Faculty Financial Situation and Morale Survey

Summary of Findings

The WFU AAUP sent the survey to 556 faculty teaching in any fulltime capacity in Wake Forest College. The survey was open to responses from December 5 to December 13, 2018. Of the 556 faculty members polled, 392 responded.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The high response rate reveals that the faculty feels strongly about these issues. Members largely perceive that they are being underpaid, and the data bear that out. The survey also reveals that student debt is a considerable burden for many faculty members, especially among the lowest salary ranks, assistant professors and assistant and associate teaching professors. In addition, the survey indicates that two out of three respondents teach Summer School out of economic need.

Turning to the levels of satisfaction with salary, the amount of student debt carried by faculty, benefits, and the levels of satisfaction with input into shared/democratic governance in the College or their departments, we found:

Salaries

* When asked, “Overall, I am quite satisfied with my salary increases over the last five years," just 20% strongly agreed or agreed, the rest were neutral or disagreed or strongly disagreed.
* 21% believe that Assistant Professors are compensated fairly
  + Dissatisfaction is especially concentrated in the Humanities
* 62% teach Summer School because of economic need
  + In the only category that stands out, Associate Professors are 5.7 times more likely to teach Summer School out of need than Full Professors.

Student Debt Owed by Faculty

* Of the 201 usable responses on student debt, 129 reported carrying debt and 72 reported no debt. Of those reporting debt when they started at Wake Forest, the average debt load was:
* Assistant Professors: $60,000 (35)
* Assistant Teaching Professors: $47,208 (12)
* Visiting Assistant Professors: $36,000 (10)
* Associate Professors: $29,000 (41)
* Associate Teaching Professors: $38,125 (8)
* Full Professors: $25,136 (22)
* Of these colleagues:
* 73% found their monthly student loan repayments heavy (38%) or moderate (35%), with 27% finding them light.
* Nearly 60% found that their monthly pay increases lagged behind their monthly repayment obligations.
* 47% of respondents had no knowledge that full-time faculty are eligible for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Benefits

* Wake Forest’s benefits package receives a 50% approval rating.

Shared Faculty Governance

* 32% said they are satisfied about the level of their participation in governance in the College.
* 64% are satisfied with their input in their departments.

1. The survey has a margin for error of +/- 3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The margin for error score is very good for the validity of this survey; we can be confident at the 95% level that when we say, for example, that just 20% of faculty are satisfied with their salary increases over the last five years, that 20% score means that for all faculty somewhere between just 17% or 23% are satisfied. In other words, somewhere from 77% to 83% of college faculty are not satisfied. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It should be noted that the fate of this program, signed into law by the Bush administration in 2007, is currently in question. Under the Trump administration, less than 1% of the first applications for debt cancellation (after ten years of repayment) have been accepted. See “Why are people being denied public service loan forgiveness?,” *The Washington Post*, 12.21.2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)