Talking about Leaving: Exit Interviews with NDSU Faculty

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Outline

- Context
- Results of past studies
- Sample and Methodology
- Findings
- Implications
Women as % of total attrition

% of attrition women STEM
% of attrition women NSTEM
% of attrition women ALL
Attrition rates as % of faculty
Attrition rates as % of faculty

- STEM W
- STEM M
- NSTEMW
- NSTEMM
Predictors of attrition

Piercy et al. (2005): “Faculty stay where morale is high; where they feel mentored; where they experience a sense of community; autonomy, and intellectual challenge; where institutional support is clear and pervasive; where they make a decent living, where the definition of scholarship is sufficiently broad to encompass their teaching and scholarship; and where they feel they have a voice and a chance to be part of the leadership” (p. 64).
Possible predictors of attrition

- Resources
  - Salary
  - University funding

- Work/life
  - Partner accommodation
  - Work/family balance support

- Research support and tenure/promotion
  - Research focus
  - Mentoring

- Department and campus climate
Methodology

- Pool identified as tenured or tenure track faculty who left NDSU due to non-retirement, non-death, non-tenure denial, non-disciplinary reasons
- 2010–2012
### Interview pool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>Pool</th>
<th>Pool %</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Associate Dean</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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Methodology

- Email contact/interview request
- Outside interviewer
- Phone interviews
- No recording or transcription
- Aggregate level reporting
Methodology

- Interviews conducted between 7/2013 – 9/2013
- 20 minutes – 90 minutes
## Final pool

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Findings

- Caveat: reporting and internal confidentiality
- Reasons for coming to NDSU – needed a job, from the area/PhD from NDSU, spousal accommodation
- Positives about NDSU
  - Good colleagues, community environment, good resources, good students
  - One third would have remained
- 50% voluntarily described themselves as on track for tenure/promotion
Findings

Primary reason for exit

- Climate: 45%
- Partner: 14%
- Family: 14%
- Other: 27%

Legend:
- Climate
- Partner
- Family
- Other
Findings

- Partner – partner accommodations
- Family – divorce, move to be nearer to family
- Other
- Climate – identified as the primary reason for exit by 10 (45%) of faculty
- Identified as a secondary reason by an additional 7 faculty
- 77% of faculty identified climate as a primary of secondary factor
Findings

- 9 women and 8 men identified climate as a primary or secondary factor.
- For women, this was more likely to take the form of sexism and gender-based harassment (though not all cases for women).
- Sources of toxic climate ranged from staff/administrative assistants, to colleagues, to chairs, Deans, and Provost (colleagues and chairs most common).
Findings

- Other negative factors
- Resources, particularly research support (library, labs, salary, university wide resources)
- Negative perception of upper administration (particularly child care center and NIH decisions)
Process of leaving

- Very little discussion of counteroffers
- Designated administrative remedies not helpful
- Many tried to discuss issues with chairs and deans
- Designated equal opportunity structure not helpful
Findings

- Moves down – temporary positions, research/soft money positions, no spousal accommodations, higher teaching loads
- Positives about new positions
  - More resources (startup, lab space)
  - More positive work environment (collaborators, collegial department, respect, good mentors)
Implications

- Partner accommodations
- Interventions to address toxic climates
Implications

- Formal structures to address collegiality – e.g., Dean’s Fellows for Advancing Collegiality at CWRU (http://www.portal.advance.vt.edu/Advance_2008_PI_Mtg/Garverick_Case_Advancing_Collegiality.pdf)
- A group of informal leaders to generate ideas to advance collegiality in their Department and/or school
- Build awareness of relevant organizational dynamics, leadership opportunities, communication skills, unconscious bias
- Appointed as Dean’s Fellows
- Meet and present ideas to Chairs, Dean and College
CWRU Dean’s Fellows

Collegiality Focus

- Focus not on gender issues specifically, but on an issue with which all can relate
- Collegiality affects collaboration, research quality, faculty attraction & retention
- Women are the canary in the coal mine
CWRU Dean’s Fellows

- Foster Greater Faculty Interaction & Build Intellectual Community
  - Interdepartmental Seminars
  - Faculty Lounge
  - Faculty Recognition Program
- Build Intellectual Community—Strike a Humanistic Tone
  - “Last Lecture” Series
- Lay Foundation for Collaborative Research
  - Track, Reward Joint Research
- Faculty Engagement, Retention
  - Formalize Junior Faculty Mentoring
  - Help Faculty Build Research Capacity
  - Improve Infrastructure
- Accountability
  - Engineering Ombudsperson
- Improve Communication between Faculty & Administration
  - “Town Hall” Meetings
Implications

- Training for chairs and deans to foster more productive department climates and deal with bullying
- Mechanisms for dealing with conflict (e.g., ombudspersons)
- Effective accountability mechanisms (carrots and sticks)