

Provost's Performance Survey Report (Spring 09)

Faculty Senate Committee on Provost and Presidential Performance
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Quantitative Report Introduction Summary:

298 of the 638 eligible faculty members accessed the Provost's survey. A total of 264 faculty members answered at least one question on the Provost's survey, resulting in a return rate of 41.4%. No Provost/Academic Vice-President Survey was conducted during the prior year in accordance with Senate rules governing the first year of a new Provost/Academic Vice-President's tenure. The survey was conducted on-line by e-mailing each eligible faculty member a web link to complete the survey. Eligible faculty had three weeks and were given four separate reminders to complete the survey.

Questions on the evaluation survey were divided into three focus areas: Total Campus Enterprise, Academic Goals, and Personnel, Faculty Relations & Campus Issues. Demographic information, along with open comment sections, was also included in the survey. The quantitative results of the survey can be seen below in Table A: Provost Summary Report Data.

The Summary Report provides a quantitative review of the Provost/Academic Vice-President's job performance for the Academic year 2007 - 2008. This table starts with the question number in column one, followed by the question text in the second column. The mean scores along with standard deviations* (SD) and the number of respondents (N) that answered each question appears followed by the no opinion/no answer numbers for each question. Usually the summary report compares current data with the previous year's data; however, this year's report is based on the Provost/Academic Vice President's only year of service at WIU.

Additionally, each focus area was broken down and analyzed based on demographic information. From the analysis of the demographic information, statistically there were no significant differences relating to gender, college/academic unit, and years of service on the responses for the focus areas. Opinions taken from the comments section were typed as written and will be provided to the Provost/Academic Vice-President.

*Standard deviation is a measure of dispersion. In other words, it measures the degree to which responses are dispersed about the mean. The larger the standard deviation, the more the scores differ from the mean. Alternatively, if the standard deviation is small, this indicates that the scores were very close to one another. A t-test is used to assess whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other.

Executive Summary:

Of the 48 individual questions assessing the Provost's performance, four questions had a mean score higher than 3.5, 24 questions had means between 3 and 3.5, 19 questions had means between 2.5 and 3, and one question had a mean below 2.5. The Provost's overall rating mean was 2.86 with 217 faculty members rating the Provost overall.

The four highest scoring questions were: 18.ii, 19.ii, 20.ii, and 23.i. The first three deal with management style that promotes diversity in faculty, staff, and student activities, with the fourth dealing with ensuring that university policy is available and transparent to faculty. The scores in order are: 3.65, 3.60, 3.78, and 3.93. The Provost scored highest on question 23 relating to faculty.

Of the 24 replies in the 3 to 3.5 range and the 19 in the 2.5 to 3 range there is no easily discernible pattern but for two questions not including the lowest scored question: 21. These two questions, 17 and 27 had scores of 2.55 and 2.54 and concerned consulting faculty before making important decisions and providing supervisory leadership to the dean or director of the academic unit. The two questions are similar to question 21, which asked about the Provost making excellent administrative appointments—2.49.

These results are not surprising given the make up of the faculty comments. The comments were wide ranging with both laudatory and critical comments, but there were concerns about the Provost’s administrative appointments and seeming lack of leadership. A detailed summary of the comments follows below.

Some faculty commented that they did not believe the comments would be read, taken seriously or effective; some faculty wrote comments that were *ad hominem* attacks against the Provost. These unprofessional comments are neither useful nor relevant to the goals of the survey. Critical comments on the survey are welcomed, but they need to be relevant to the issue at hand and written in a professional tone and manner.

Overall, the quantitative data demonstrates what faculty members think is important, what Provost Thomas’s areas of strength and weakness are, and how the Provost’s leadership has affected them over the last year. In this sense, the survey has fulfilled its function.

Table A: Provost Summary Report Data

For each of the following series of questions you will be asked to rate how effective Provost Thomas is in performing various aspects of his responsibilities. The scale ranges from 1 (not effective) to 5 (highly effective). If you feel that you do not have enough information to form an opinion please select “No Opinion” or “No Answer.”

Q #	Question Text	Mean (Average) Score	Standard Deviation	N (Total # of Respondents for this question (no opinion/no answer*))
1.	The Provost actively promotes an environment for excellence in: i. Scholarship ii. Teaching iii. Student learning	3.20 3.09 3.26	1.29 1.29 1.28	234, 23/6 233, 24/5 206, 45/11
2.	The Provost actively promotes policies that support the mission of the university relative to: i. Short term strategic planning ii. Long term strategic planning	3.22 3.15	1.32 1.38	193, 56/15 189, 59/13

Q #	Question Text	Mean (Average) Score	Standard Deviation	N (Total # of Respondents for this question (no opinion/no answer*))
3.	The Provost actively promotes policies that foster the activities of your department or academic unit.	2.64	1.36	249, 12/2
4.	The Provost actively promotes the University's academic mission to: i. The local community ii. The western Illinois region iii. Beyond the region	3.12 3.07 2.90	1.33 1.34 1.40	161, 87/16 150, 93/18 133, 108/22
5.	The Provost manages the University's resources well.	2.99	1.31	192, 59/9
6.	The Provost actively promotes resource development for academic affairs.	3.13	1.33	191, 59/8
7.	Overall, the Provost fosters faculty success.	2.87	1.36	239, 16/4
8.	Overall, the Provost fosters an academic environment that is rewarding for: i. Faculty to work ii. Students to learn	2.77 3.17	1.38 1.22	246, 12/3 202, 52/6
9.	Overall, the Provost fosters the academic mission of Western Illinois University.	3.10	1.32	221, 32/8
10.	The Provost fosters highest academic standards for students at Western Illinois University.	3.13	1.31	212, 36/8
11.	The Provost works effectively with the President and Deans to allocate resources for your department or academic unit to achieve Western Illinois University's mission. i. Provost with President ii. Provost with your Dean	3.14 2.64	1.38 1.38	162, 82/14 194, 53/7
12.	The Provost works effectively with other administrators anticipating future needs (i.e. technology, infrastructure, or student services) of: i. Faculty ii. Students iii. Staff	2.83 3.03 2.87	1.38 1.31 1.42	212, 42/4 152, 92/12 143, 98/15
13.	The Provost works effectively with Student Services to foster policies for: student leadership co-curricular participation	No data	No data	No data
14.	The Provost allocates resources so that your department or academic unit's faculty can accomplish their research mission.	2.77	1.37	233, 20/4
15.	Regarding Quad Cities Campus academic programs, the Provost provides leadership in: i. Planning ii. Developing iii. Implementing iv. Assessing	3.12 3.05 3.01 2.93	1.48 1.45 1.49 1.53	94, 133/30 94, 133/30 92, 133/31 86, 139/31
16.	The Provost supports faculty governance at all levels.	2.95	1.43	223, 29/5
17.	The Provost consults the faculty adequately before making important decisions.	2.55	1.47	229, 21/5
18.	Regarding faculty, the Provost's management practices promote: i. Excellence ii. Diversity	2.74 3.65	1.39 1.27	237, 18/1 219, 34/4
19.	Regarding staff, the Provost's management practices promote: i. Excellence ii. Diversity	2.85 3.60	1.46 1.41	123, 111/23 116, 111/26
20.	Regarding student activities, the Provost's management practices promote: i. Excellence ii. Diversity	3.23 3.78	1.37 1.27	135, 104/19 139, 100/19
21.	The Provost makes excellent administrative appointments.	2.49	1.40	198, 52/6
22.	The Provost fosters cooperation among university colleges.	2.76	1.39	185, 58/12

Q #	Question Text	Mean (Average) Score	Standard Deviation	N (Total # of Respondents for this question (no opinion/no answer*))
23.	The Provost ensures that university policies, procedures, and available resources are transparent to: i. Faculty ii. Staff iii. Students	3.93 3.05 3.15	1.45 1.48 1.45	238, 16/1 152, 90/15 143, 94/18
24.	The Provost is accessible to concerns from: i. Faculty ii. Staff iii. Students	3.20 3.21 3.42	1.45 1.50 1.43	230, 21/6 131, 99/26 116, 114/26
25.	The Provost works effectively with the union to administer the collective bargaining agreement.	2.80	1.43	210 37/10
26.	The Provost provides effective leadership in the areas of: i. International education ii. Life long learning iii. The Centennial Honors College	2.93 3.11 3.14	1.38 1.44 1.40	141, 98/15 125, 112/19 121, 109/23
27.	The Provost provides effective supervisory leadership to the Dean or Director of your college or academic unit.	2.54	1.41	182, 64/8
28.	Overall, I rate the Provost	2.86	1.32	248, 0/8

*264 faculty members answered at least one question. Because a person could not answer a question without using the “no answer” button, the total for each question does not add up to 264.

Comments Report Introduction Summary, Provost Performance:

As part of the 2008-2009 Annual Faculty Survey of the Provost/Academic Vice President, the 263 faculty respondents provided 193 comments. The Provost/Academic Vice President has received a print copy of all comments. Though the areas assessed were divided into three categories on the initial review form (total campus enterprise, academic goals, and personnel, faculty relations and campus issues), the comments often did not squarely fit into one of these categories. In light of this we have organized the comments around personal skills related to the role of Provost, overall job efficiency and comments about specific topics.

Personal skills related to the role of Provost:

Many praised various personal characteristics of the Provost such as his being thoughtful, intelligent, respectful, caring and personable. This was supported with comments voicing appreciation for being straightforward, communicating openly and being readily approachable and available for faculty members.

Though good communication was oft cited as a positive attribute, others commented that the Provost has had poor communication in public settings. Several comments indicated a concern that there was too great of a reliance on associates and assistants for decisions and not enough leadership and direct interactions with faculty and departments. Some suggested this would be improved by meeting with individual departments across campus. There were also a few comments suggesting the Provost seemed to micro-manage. A few others opined that the Provost had a poor understanding of diversity on the campus.

Overall job efficiency:

Several positive comments were phrased in terms of nonspecific statements about the Provost's performance. These include comments such as he is doing a wonderful job, he should be commended and he is a refreshing change from the previous Provost. One person exclaimed that he was a great hire. Others lamented that the Provost inherited a "mess," and is quite limited by the resources available to him. Many felt Provost Thomas was doing a very good job in light of the extremely limited budgetary situation and given administrative decisions made by the previous Provost. Many also remarked that there is too little information to provide a fair assessment of job performance at this point.

While many commented on the heavy learning curve the Provost faced, at the same time several were concerned with an apparent lack of understanding of Western Illinois University, its history and issues facing particular departments. A couple comments voiced a concern about a lack of promoting academic excellence, and there were related concerns about the continuing deteriorating infrastructure that hinders the teaching process and perceived lower standards for admissions.

Comments about specific topics:

Two initiatives were clearly identified as very positive. One was the initiation and use of the Provost's Advisory Committee, which was identified as an example of the Provost's desire to improve communication. A second initiative receiving very extensive and strong positive feedback is the newly implemented provision for Provost Travel Grant awards, for which several faculty members voiced appreciation.

Receiving the most negative attention was criticism of the way the recently revised Professional Achievement Awards implementation process took place. Some sympathy was voiced for a poor contract to work with, yet concerns were raised about the lack of understanding of the contract language and apparent inability to grasp particular concerns of various disciplines. A particular aspect of the contract questioned by a few faculty members was the use of student evaluation scores as a measure of teaching performance.

Another topic receiving significant negative attention was the increase in administrative positions, especially in light of limited budgets. The newly created Assistant Vice President position was identified as a particular concern, with criticism regarding not only the creation of the position, but also the salary and the process used in hiring.

Finally, several faculty members questioned the value of the newly implemented fall meeting at the beginning of the semester, commenting that it was not an efficient use of time and in particular the speakers were not beneficial.

Comments Summary Conclusion:

The survey revealed a mixture of views about the Provost's performance, with strong positive claims along with numerous critical concerns. It was apparent that many respondents did not think they had enough knowledge of the Provost in the relatively short time he has been on campus to provide thorough feedback. Statements about communication skills and leadership were especially widely ranged and nearly evenly distributed.