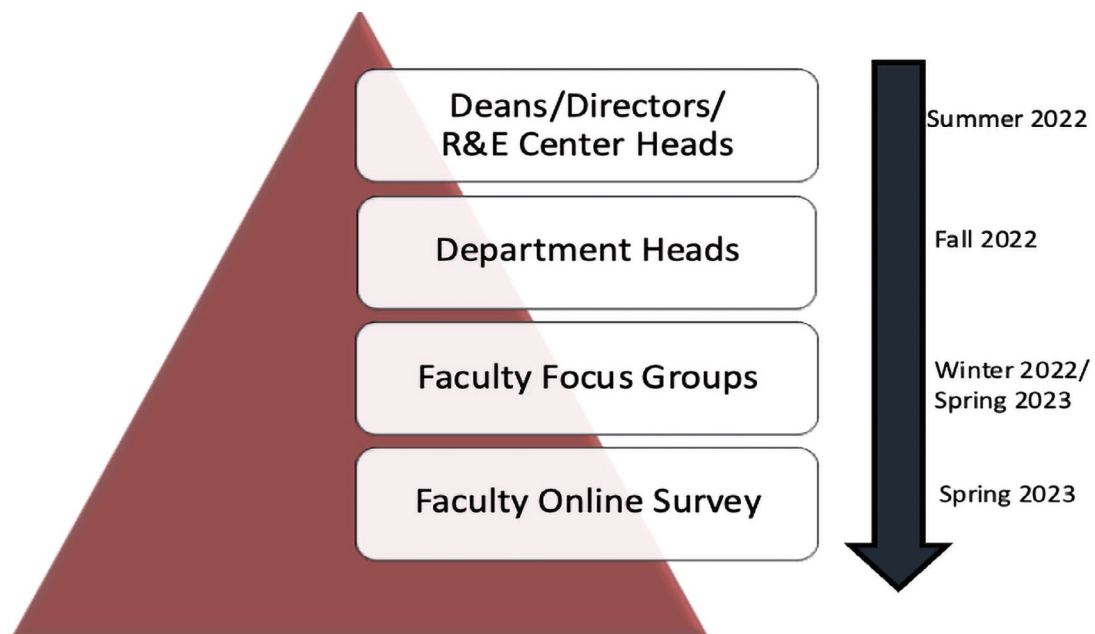


Figure 2: Model and timeline of the phased approach used for project data collection.

Administrator Interviews

DAFVM Deans, Research & Extension Center Directors, Extension Director, and Associate Extension Directors were recruited in Summer 2022 to participate individually in guided discussions with Ashli Brown, Associate Vice President, DAFVM, and Leslie Burger, DAFVM Intern and Associate Professor. A set of 13 guiding questions (Appendix A) were used as the foundation for one-hour individual meetings held in the DAFVM administrative suite on the MSU campus. Discussions were led by A. Brown, and L. Burger recorded feedback through written notes.

The same approach was taken with DAFVM Department Heads in Fall 2022 through Spring 2023. Fifteen questions (Appendix B) were developed, although there were cases when some questions were not addressed in individual sessions because of time restrictions. Responses from notes taken during the discussions were assessed to identify emerging themes and patterns.

Faculty Focus Groups

Information gleaned from administrator interviews and published research informed the discussion questions (n=14, Appendix C) designed to garner DAFVM faculty members' perspectives on job expectations and satisfaction, professional development, and other productivity- and retention-related issues. Faculty were recruited from a list of "successful

faculty” (n=62; 63% Associate Professors, 11% Assistant Professors, 26% Professors) generated from recommendations made by Deans, Directors, and Department Heads during their interviews. Focus group nominees were invited through email sent by L. Burger on behalf of the DAFVM Office of the Vice President. Individuals were able to choose a focus group session (by faculty rank) that fit their schedule from a suite of options made available through an online registration system (www.signupgenius.com). Group size was restricted to four to facilitate discussion. Additionally, to reduce the potential of inhibited responses caused by the presence of an associate vice president, A. Brown was not present; L. Burger managed the discussions and note-taking. Focus group meetings were held in the DAFVM administrative suite with some off-campus faculty participating via videoconference.

Faculty Online Survey

Outcomes of in-person information-gathering sessions guided composition of an online survey (23 questions; Appendix D) administered via Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com) and distributed to all in DAFVM with a faculty appointment. The survey was designed to end early in the process if respondents were not employed in a faculty position or did not have a professorial title (e.g., those faculty with Instructor title). The anonymous survey was estimated to take five minutes to complete, and it was available for three weeks in April 2023. A reminder to complete the survey was sent two weeks from initial distribution by the DAFVM Vice President to improve response rate.

Data were exported to Microsoft Excel and edited after survey closure to remove incomplete surveys (five or more questions left unanswered) and responses from administrators with faculty titles or faculty in non-permanent positions. Data analysis was conducted in IBM SPSS® (Version 29.0.1.0).

University Task Forces and Rankin Climate Survey

During 2020-2022, MSU’s Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President formed 19 task forces charged with exploring a diversity of topics relevant to the university’s effectiveness in its research, teaching, and outreach missions. A number of these Task Forces had potential relevance to the objectives this mid-career faculty success project, including the (1) Clinical/Instructional Faculty Task Force, (2) Evaluation of Teaching Task Force, (3) Faculty Development Task Force, (4) Faculty Performance Evaluation Task Force, (5) Online Education Task Force, (6) Outreach Task Force, and (7) Student Success Task Force. Final reports from these efforts were reviewed to identify task force recommendations that aligned with this project’s findings.

MSU contracted with Rankin Climate, LLC in 2021 to conduct a university-wide survey to assess faculty, staff, and student experiences and perceptions about the work and academic environment. A 19-member Climate Study Working Group comprised of MSU faculty, staff and administrators worked with Rankin Climate to select survey items from Rankin Climate’s question bank; these were used in 16 focus groups conducted in 2022. An online survey containing multiple-choice survey items and open-ended questions was deployed campus wide.

Findings

Upper Administrator Interview Results

DAFVM leaders interviewed in this project were (in alphabetical order): Wes Burger, Dean, College of Forest Resources; Angus Catchot, Associate Director, Extension; Jeffrey Gore, Interim Head, Delta Research and Extension Center; James Henderson, Head, Coastal Research and Extension Center; Kent Hoblet, Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine; Gary Jackson, Director, Extension; Jane Parish, Head, North Mississippi Research and Extension

Center; Sherry Surette, Head, Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center; and Scott Willard, Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. (Note: Current DAFVM leadership composition is different than what is reflected here because of retirements and position changes that have occurred since this project element was completed.) Key outcomes from these interviews follow.

Successful faculty were defined by the Deans/Directors as being happy in their job, passionate about their work, self-motivated and possessing a sense of purpose, team-players and yet independent, resourceful and flexible, recognized for their work, and achieving ("exceeding" was stated once) their unit's performance criteria for their appointment.

Based upon exit interviews conducted by these leaders, DAFVM mid-career faculty leave MSU for family or related personal matters and new positions in academia or industry that provide higher salaries, more support (e.g., infrastructure, resources, personnel), new experiences, new work environment or colleagues, and/or different job expectations.

- Loss of faculty for these latter reasons are predicted by the Deans/Directors to become increasingly more common with the incoming generation of faculty who appear to be less motivated by loyalty or obligation to the institution that hired them than those of previous generations.
- Mid-career faculty become disenfranchised by policies and regulations, normalized salaries, unclear or conflicting expectations, and professional isolation (off-campus workstations, discipline "silos", appointment type) which can cause them to stagnate professionally or to vacate their position.

Division leadership saw Department Heads as pivotal in faculty retention and faculty support. They help set departmental culture and are responsible for conducting annual evaluations which are seen by Deans and Directors as a dedicated time for discussions about faculty needs, aspirations, goals (e.g., career-mapping), and expectations. They identified mid-career as a time to reexamine appointments to match faculty interests and strengths as well as departmental needs. This requires Department Heads be familiar enough with their individual faculty to provide targeted support, particularly with those who are less likely to advocate for themselves, but this may not be occurring regularly. There was recognition that not all Department Heads are adequately equipped to support mid-career faculty, and additional training is likely warranted.

Pivotal moments identified by these interview participants as keys to their own success include investments in career development by their mentors, professional training in leadership (e.g., Lead 21 and Food Systems Leadership Institute (FSLI)), and new professional opportunities that led to skill development and strengthened CV's and a sense of being valued.

Lastly, these leadership noted there is strong emphasis placed on equipping Assistant Professors on program and academic development but support for resourcing Associate Professors on program and academic sustainability is lacking beyond that which exists for developing their leadership skills.

Department Head Interview Results

Participants in one-on-one Department Head conversations included (in alphabetical order) Sadik Artunc, Landscape Architecture; Jeff Dean, Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology, and Plant Pathology; Darrin Dodd, Plant and Soil Sciences; Bill Epperson, Pathology and Population Medicine; Don Grebner, Forestry; Andy Kouba, Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture; Andrew Mackin, Clinical Medicine; Michael Newman, Human Sciences; Wes Schilling (interim), Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion; Rubin Shmulsky, Sustainable Bioproducts; and Alex Thomasson, Agricultural and Biological Engineering. (Note:

The current leadership composition is different than what is reflected here because of retirements and position changes that have occurred since this project aspect was completed.) Key outcomes from these interviews follow.

DAFVM Department Heads varied in their definition of faculty success; however, all included productivity metrics related to scholarship, e.g., total publications and awarded funds, faculty role on awards and publications (e.g., PI vs co-PI), and number of graduate students. Although this element was the primary metric of success for some Department Heads, others identified additional criteria, such as research quality (acknowledging this can be difficult to assess), performance in all appointment areas (“a well-rounded portfolio”), productivity over time, collegiality and team-orientation, performance level in their primary area of appointment, engagement in service and departmental activities (e.g., attendance at seminars and functions), participation in professional organizations, respect of colleagues and peers, and satisfaction with professional and personal lives. No department head included education-related outcomes such as instructional effectiveness or student success in their characteristics of faculty success.



Terms used by Department Heads to describe characteristics of successful faculty were hard workers; open to new ideas and opportunities; collaborators; collegial (e.g., “use ‘we’ language rather than ‘I’ language”); capable of balancing faculty appointments; and able to manage the work-life relationship.

Department Heads uniformly reported job expectations for mid-career faculty are communicated during annual evaluations though conversations about performance and progress toward full professor. Some Department Heads mentioned intentionally seeking feedback on job satisfaction during these meetings so adjustments (including the potential for appointment modification) or interventions could be considered. One Department Head mentioned keeping a running list of faculty development items (e.g., feedback from Advisory Boards or student evaluations) to share with faculty during regularly scheduled faculty meetings to help guide all toward self-improvement and promotion. Several noted they routinely walk the halls, visit faculty offices, or go to lunch as a way of “connecting and communicating” and providing informal assistance.

Division leadership saw its Department Heads as pivotal in faculty retention and faculty support.

Department Heads identified a diversity of roles they play in faculty success and retention. It was noted it begins by hiring properly, especially in recognizing teaching as a part of most appointments and, therefore, a consideration when evaluating potential candidates. At the mid-career stage, some Department Heads use the option for adjusting appointments to meet faculty interests (which addresses retention issues) while keeping in mind departmental needs. Mid-career faculty support activities employed by these leaders includes coaching by clearly communicating expectations, being transparent about decisions, securing resources, managing loads (e.g., teaching breaks to focus on research), encouraging and supporting professional development opportunities (including sabbatical), and nominating faculty for awards and recognition. One Department

Head noted the unique needs of off-campus faculty (e.g., limited access to graduate students or close collaborators) who can require more specialized support in guiding them toward promotion to full professor. Another noted mid-career faculty should be encouraged to emphasize work that is in support of the Department, MSU, or their discipline rather than in support of themselves as a means of engendering a sense of purpose.

Department Heads were asked about reasons for mid-career faculty loss, besides family-related causes (e.g., moving closer to parents, spouses/partners dissatisfied with the MSU community), as a means of determining potential mechanisms for retention. They indicated faculty leave for industry because of the perception or reality of more research support, higher salary, and/or more traditional work hours. They noted the appeal of hard-funded associates and infrastructure (e.g., newer tractors, functional or unique lab equipment to allow for response to RFPs, etc.) at other universities or industry. Heavy teaching loads in smaller departments make it more difficult to meet research and/or publication expectations for promotion and to achieve larger grants; therefore, moving to another institution may be seen as a way to better meet professional goals. Faculty are also lost to other universities when they take administrative positions not available to them at MSU.

To combat the loss of mid-career faculty, DAFVM Department Heads identified assorted options. One noted the need for Department Heads to spend time regularly listening to faculty so there is the opportunity to identify dissatisfaction issues before they become a retention issue. Another mentioned the value of realigning appointments of associate professors to enable them to develop interests and capabilities identified when Assistant Professors. Enabling people to work within their areas of enjoyment and success was suggested by another Department Head as a means of keeping mid-career faculty engaged and productive. It was noted that adjusting appointments for faculty requires securing the approval of a dean and as many as three directors, a situation that means faculty may not be granted the change they seek. Promoting sabbaticals for associate professors was mentioned several times as an existing mechanism that could be better used to reenergize mid-career faculty for the next phase of their career. Several indicated opportunities for leadership or professional development could be expanded for mid-career faculty to help them feel valued and productive as could allocating additional funds for research support (e.g., equipment and staff). Another Department Head mentioned a need for incorporating additional measures of success beyond traditional research metrics (numbers of publications or grant funding), e.g., impact or outcomes of collaborations, particularly for those in smaller departments, at field stations, or in more narrow disciplines where opportunities for research funds are more limited.

Department Heads participate in administrators' training when early in their role; however, those interviewed in this project agreed additional training would be beneficial. Numerous topic areas were suggested, and those mentioned at least twice are listed below.

Department Head Training Topics

Personnel Management

- Engaging, supporting, and connecting with off-campus faculty.
- Handling and managing discrimination, harassment, and related topics regarding employees and students.
- Managing workloads and performance (e.g., one who is performing poorly is removed from a responsibility and that responsibility is then shifted to one who will handle it well, effectively rewarding the poor performer with less work and penalizing the excellent performer with more work).
- Recognizing achievement, e.g., solid performers can be overlooked if they are not drawing attention through self-promoting and excessive requests/demands.

- Managing diverse faculty (e.g., those with person-care responsibilities, minority status, international cultures, etc.).
- Conflict resolution and management.

Managing departmental needs when faculty are away for sabbatical, leadership or military details, extended personal leave, and similar.

Fostering positive departmental culture (including the relative role of a P&T committee).

Tools for strategic decision-making.

Effective communication.

A review of “basics” after 5 years of service–Budgeting, Audit, SPA, etc., including the option for development of a reference manual.

Department Head mentoring and networking internally and across campus

- Support for participation in national training programs like FSLI to promote broader perspectives and connections.

University administration, structure, and function, the relationship of units to one another, and their relevant roles.

- Connecting with Provost, Dean of Students, ORED, etc.
- Student success programs and similar.

Grants, Contracts and Budgets

- F&A and related (e.g., “Why don’t subcontracts include overhead?”)
- Lapsed salary.
- Strategic use of fund sources, e.g., altering faculty appointments.
- A dashboard for Department Heads to track funds, publications, and other performance metrics.

Faculty Focus Groups and Qualtrics Survey Results

Thirty-nine Associated Professors were recommended for faculty focus group discussions by DAFVM Deans/Directors and Department Heads; of these, 26 (67% response rate) participated in the seven, small group (2-4 individuals) meetings held in March 2023.

Thirteen DAFVM units were represented, including Agricultural and Biological Engineering; Agricultural Economics; Animal and Dairy Sciences; Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology, and Plant Pathology; Comparative Biomedical Sciences; Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion; Forestry; Human Sciences; Landscape Architecture; Plant and Soil Science; Poultry Science; Sustainable Bioproducts; and Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture. MSU Extension was represented by faculty (n=6) with split or full Extension appointments embedded with DAFVM departments. Eleven percent were located off-campus. Only one CVM faculty member elected to participate.

A total of 209 people participated in the Qualtrics online survey used in this project, and 136 valid responses were included in the analysis. Faculty ranks were fairly equally represented in the response data (Figure 3), and all DAFVM departments had faculty participants in the survey (Figure 4).

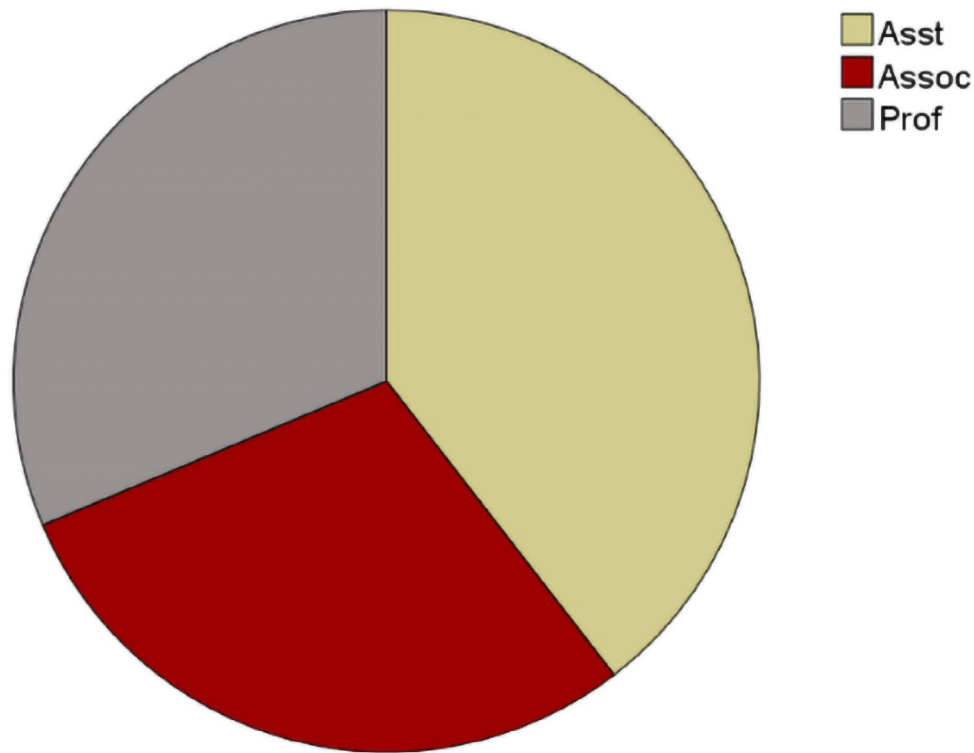


Figure 3. Distribution of valid Qualtrics survey responses from DAFVM faculty among ranks.

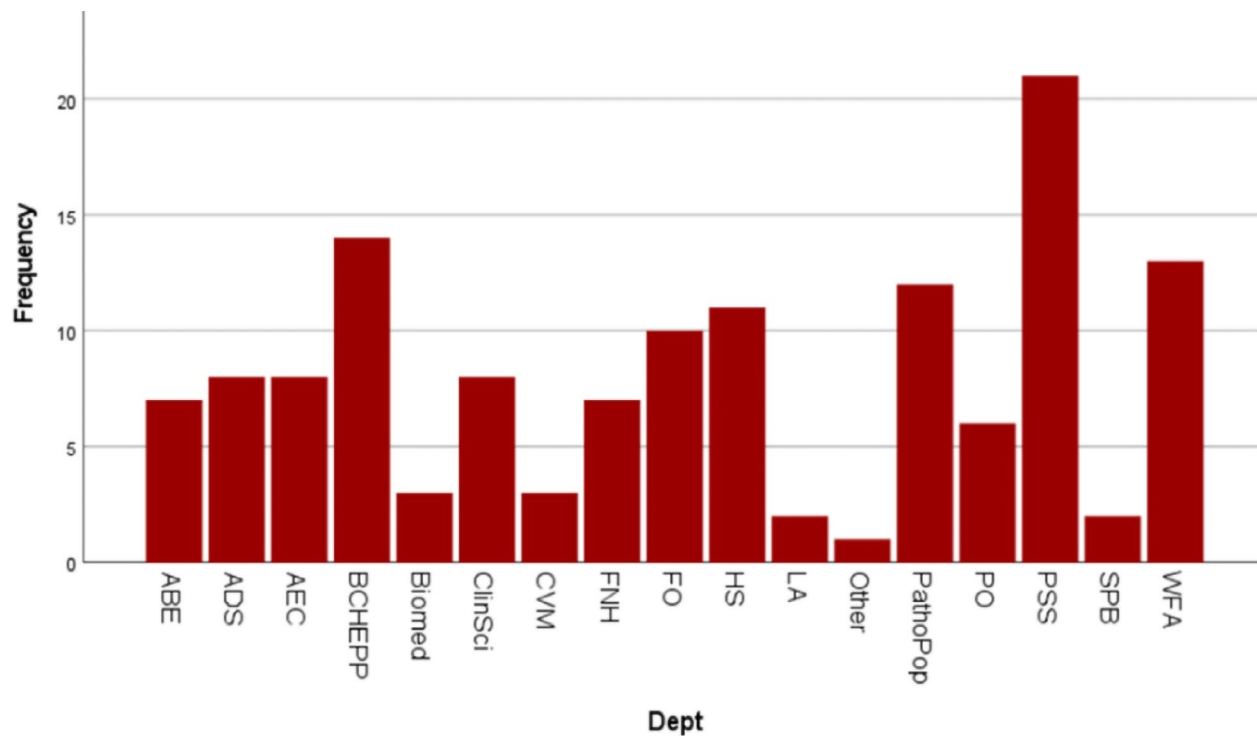


Figure 4. Distribution of valid Qualtrics survey responses from faculty among DAFVM departments. (Department names associated with abbreviations are in Appendix E.)

Seventeen percent of survey respondents indicated their workstation was off-campus; 63% were on-campus faculty. Most respondents identified as White (75.2%; 7.4% Asian, 0.8% Black, 16.5% preferred not to answer) and non-Hispanic (82.8%; 2.5% Hispanic, 14.8% preferred not to answer). “Third gender/non-binary” was included as a gender identity option in the survey, but it was not selected by any respondents. Although overall distribution of faculty among gender groups was fairly uniform in the survey data (39.3% indicated male gender/gender identity, 27.9% female, and 32.8% preferred not to answer, n=122), the percent female and non-identified persons varied among ranks, with fewer female participants represented at higher ranks (Table 1).

Among full Professors who participated in the Qualtrics survey, 23 (55%) had been at rank for 7 or more years (11 of these for 15+ years). There were two (3.7%) Assistant Professors and eight (20.5%) Associate Professors who indicated seven or more years at rank, which implies a hesitancy in seeking promotion in these individuals.

Table 1. Distribution of Qualtrics survey respondents by gender/gender identity within faculty ranks.

Gender/Gender Identity	Assistant Professor (n=48)	Associate Professor (n=34)	Professor (n=40)
Male	41.7%	52.9%	65.0%
Female	47.9%	38.2%	17.5%
Preferred not to answer	10.4%	8.8%	17.5%

The Qualtrics survey asked faculty about their formal service responsibilities (e.g., Undergraduate or Graduate Coordinator, Director or Assistant/Associate Director of university-level labs, Intern or Fellow, etc.). Almost one-third (30.8%) of respondents were in a service role; of these, 35% were Assistant Professors, 27.5% were Associate Professors, and 35.7% were full Professors (n=13). Although female faculty of all ranks comprised 28% of the survey respondents, 45.9% of faculty in service roles were female; 48% were male and 5.4% preferred not to identify their gender/gender identity.

Forty-seven percent of faculty respondents in the online survey indicated they had regular caretaker responsibilities for people in their household (e.g., dependent children or adult family members), although Associate Professors more frequently had these obligations than Professors at other ranks (Table 2). Female Associate Professors (31.8%) were not overrepresented in this situation (male = 54.5%; 13.6% not identified).

Table 2. Distribution of Qualtrics survey respondents with caretaker roles within faculty rank.

Caretaker?	Assistant Professor (n=48)	Associate Professor (n=32)	Professor (n=40)
Yes	39.6%	68.8%	37.5%
No	60.4%	31.3%	62.5%

Themes

Emergent themes were identified during focus group discussions with Associate Professors and were further explored in the Qualtrics survey. Results from both assessment approaches are described by theme in the following sections.

Retention

Associate Professors in the focus group meetings cited a variety of positive reasons for staying at Mississippi State University rather than seeking other opportunities elsewhere. Some reasons were related to research, such as reasonable indirect rates and administrative practices (especially when compared to other institutions); research facilities located on or relatively close to campus; MSU’s strong reputation and support for applied and agricultural

research endeavors; and lack of strong pressure to pursue high-profile funding sources. The work environment was also seen as a benefit, reflected through comments about collegiality; diverse opportunities, perspectives, and collaborations; room to grow in a comfortable (“not cut-throat”) setting; flexible work options when combined with productivity and sensibility; and strong leadership in the Division, Provost’s, and President’s Offices. Others cited opportunities to engage in activities such as Faculty Senate and professional organizations and conferences as positive elements of their MSU position.

Even though most mid-career faculty have the security of tenure, there are those who choose to leave MSU for new positions. When asked about their perspectives on these occurrences, focus group participants indicated this often happens for reasons beyond the university’s control. Faculty leave to be closer to family or because a spouse or partner is dissatisfied with their job opportunities, or the town, schools, or state. There is occasionally a mismatch between an individual and the department or research opportunities that leads to a departure. Two Associate Professors noted they were aware of those who stayed at MSU long enough to “get their credentials” to be competitive at “higher tier” institutions.

Other reasons for loss of mid-career faculty cited by focus group members are potentially within the university’s sphere of influence, but they can be challenging to resolve. For example, comparatively lower salaries and perceived or stated expectations for excessively high workloads contributes to the appeal of industry’s higher salaries and more traditional workdays, and this has resulted in faculty departures. Loss of their collaborators to retirements or other institutions has led some faculty to exit MSU in pursuit of new opportunities with new colleagues. Other institutions have leadership positions or research equipment or facilities that are appealing when not available or an option at MSU. Some mid-career faculty have felt stymied or stagnant in their position, so they left to try something.

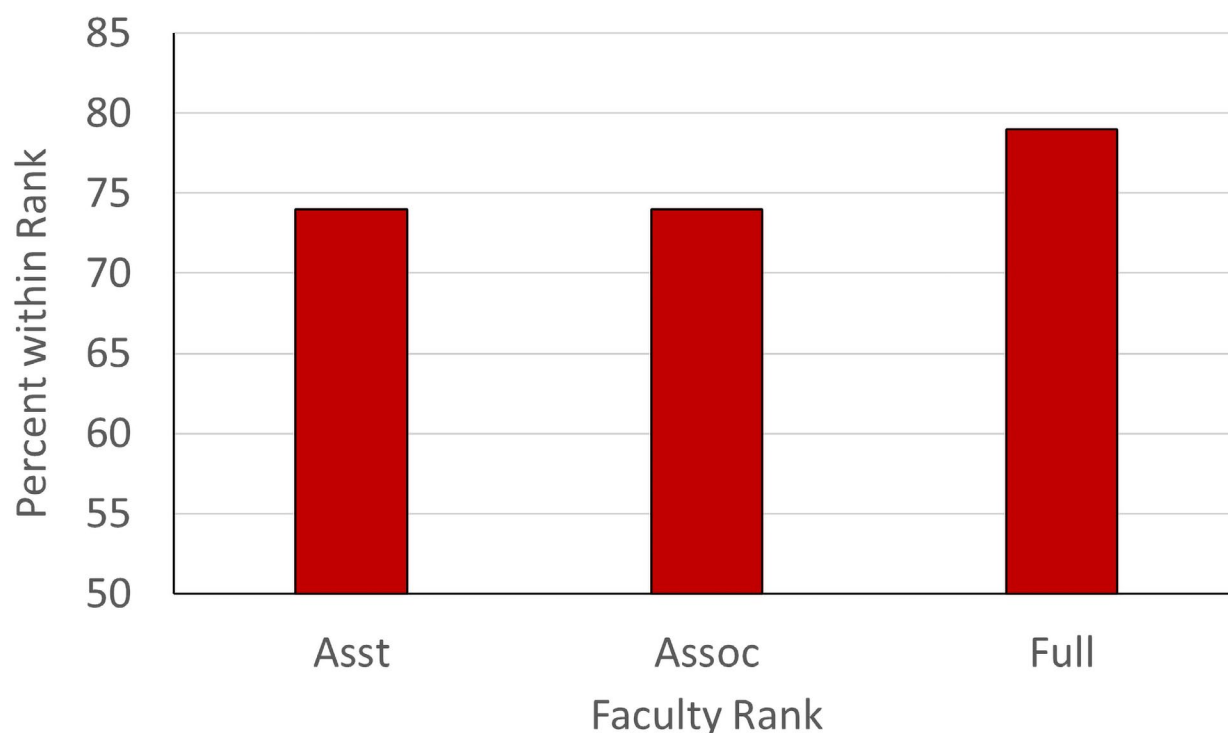
Expectations and Workload

Reaching P&T is seen by new professors as a major professional achievement, yet as observed by Blanchard (2012), many Associate Professors in the focus groups did not experience their anticipated sense of satisfaction and relief at P&T; words like “anti-climactic”, “fizzle”, “underwhelming” and “let down” were used to describe their reaction to receiving the final confirmatory letter from the MSU President. Causes cited by focus group participants for this response included the length of time to complete the P&T review and approval process, the limited acknowledgement for this major accomplishment, and their uncertainty about meeting the “higher bar” for promotion to full Professor. One participant did note a sense of relief after receiving tenure but added she was not worried about promotion to full professor, saying, “If I don’t get it, I will go private or to governmental service”. Another expressed excitement at being able to “be impactful and meet people’s needs rather than focus on outputs” now that he was a tenured Associate Professor. One mentioned that since her promotion to Associate Professor came at the same time as merit raises, she was only granted the promotion raise, which was disappointing and discouraging to her.

Contributing to the “higher bar” concern were apprehensions about maintaining current commitments and productivity levels while also working toward additional performance categories measured for the next promotion (cited examples included additional teaching and service, development of a national or international reputation, and new P&T criteria such as collegiality). Focus group faculty and Qualtrics survey respondents (Figure 5) seemed to understand general expectations for the next promotion—being excellent in two areas of their appointment and possessing a national or international reputation—but there was uncertainty about the means for achieving this (“How do I keep doing what I am doing but also do more?”) or how criteria like “excellence” or “national” were measured (Figure 6). For example, one Associate Professor wondered whether to pursue more national grants and present at national conferences rather than to continue being productive with local grants

and state conference presentations. An Extension Associate Professor was concerned about how to build a reputation that exceeded the boundaries of the state's stakeholder base to which he felt beholden. Another expressed frustration about being compared to other Associate Professors in her department who consistently taught small "boutique" classes populated by better and more interested students whereas she was tasked with teaching larger "service" classes in which excellence in teaching – as reflected in student evaluations and creativity – was more difficult to achieve. Several noted annual evaluation feedback statements of "You'll be fine at promotion" left them feeling uncertain and not relieved, confident, or guided. Turnover in Department Heads also resulted in annual evaluation feedback that was contradictory, nebulous, or absent for some focus group members.

DAFVM Faculty Who Are Confident* in Meeting Performance Expectations



* Response Ratings of 8/10 - 10/10

Figure 5. Qualtrics survey respondents, by faculty rank, who understand performance expectations.

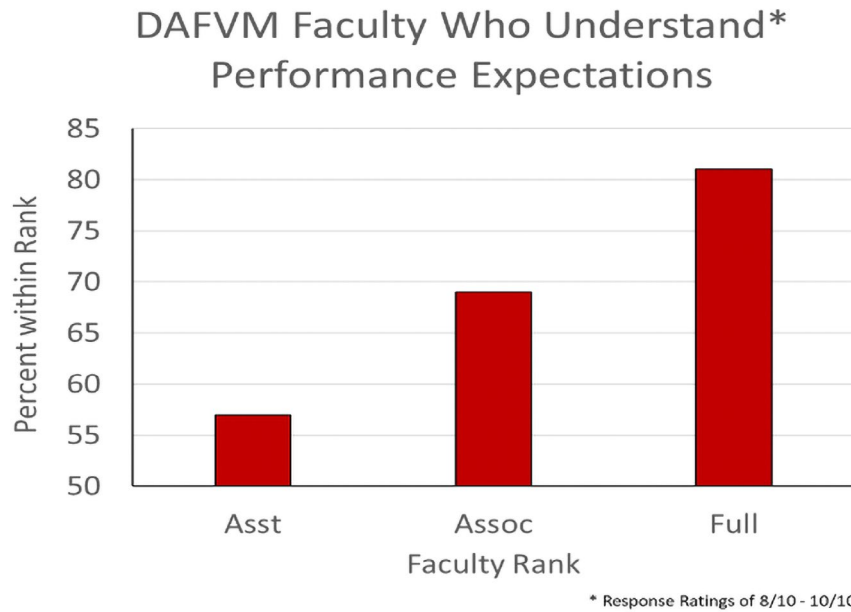


Figure 6. Qualtrics survey respondents, by faculty rank, who are confident in meeting performance expectations.

The strong role of Department Heads to faculty success was apparent in the Qualtrics survey question which asked respondents to rate the relative importance ascribed to various sources of P & T guidance (Table 3).

Table 3. Mean score (on a value scale of 1-100), by rank, ascribed by DAFVM professors to sources of performance guidance information as indicated in a Qualtrics survey

Source of Information	Assistant Professor (n=53)	Associate Professor (n=39)	Professor (n=42)
Department Head	36	42	42
P&T Guidelines Document	23	25	22
P&T Committee	15	15	16
Peers	26	18	20

Faculty focus group members listed support mechanisms they thought would be beneficial for their program success. These were summarized for inclusion in the Qualtrics survey, and faculty were asked to rank them in order of preference (see Appendix D). Programs that would provide personnel or financial support for research were most favored (Table 4) and reflect the perception of needing to do more to achieve the next promotion.

Table 4. Professors' top preferences (percent selected by rank) for suggested support programs as indicated on the Qualtrics survey.

Type of Support	Assistant Professor (n=48)	Associate Professor (n=33)	Professor (n=25)
Internally competitive funds to support research programs	25%	36%	16%
Internally competitive funds to support post-doctoral or program associates	31%	24%	48%
Internally competitive funds for research equipment purchase or repair	11%	18%	4%
Access to short-term grant management assistants	21%	9%	12%
Internally competitive funds for conference travel	8%	9%	8%
Support for fee-based professional development	2%	3%	16%

In addition to financially based suggestions, other solutions to address performance worries were elucidated through the focus group discussions. The Committee of the Whole approach to P&T used in the Department of Biochemistry, Entomology, Molecular Biology and Plant Pathology seems to have eliminated uncertainty about performance expectations among its Associate Professors. A couple of Associate Professors cited the value of mentoring they received from full Professors in their unit; conversely, another noted the loss of full Professors from their unit as a loss of internal support and guidance for those at lower ranks. Another mentioned that P&T packets from successfully promoted Assistant Professors in his unit were shared with him to aid in his first promotion, which he found beneficial. The online survey indicated many Assistant Professors wanted to be mentored (75.0%) and receive more frequent P&T committee guidance (68.8%); these values were lower but still substantial for Associate Professors (55.9% and 44.1%, respectively).

Isolation

Off-campus faculty (11% of focus group participants; 17% of Qualtrics respondents) who are not within a cluster of colleagues with whom synergetic work can be conducted feel isolated programmatically and professionally, which impacts their job satisfaction and confidence toward the next promotion. For example, those off-campus faculty in the focus groups said they do not have access to informal mentoring that results through regular, casual interactions with other departmental faculty, including those on the P&T committee. They often have additional demands that detract from their ability to focus on the measured metrics, e.g., they fix waterlines or fences, clean toilets and maintain property, or provide support for others' research occurring on the property. Access to research support resources (including graduate students) and professional development opportunities hosted on-campus is more difficult and time-consuming. Some off-campus Associate Professors are also in supervisory roles (e.g., over technicians or associates), which could be seen as contributing to performance metrics, but the Digital Measures performance reporting system does not capture this activity well.

Several off-campus professors questioned whether the department head or P&T committee understands their limitations and takes them into consideration when evaluating performance. This was reflected in the Qualtrics survey in which only 21% of off-campus faculty expressed strong confidence (ratings of 9 or 10 on a scale of 10) in the

P&T committee's understanding of their opportunities (compared with 27% of on-campus faculty). Those in specialty disciplines reported some of the same feelings of concern over collaboration opportunities and performance assessments, especially when more limited grant prospects are perceived to impact productivity outputs. This was also reflected in the Qualtrics survey in which only 21% of all off-campus respondents indicated high confidence (rating of 9- or 10-points out of 10 possible) in their P&T committee's ability to understand their discipline, as compared to 28% of on-campus respondents.

Instruction

Teaching (classroom or Extension-related) was not mentioned as a performance concern or goal by focus groups members except for a few who noted research demands had higher priority than teaching. This viewpoint of research and teaching priorities was also reflected by 33% of Associate Professor survey respondents, who indicated expectations for research impact the quality of their teaching program.

Value

Although the majority of faculty survey participants agreed that MSU values the faculty's role in meeting its triad mission, the Qualtrics survey indicated Associate Professors were the least positive (25.5%) of the 3 ranks (32%, Full; 43%, Asst.) Failure to address infrastructure issues and vacant positions were cited by focus group members as issues that impact their ability to compete for grants, manage their workload, and achieve promotion, and thus, their perception of how the university values their contributions.

Well-being

Personal well-being and departmental culture are important to faculty satisfaction and productivity. Only 22.0% (n=123) of all Qualtrics respondents strongly agreed with the statement "I am satisfied with my work-life balance"; 40.7% somewhat agreed, 26.8% somewhat disagreed, and 10.6% strongly disagreed. Similarly, 29.3% of all respondents strongly agreed with the statement, "My mental, emotional and physical health are appropriate for my state in life"; 45.5% somewhat agreed, 15.4% somewhat disagreed, and 9.8% strongly disagreed. Loss of faculty to other work environments is often driving by these factors related to work-life balance and personal well-being, so attention to strengthening faculty in these areas can enhance DAFVM's overall success.

Professional Growth

Professional development (PD) was not advanced as a strong need or interest by focus group participants except for that associated with networking and leadership. Fewer (26%) Associate Professor survey respondents than Assistant Professors (41%) regularly participate in PD, although there was strong interest by Associate Professors for PD opportunities on program sustainability, complex grants, and leadership. Only 33% of Associate Professor survey respondents have taken or intend to take a sabbatical, yet this is an opportunity to grow professionally. In focus group discussions on sabbatical, mid-career faculty were not intending to pursue sabbatical because of on-going research (including those associated with graduate students) and family responsibilities.

Peer Institutions' Approaches to Mid-Career Faculty Support

Faculty support is not an issue isolated to Mississippi State University, therefore, there is value to examining programs and methods implemented at other institutions of higher learning, particularly peer institutions, to determine what may be beneficial for emulating in some fashion at MSU.

A number of universities have formal administrative units, generally housed within the Provost's Office, dedicated to supporting the diverse roles of faculty in delivering their university's mission areas (e.g., Division of Faculty Affairs, University of Tennessee-Knoxville; Office of Faculty Affairs, University of Georgia and University of Mississippi Medical Center; Faculty Affairs, Purdue University and Virginia Tech; Office of Faculty Excellence, North Carolina State University). Administrative structure within these units varies among institutions but generally includes high-level leadership (e.g., Vice Provost, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, Purdue University and Virginia Tech; Associate Provost, University of Georgia) and support staff who are responsible for delivering or coordinating various aspects of the office (e.g., director of programming, director of faculty recognition, leadership program manager, dual career program coordinator, immigration affairs coordinator, administrative specialist, communication specialist, instructional designer, and faculty fellows). Programs operated under these units may include faculty recruitment, new employee orientation, professional and leadership development at all ranks, mentoring, awards for excellence, promotion and tenure guidance, internal grants programs, spousal accommodations, certificate programs, work-life balance support, and wellness.

In addition to dedicated staffing, several peer institutions have centralized, faculty-facing websites that provide relevant content in a single organized site, e.g., [University of Texas A&M's Faculty Affairs](#), [Clemson University](#), and [North Carolina State University](#). In the time during which this project was conducted, MSU has made significant improvements in this regard by providing key faculty-relevant materials in a single site on the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President website.

Lastly, several peer institutions (e.g., North Carolina State University, Purdue University) participate in Harvard's Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE), a research-practice partnership with universities designed to assist in implementing informed change using approaches based on research-driven, faculty-based data. Participation in this program could advance MSU's educational and research goals while improving faculty satisfaction, retention, and productivity.

Relevant MSU Task Forces

Since 2021, the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President has conducted a [Task Force initiative](#) to investigate key issues associated with university functions. Several of these Task Forces addressed situations that have direct bearing on mid-career faculty and the findings of this project. Therefore, implementation of Task Force recommendations would lead to improving or solving concerns identified in this project. Some key recommendations are noted below.

Task Force on Evaluation of Teaching Performance (2020)

- Require departments to use a variety of assessment measures to evaluate teaching and foster continual improvement.
- Provide training (and/or other forms of information) for instructors and administrators regarding appropriate measures of teaching effectiveness (including student survey data) to instructors.
- Revise AOP 13.15 Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness by refocusing the policy to create a more holistic, robust, and equitable approach to evaluating teaching effectiveness.

Online Education Task Force (2021)

- Develop and offer faculty training for online instruction that allows for progression from proficiency to mastery in online instructional skills and best practice implementation.

Outreach Task Force (n.d.)

- Foster conversations about the role of outreach in faculty evaluation, promotion, and tenure.
- Provide additional training and support for outreach to build capacity and effectiveness.
- Faculty Performance Evaluation Task Force Report (2021)
- Implement a universally understandable strategy for annual assessments based upon fair principles that would be consistent among reviewers and that would adjust to evolving modes and methods of teaching, research, and service and be inclusive of all faculty positions and appointments.
- Clearly communicate departmental, college, and university goals and objectives with all faculty.
- Establish a departmental workload policy that is clear and equitable.
- Whenever feasible, establish and use clearly defined performance standards for teaching, research, service, and outreach activities.

Faculty Development Task Force (2022)

- Incentivize teaching-related professional development using tangible and intangible incentives.
- Revise the Center for Teaching and Learning website so it serves as a central hub for all services and resources related to teaching and course development.
- Create a mentoring program for faculty development for teaching.

Rankin Climate Survey

The 2022 Rankin Climate Survey yielded 4,725 completed surveys (16% response rate); of these, 623 (13%) were submitted by faculty members. Tenured and tenure-track faculty were positive about their work and their workplace (70%), and the majority (89%) believed research was valued, although those who had been employed more than one year or who were women or non-white were less positive, findings which are consistent with outcomes of this project. Similarly, 74% of tenured and tenure-track respondents felt tenure criteria were clear, however, the Rankin Climate study did not address faculty confidence toward meeting those criteria.

Twenty-three percent of faculty respondents (compared to 14% of staff respondents) indicated they had experienced exclusionary, offensive, intimidating, or hostile conflict attributed to their gender or gender identity, position status, or political views. This mid-career project also noted lower percentages in satisfaction metrics (e.g., supervisor support, well-being, work-life balance) for faculty who identified as non-binary or provided no gender identity information.

Approaches for Improving Mid-Career Faculty Retention and Success

In addition to solutions posed by Task Force Recommendations, there are some major take-away points from administrator interviews and faculty feedback via focus groups and the online survey that can be considered for implementation at the DAFVM and/or university levels. These are summarized below.

Professional Development

Target those most likely to benefit. “Star faculty” may not need any additional support in this area, and low performers may not engage.

- Provide targeted considerations for some subgroups, e.g., international and/or underrepresented faculty, off-campus personnel, single parents, or those in temporary stress situations (e.g., those with severe personal or family illness).

- Focus on building strengths rather than mitigating weaknesses, particularly those in danger of burning out because of limited resources, narrow or challenging discipline areas, short-term personal/work-life issues, and the like.

Provide opportunities for Associate Professors to learn skills and strategies that promote greater program success and retention, and effectively communicate these opportunities, keeping in mind that 9-month faculty will not be receptive to summertime trainings. (It was also noted that many of these opportunities require initiation by a Department Head, which can be a barrier to faculty participation). Recommended topics included:

- Team building and “we” (rather than “I”) culture.
- Program sustainability.
- Strategic grant budgeting, e.g., leveraging F&A in grants to support programs.
- Securing funding for and leading to multi-state projects.
- Building a national or international reputation, including approaches for Extension faculty who need to maintain a strong focus on state needs.
- Leadership and administration
- Time and priority management (including saying “no” and addressing “leave guilt”).

Provide no-cost support to mid-career faculty that enables them to attend off-campus professional development as a reward, to show confidence in the employee, and to allow for fresh ideas and networking that might not be possible to the same degree with on-campus professional development.

Adopt a centralized approach to faculty support—using the MSU Office of Student Affairs as a model—to integrate and coordinate the various professional development opportunities and provide for incremental and synergetic development, reduced redundancies, and identification of gaps in learning options.

Initiate faculty mentoring programs, including the possibility of mentors from related professions to expand networking and professional and personal development.

Cover costs of dues for professional memberships that support faculty success.

Offer writing workshops and writing retreats (dedicated time away from the office room) to focus on publications or grant proposals.

Performance Evaluation

Expect Department Heads to provide meaningful annual evaluations that include strong guidance in performance expectations and management.

Seek, discuss, and facilitate faculty members’ personal development and goals as well as performance goals during annual evaluations.

Renegotiate appointments so mid-career faculty can pursue career interests and expertise that have evolved during their time at MSU.

Reevaluate the P&T and annual evaluation process so that a focus on program value and impact (e.g., student or peer mentoring, research impacts) is considered in addition to the traditional focus on outputs (e.g., publication and grants numbers.)

Explore a new method for evaluating CVM clinical faculty for whom the current system employed through Digital Measures is not a good fit.

Creative Endeavors

Institute creative interventions that reinvigorate Associate Professors' passions and professional interests that may have been negatively impacted during the Assistant Professor stage.

- Explore use of sabbatical alternatives (i.e., “staybaticals”, short-term reassignments, teaching releases, time off to take courses, or new equipment for new research directions) that enable mid-career faculty to develop new abilities that can promote enthusiasm, innovation, and productivity.

Develop a means for allocating funds that allow for continued support of Departmental functions when a faculty member is on sabbatical rather than redistributing their responsibilities to others, thereby increasing the burden on those remain and potentially discouraging participation in sabbatical.

Faculty Networking

Enhance mid-career faculty success through networking support programs and actions within DAFVM and MSU that lead to new innovations and collaborations at various scales.

- Improve engagement with off-campus faculty.

Strengthen faculty community through diverse methods (e.g., social events, designated allocate gathering spaces in buildings, or 3-minute-thesis-style events for sharing CVs) to promote collegiality and work relationships.

Build faculty affinity groups for those underrepresented or under unique pressures (e.g., young children, in-home adult care, serious illness, etc.) to build a sense of belonging.

Faculty Research/Extension Program Support

Initiate internal, short-term competitive funding programs for Associate Professors (perhaps modeled after those open to Assistant Professors) to enable them to expand programs, ignite new opportunities, and enhance productivity, e.g., teaching release, research/program assistants, post-docs, or graduate students; travel or equipment support; professional development courses.

Explore the option for new “start-up” funds at promotion to ignite new program direction and inspire retention.

Offer graduate student positions to faculty in disciplines with limited or smaller grants opportunities that restrict their options for graduate student-supported research. (It can be easier to find extramural funds for equipment than for graduate student support).

Provide Associate Professors with access to project personnel who can assist with pre-award or post-award activities as a means for managing increased service and teaching expectations (especially if they do not have large awards with budgets for this support).

Repair or upgrade research equipment to improve efficiencies and competitiveness.

Acknowledgment

Increase public and private recognition of mid-career faculty members' programs and efforts by the various levels of leadership through methods such as:

- a ceremony above the Department level to celebrate those who received promotion.

- personal notes, calls, or emails from supervisors and administrators (rather than form letters) for recognition of quality work.

Restructure awards programs so they do not take an inordinate amount of faculty time to complete.

Recognize that provision of items (e.g., new equipment) that support faculty success may be more impactful and meaningful than an award.

Provide pay raises or support items as a reward for strong commitment and valuable contributions to MSU rather than requiring an offer letter from another entity. Granting raises to faculty who “play the offer game” can be demoralizing to those who don’t and may consequently be overlooked.

Acknowledge (e.g., via extra pay or in evaluations or P&T) extraordinary service vital to unit function, e.g., undergraduate/graduate coordinators or those who assume interim responsibilities of vacant positions in addition to maintaining their own job.

Invite faculty to join their administrators in university-level discussions when campus leadership is discussing programs that involve the faculty member’s expertise.

Salary

Develop a means for offering preemptive retention offers and personal retention of a portion of salary funds in grants to incentivize retention of quality mid-career faculty.

Address faculty salary compression issues so Assistant Professors are not routinely paid more than Associate Professors.

Department Head Training

Initiate Department Heads training programs, using the list of topics described in this document as a starting point, to provide the abilities that lead to better faculty guidance.

Work-Life Balance and Personal Wellness

Promote and provide support programs that improve faculty mental, physical, and family health and well-being, e.g., time off within a week for exercise, gym membership, departmental culture that includes wellness and personal balance as well as productivity.

Address work-life balance, particularly for those in temporary “crisis” situations, with young children, etc., in a meaningful and intentional fashion.

Facilitate mentoring groups to address the path to full professor as well as more personal (e.g., managing work-life balance).

Recognize and address the need for mental health support, particularly for instructional faculty dealing with students’ increasing mental health-related issues.

Other

Fill vacated positions to reduce the workload assumed by remaining faculty so they can focus on doing the job for which they were hired and upon which they are evaluated.

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Appendix A: Deans & Directors Discussion Questions

1. Describe the overall faculty in your unit with regard to appointments and ranks.
2. How do you define faculty success?
3. How does your unit define faculty success (e.g., Department Heads & annual reviews; P&T committee)?
4. What are common characteristics of successful faculty in your unit?
5. Would you provide the names of faculty within your unit who may be able to provide insight into this issue of faculty success?
6. What role do department heads play in faculty success/retention?
7. Given your position, it would be fair to say you have had a successful career. What are the key factors in your career that contributed to your success? Could this be replicated for faculty in your unit and how?
8. What are the important items that would support mid-career faculty, allow them to be successful and make them feel valued within their unit?
9. For faculty who have left your unit, what reasons are most cited for their decisions?
10. Research indicates post-recession spending at universities shows a hesitation to invest in tenure-track faculty (to control rising tuition costs, respond to fluctuations in enrollment with adjuncts/instructors). What options might be considered at the college/unit level to help mid-career faculty success in the face of these financial challenges?
11. DAFVM has numerous programs to support early career faculty (start-up packages, orientation workshops SRI). Similarly, there are leadership programs for longer-term faculty, such as FLDI and Lead21. How can MSU provide similar for mid-career faculty?
 - a. Are you aware of faculty support programs within MSU or elsewhere that support development and long-term success and retention of mid-career faculty?
12. Do you think subgroups of mid-career faculty face different challenges that may need to be considered separately when/if developing faculty support/professional development programs, e.g., faculty based at off-campus facilities, underrepresented faculty (e.g., women in STEM, racial/ethnic minorities, etc.)?
13. Do you have anything you would like to add regarding this topic of mid-career faculty success and retention?

Appendix B: Department Heads Discussion Questions

1. Describe the overall faculty in your unit with regard to appointments and ranks.
 - a. Do you have off-campus faculty that you supervise?
2. As a department head, how do you define faculty success?
3. What are common characteristics of successful faculty in your unit?
4. Given your position, it would be fair to say you have had a successful career. What are key factors in your career that contributed to your success?
5. What role do you think dean/directors play in faculty success/retention?
6. What role do you think department heads play in faculty success/retention?
7. Annual evaluations and P&T are measures of faculty achievement. For mid-career faculty, how are expectations for success beyond tenure and the first promotion communicated by annual evaluations and/or the P&T committee?
8. Besides annual evaluations and P&T, are there other routine ways in which you provide performance feedback to your faculty?
9. Mid-career faculty leave MSU for new positions in universities or industry that provide higher salaries, more support, new experiences, new work environments, and different job expectations. What can support mid-career faculty, allow them to continue to be successful and productive, weather the disenfranchisement that can develop over time, and help them feel valued within their unit so they do not leave?
10. DAFVM has numerous programs to support early career faculty (start-up packages, orientation workshops, SRI, etc.). Can similar options for mid-career faculty? If so, what?
 - a. What options might be considered in the face of financial limitations?
11. Earlier you mentioned some factors that you attribute to your career success. Could any of these be replicated, in full or in part, for faculty in your unit and how?
12. Do you believe Department Heads would benefit by support programs that enable them to be more effective in their administrative roles related to faculty?
13. If faculty support/professional development programs for DAFVM faculty were to be developed, what would be effect and beneficial and who should be targeted?
 - a. Do subgroups of mid-career faculty face different challenges that may need to be considered separately, e.g., faculty based at off-campus facilities, women or minorities, international faculty?
14. Would you provide the names of faculty who may be able to provide insight into this issue of faculty success?
15. Do you have anything you would like to add regarding this topic of mid-career faculty success and retention?

Appendix C: Faculty Focus Group Discussion Questions

Associate Professors

1. The hurdle of tenure and promotion has been cleared. Has that brought you relief? Excitement for new directions? Concern about your ability to keep up or exceed your pre-tenure pace? (My research has indicated that for many the relief that was expected does not come).
2. Do you feel you understand what is expected of you to move to full professor rank?
 - a. Can you achieve this rank with the support currently available to you?
3. Even though most mid-career faculty have the security of tenure, there are those that choose to leave for other jobs elsewhere. Sometimes that happens for reasons beyond the university's control, e.g., to be closer to ageing parents. Beside those types of situations, why do you think people choose to leave MSU?
 - a. Why stay at MSU?
4. Besides the obvious factor of salary as an incentive, do you think there are other ways—small- or large-scale—to motivate and support mid-career faculty and help them be satisfied and effective in their work? (to avoid chasing the “shiny bobble”). What additional support or opportunity would be helpful to you?
5. Would you like to professional development opportunities targeting those in the mid-career stage?

Assistant Professors (nearing or going through P&T)

1. Do you feel you clearly understood/understand the expectations for P&T?
2. Do you feel you have the support you need to be successful at achieving those expectations?
3. What unexpected hurdles have you encountered?
4. There are a sizable number of trainings available for new faculty. Is there something you wanted in this regard but could not find?
5. When you matriculate to Associate Professor, do you envision any changes—positive or negative—in your career at MSU? New programmatic directions? Opportunities (i.e., leadership training, sabbatical)? Workload changes?

Full Professors

1. Looking back on your pre-tenure and mid-career stage, were there things that you would deem as pivotal decisions or actions that increased your job satisfaction, productivity, or impact?
2. Full professors have considerable time in service at the university, and therefore a unique perspective. Besides the obvious factor of salary increases (e.g., merit raises), are there ways—small- or large-scale—to motivate and support mid-career faculty, help them be satisfied and effective in their work, and aid their promotion to full professor?
3. Are there training or other professional development opportunities you wished you had had as an associate professor to help you get to where you are now?
4. Leadership training is an opportunity held out to more senior faculty, including associates and full. For those who do not seek leadership positions in the future, are their other professional advancement or support opportunities that should be provided to keep faculty engaged and productive and satisfied?

Appendix D. Faculty Online Survey

1. Which Department is your academic home?
2. Are you employed in a faculty position?
3. What is your position title?
4. What is your current professorial rank?
5. Is your position permanent?
6. Approximately how many years have you been at your current rank?
7. Describe your appointment by moving the slider to indicate the % FTE in each category.
8. Do you currently serve in any of the following capacities? Check all that apply.
 - a. Undergraduate Program Coordinator
 - b. Graduate Program Coordinator
 - c. Unit Director or Assistant/Associate Director
 - d. Head of a Center or Lab (excluding faculty-level labs)
 - e. Interim administrator (Department Head, Asst./Assoc. Director, etc.)
 - f. Intern: Administration, Research, Provost, etc.
 - g. Other unit-level position of responsibility. Write in the space below.
 - h. No, I do not currently serve in any of these capacities.
9. Is your workstation on the Starkville campus?
10. Use the slider: Rate the strength of your understanding of performance expectations for promotion in your unit.
11. Use the slider: Rate your confidence level in meeting performance expectations for promotion in your unit.
12. Use the slider: Rate your confidence level that your department head/supervisor and P&T committee are in agreement regarding performance expectation and assessment.
13. Use the slider: Rate your confidence level that your P&T committee understands the opportunities and limitations of your discipline and job situation.
14. Indicate the level of agreement you have with the following statements. If the statement is not applicable to your situation, leave the slider in the "0" position for that item.
 - a. Expectations for research detract from the quality and success of my classroom teaching.
 - b. Expectations for research detract from the quality and success of my Extension programming.
 - c. Expectations for teaching detract from the quality and success of my research program.
 - d. Expectations for teaching detract from the quality and success of my Extension programming.
 - e. Expectations for service detract from the quality and success of my research program.
15. The following items can influence how you allocate time and effort to meet your job responsibilities and goals. Rate the relative weight (%) that you ascribe to each. Values should sum to 100.
 - a. Department head/supervisor
 - b. P&T document
 - c. P&T committee
 - d. Peers
16. Research has indicated programs like those listed below may be beneficial in enhancing faculty success. Rank your interest in these suggestions by dragging and dropping the boxes to reflect your preference with 1=most preferred.
 - a. Internal, competitive funds to support short-term (1-2 years) program associates/post-docs
 - b. Short-term access to trained personnel to assist with grant management.
 - c. Vehicle pool and/or equipment loaner program to provide access to items needed intermittently.
 - d. Internal, competitive funds for travel support to national or international conferences

- e. Internal, competitive funds for off-campus professional development training.
 - f. Internal, competitive funds for research (preliminary data, graduate students, etc.)
17. Rate your interest in training on the following topics (no-to-low interest; moderate interest; strong interest)
- a. Writing grant proposals and managing awards
 - b. Forming interdisciplinary or collaborative teams
 - c. Competing for large and complex grants
 - d. Building sustainable programs
 - e. Balancing split appointments
 - f. Building leadership skills for programs and administration
 - g. Managing personnel
 - h. Improving instructional practice (classroom & extension)
 - i. Working with diverse peers, students, and/or stakeholders
 - j. Submit your own topic in the box below.
18. Rate your agreement with the following statements (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree)
- a. My work is valued.
 - b. I am supported by my supervisor(s).
 - c. I have the flexibility to pursue career interests.
 - d. Diverse people and perspectives are welcomed in my department/unit.
 - e. I collaborate regularly with others at MSU.
 - f. I have the resources I need to be successful in my position.
 - g. The atmosphere in my department/unit is positive.
 - h. I am satisfied with my work-life balance.
 - i. My mental, emotional and physical health are appropriate for my state in life.
 - j. I can make a rewarding career at MSU.
19. Answer "yes" or "no" to indicate your opinion about the following statements.
- a. My annual evaluation provides meaningful feedback and guidance
 - b. I would like to be mentored by others to learn how to better perform in my job.
 - c. I would like more frequent feedback or guidance from my P&T committee.
 - d. I plan to take (or have taken) a sabbatical.
 - e. I regularly participate in MSU professional development training to improve my performance.
 - f. I would participate in more professional development to improve my performance if I received credit for in on my annual evaluation.
 - g. A personal note, email, or call from a university administrator would make me feel valued.
 - h. A personal visit to my unit by a university administrator would make me feel valued.
 - i. Recognition in MAFVM/MSU newsletters, social media, news releases, etc. would make me feel valued.
 - j. MSU values the role of faculty in meeting its mission in research teaching and service.
20. What is your ethnicity?
- a. Hispanic
 - b. Non-Hispanic
 - c. I prefer not to answer.
21. What is your race.
- a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 - e. White
 - f. Multiple races

- g. I prefer not to answer.
22. How would you describe your gender?
- Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary/third gender
 - I prefer not to answer.
23. Are you currently responsible for any of the following person-care situations? Check all that apply.
- Yes, I am caring for a minor child or children in the home as a single parent/individual.
 - Yes, I am caring for a minor child or children in the home with help from a partner in the home.
 - Yes, I am caring for a dependent adult(s) in the home as a single individual.
 - Yes, I am caring for a dependent adult(s) in the home with a partner in the home.
 - No, I am not responsible for daily person-care, but I frequently must provide unplanned care for aging or unwell family members.
 - No, I am currently not responsible for dependent person-care.

Appendix E: Codes, Departments, and Colleges Represented in the Qualtrics Faculty Survey.

Code	Department	College
ABE	Agricultural and Biological Engineering	Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS)
ADS	Animal and Dairy Sciences	CALS
AEC	Agricultural Economics	CALS
BCHEPP	Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology, and Plant Pathology	CALS
Biomed	Comparative Biomedical Sciences	Veterinary Medicine (CVM)
ClinSci	Clinical Sciences	CVM
FNH	Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion	CALS
FO	Forestry	Forest Resources (CFR)
HS	Human Sciences	CALS
LA	Landscape Architecture	CALS
PathoPop	Pathology and Population Medicine	CVM
PO	Poultry Sciences	CALS
PSS	Plant and Soil Science	CALS
SPB	Sustainable Bioproducts	CFR
WFA	Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture	CFR



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