Voices from the MSU Field during Major Faculty Transition Points

Job Candidate Interviews and Faculty Exit Interview Prevalent Qualitative Themes

Comments from Respondents

On Declining an Offer:

"My wife got cold feet…We have an acceptable work/life balance where we are…and my salary there would have had to match (the one here,) which was, I guess, a bit of a stretch, so the offer would have had to knock us off our feet."

"For me, research is really important. It's an important part of what I wanted to keep doing… MSU has some infrastructure to support people that do research, but at some of the other places that was more established, and sort of more universal."

On Choosing to Leave MSU:

"I was…very excited about working with Montana State University but it needed to be accommodative of spousal hire, especially when they are nationally renowned in their field."

"My salary at my new institution is twice what my salary at MSU was…My health coverage is cheaper and more comprehensive than MSU and the institution's contribution to my retirement is several percentage points higher than MSU."

Summary of Significant Findings

Most common reasons for declining offers:
- No employment opportunity for spouse/partner (3 of 7)
- Spouse/partner did not want candidate to accept (3 of 7)
- Geographic location- expensive, difficult for travel (2 of 7)
- Received a more attractive offer (2 of 7)

Most common reasons for leaving MSU:
- Low salary/lack of benefits to compensate (9 of 10)
- Lack of research support at different levels- department head, dean, VPR, provost, and president (4 of 5)
- Geographic location (6 of 7)
- Spouse/partner/family needs (4 of 10)

To Consider: How can MSU improve its efforts to recruit and retain quality faculty members, given salary and cost-of-living constraints?

Data Collected from the Following Faculty Groups:

- **Candidates who declined employment offers** : n=7; 4 male, (2 STEM, 2 SBS) 3 female, (2 STEM, 1 SBS)
- **Faculty members choosing to leave MSU:** n=10, 6 male (all STEM) 4 female (2 STEM, 0 SBS)
- **Faculty members who had recently been reviewed for retention, promotion and/or tenure matched sample** : n=13, 7 male, 6 female, all STEM (3 retention, 8 P&T, 2 promotion to professor)
- *All Interviews conducted and transcribed by experts outside MSU-Bozeman*

Forthcoming: P&T Analyses

Analysis of interview data from faculty members who were reviewed for retention, tenure and promotion during 2013-2014.

Initial impressions:
- Evaluation process varies significantly across departments and disciplines.
- Mentoring and training sessions are perceived as valuable.
- Third year retention review viewed as very useful for feedback and preparation for P&T
- Biggest perceived obstacle is lack of clarity/specificity of performance expectations.

Implications for Project TRACS initiatives

✓ Work/life integration policies (consistently positively evaluated by all three faculty groups).

✓ Opportunities to pursue research and additional research support.

✓ Mentoring/support from department heads and administrators.

✓ Easing the service and administrative burdens placed on junior faculty.

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

www.montana.edu/nsfadvance   ADVANCE Project TRACS