

Results of a faculty survey conducted by the Research and Scholarship Committee of the Faculty Senate, in cooperation with the Office of the Vice President for Research, University of Maine, AY 2015

Objective

As the State's Land Grant and Sea Grant institution, and the State's only comprehensive research university, the University of Maine is obligated to contribute research and scholarship to the State, Nation, and World. UMaine seeks to grow the quantity, quality and impact of its research and scholarship across a broad spectrum of disciplines. This survey was designed to solicit faculty input on how best to facilitate this growth, and what impediments might stand in the way.

This document aims at summarizing and listing the main identified points that came out of the survey, made available for further scrutiny at the senate web site at:

<http://umaine.edu/facultysenate/committees/research-committee/>

Faculty Senate Research and Scholarship Committee Members

- Mauricio Pereira da Cunha (College of Engineering) – *Committee Co-Chair*
- Robert Gundersen (College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture)
- Gordon Hamilton (College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture)
- Zhihe Jin (College of Engineering)
- Scott Johnson (College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture) – *Committee Co-Chair*
- Meghan Sills (Graduate Student Government Representative)
- Clayton Wheeler (College of Engineering)
- Dorothy Klimis Zacas (College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture)

The Survey Instrument

The anonymous survey was implemented using Qualtrics and initially distributed on January 12, 2015 with non-respondents received three follow-up requests during the next two months. The distribution list included 1008 full-time and part-time faculty members and had an 18% response rate. The survey began with three demographic questions:

1. Please choose your faculty status.
 - a. Full Time Faculty Member
 - b. Part Time or Adjunct Faculty Member
2. Please choose the academic area with which you most closely identify.
 - a. Business
 - b. Economics

- c. Education
 - d. Engineering
 - e. Food & Agriculture
 - f. Forestry
 - g. Health Professions
 - h. Human Development
 - i. Liberal Arts
 - j. Natural Sciences (within NSFA)
 - k. Sciences (within CLAS)
 - l. Social Sciences
 - m. Biomedical Sciences
3. Please read carefully and select **ALL OF THE OPTIONS** that describe your experience with conducting sponsored research.
- a. I have never conducted sponsored research.
 - b. I am currently conducting sponsored research.
 - c. I plan to continue or begin or restart conducting sponsored research in the future.
 - d. I have conducted sponsored research for more than 10 total years.
 - e. I have conducted sponsored research for between 5 and 10 total years.
 - f. I have conducted sponsored research for less than 5 total years.

The demographic section was followed by the following two questions:

1. Please suggest up to three things that could be done to improve the sponsored research productivity at UMaine (limit 150 characters per item).
2. Please list up to three impediments which you believe would limit the implementation of your suggested improvements (limit 150 characters per item).

All survey responses were recorded regardless of whether the respondent chose to answer the sponsored research questions. The responses from the survey were summarized in a spreadsheet that can be sorted and filtered according to the demographic data.

Summary of Findings

The survey received 182 responses across all of UMaine's academic colleges. The committee met twice for a total of six hours to group the responses into thematic areas, and then worked by email to develop a spread sheet analyzing the data in a variety of ways. The committee agreed that the following themes captured the major aspects of the responses received.

(1) Research Culture (40.5% of respondents)

Comments in this thematic area varied widely. Some respondents commented on the lack of incentives for doing sponsored research, others commented that UMS does not seem to care about research and graduate education at UMaine. Individuals who made general comments about culture typically also made specific comments, which are reflected in thematic areas below.

(2) Institutional Support (35.9% of respondents), which was further broken down into: (a) Seed Grant and Professional Funds (11.5%), (b) Research Assistantships and graduate student Bridging Funds (9.2%), (c) support for Postdoctoral Researchers (3.8%), and (d) support for Research Infrastructure (18.3%).

(3) Workload (35.1%), which was further broken down into: (a) Heavy Teaching Loads (16%), (b) Standardization of Teaching Loads (5.3%), (c) Administrative and Service Loads trickling down to the faculty (9.9%), (d) the need for more Teaching Assistants to relieve teaching loads (9.2%), and (e) Generic statements about workload (3.1%).

(4) Help with Grant Writing (32.1%).

(5) Return a portion of recovered Indirect Costs from sponsored grants (25.2%).

(6) Help with Grant Management (25.2%).

(7) Help with Budget Preparation and Completion of Forms (14.5%).

(8) Mentoring (6.1%).

(9) Develop a coordinated Outreach program for addressing “Broader Impacts” (2.3%).

(10) Library (1.5%).