

COACHE 2015: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE)¹ Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey assesses faculty experiences regarding several important aspects of their work lives. This Executive Summary highlights some key findings from the survey; however, as COACHE reports and results are viewed by diverse audiences on campus, other salient findings are likely to emerge. Additional detail can be found in materials provided by COACHE.²

Response Rates

VCU term faculty, tenured, and tenure-track faculty were surveyed in January 2015. A total of 632 faculty responded, for an overall response rate of 41% (Table 1). Response rates were higher among female faculty, White faculty, and associate professors.

TABLE 1: ESTIMATED RESPONSE RATES BY TENURE STATUS, SPRING 2015

Sub-group	Term		Tenured/Tenure-track		Total	
	N	Response Rate	N	Response Rate	N	Response Rate
Male	104	31%	195	41%	299	37%
Female	161	41%	172	53%	333	47%
White	215	38%	290	49%	505	44%
Faculty of Color	50	31%	77	36%	127	34%
Instructor	98	37%	N/A	N/A	98	37%
Assistant	124	35%	N/A	N/A	214	39%
Associate	36	46%	158	47%	194	47%
Full	7	30%	118	43%	125	43%
Total	265	37%	367	46%	632	41%

Global Satisfaction

The majority of faculty were satisfied with VCU and their departments as a place to work (Table 2), would choose to work at VCU again if they had to do it over (Figure 1), and would recommend their department as a place to work (Figure 2).³ Faculty cited the quality of their colleagues, support from colleagues, their sense of “fit,” and geographic location as some of the best aspects of working at VCU (Table 3). By contrast, faculty cited compensation, teaching load, quality of facilities, and lack of support for research/creative work as the worst aspects of working at VCU.

¹ Based at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

² COACHE provides a *Provost’s Report* (tenured/tenure-track results), a *Governance and Leadership Report*, spreadsheets with mean scores and frequencies for each item, and a record-level dataset.

³ Unless otherwise noted, percentages in this report exclude faculty who declined to answer, “do not know,” or for whom the item was not applicable. However, for some items, a high percentage of faculty who selected these responses may be indicative of problem or a relatively low priority for faculty.

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY SATISFIED WITH INSTITUTION AND THEIR DEPARTMENT AS A PLACE TO WORK

Faculty	Institution as place to work		Department as place to work	
	VCU	Peer/All ¹	VCU	Peer/All
Term	66	72	73	75
Tenure-track	63	68	65	74
Tenured	59	63	67	70

¹ Results for selected comparison group for tenure/tenure-track faculty and all COACHE institutions for term faculty.

FIGURE 1: IF I HAD TO DO IT ALL OVER, I WOULD AGAIN CHOOSE TO WORK AT THIS INSTITUTION

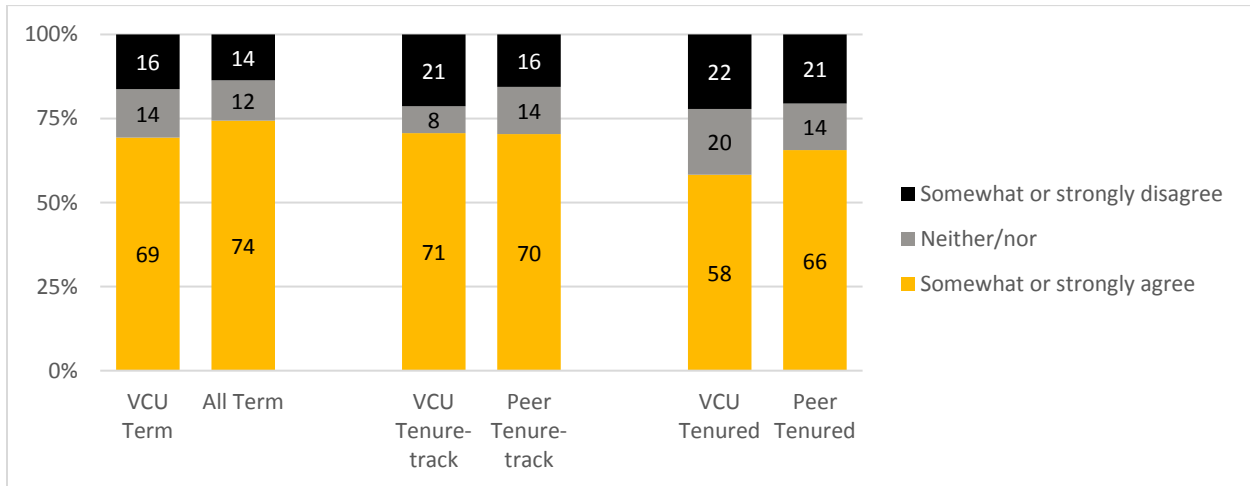


FIGURE 2: IF A CANDIDATE FOR A POSITION ASKED YOU ABOUT YOUR DEPARTMENT AS A PLACE TO WORK, WOULD YOU . . .

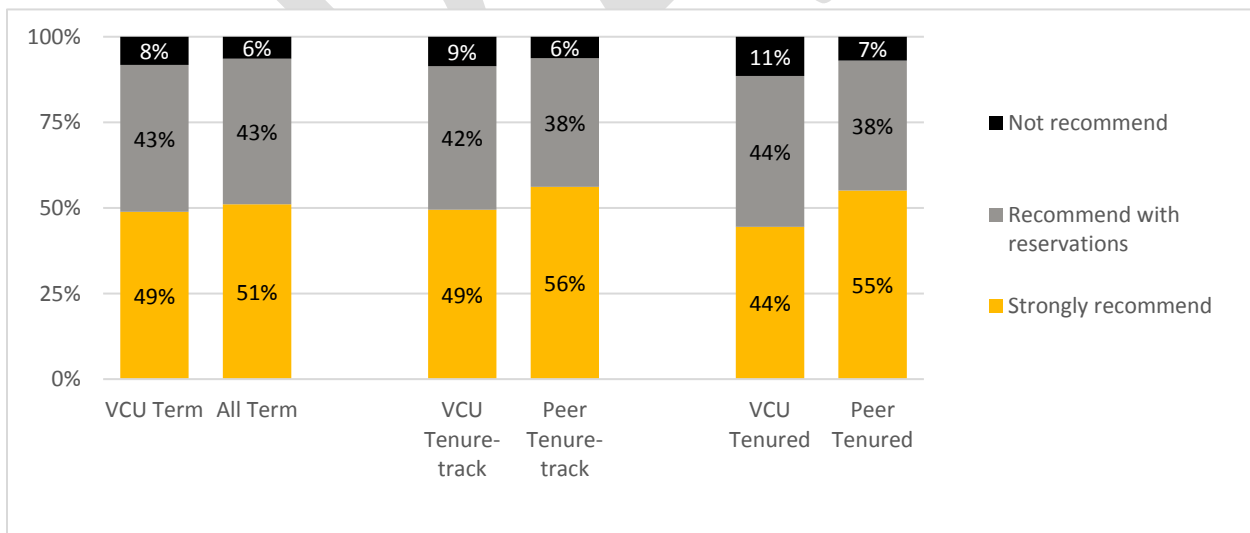


TABLE 3: TWO BEST AND WORST ASPECTS OF WORKING AT VCU

Faculty	Best aspects	Worst aspects
Term	Quality of colleagues; Support of colleagues; and Sense of fit ^a	Compensation; Teaching load
Tenure-track	Quality of colleagues; Geographic location	Compensation; Quality of facilities
Tenured	Quality of colleagues; Geographic location	Compensation; Lack of support for research/creative work

^a Tied as number two

Table 4 shows faculty responses for three items related to campus climate. The majority of faculty felt that VCU leaders and colleagues in their department were committed to supporting and promoting diversity and inclusion. Most also felt a sense of belonging in their department. Nonetheless, fewer faculty of color and faculty who identified as LGBT agreed with these statements.

TABLE 4: FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF CLIMATE

Item	White	Faculty of Color	Female	Male	Non LGBT	LGBT
Agree colleagues are committed to supporting and promoting diversity and inclusion in the dept.	81%	64%	78%	77%	78%	74%
Agree there is visible leadership at VCU for supporting and promoting diversity on campus	76	57	71	73	73	66
Satisfied with how well you fit in your department (e.g. sense of belonging)	69	53	65	66	67	57

Tenured/Tenure-track Faculty Results

COACHE provides a *Provost’s Report* which summarizes results for **tenured/tenure-track faculty**. A Dashboard (Figure 3) featured in this report offers a high-level overview of the results. Benchmark scores⁴, comparison data, and sub-group results can be used to identify areas of strength and concern at VCU.

Benchmark Scores

High benchmark scores represent areas where VCU is best meeting faculty expectations, while low benchmark scores, especially in areas of high importance for the institution, represent potential opportunities for improvement. Across the 19 benchmarks measured by the survey, tenured/tenure-track faculty at VCU provided the highest overall ratings for departmental collegiality, teaching, and collaboration and the lowest for interdisciplinary work, mentoring, and personal and family practices:

⁴ Each benchmark represents the mean score of several items that share a common theme. A benchmark score provides a general sense of how faculty feel about a particular aspect of their work/life.

FIGURE 3: VCU COACHE DASHBOARD, TENURED/TENURE-TRACK FACULTY, SPRING 2015

Virginia Commonwealth University

	YOUR RESULTS COMPARED TO PEERS ◀ AREAS OF STRENGTH IN GREEN										YOUR RESULTS COMPARED TO COHORT ▶ AREAS OF CONCERN IN RED					WITHIN CAMPUS DIFFERENCES*				
	mean	overall	tenured	pre-ten	full	assoc	men	women	white	foc	tenure status	tenured ranks	gender	race	2008					
Nature of work: Research	3.18	◀	◀	▶	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	tenured	assoc			N/A					
Nature of work: Service	3.18	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	tenured	assoc	women	foc	N/A					
Nature of work: Teaching	3.69	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀		assoc		foc	N/A					
Facilities and work resources	3.46	◀	◀	▶	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	tenured				N/A					
Personal and family policies	2.98	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	tenured	assoc	women	foc	N/A					
Health and retirement benefits	3.61	◀	◀	▶	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	tenured		men	foc	N/A					
Interdisciplinary work	2.79	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	tenured	assoc	women		N/A					
Collaboration	3.64	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶		assoc		foc	N/A					
Mentoring	2.92	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	tenured	assoc	women		N/A					
Tenure policies	3.49	◀	N/A	◀	N/A	N/A	◀	◀	◀	◀	N/A	N/A	women	foc	N/A					
Tenure clarity	3.32	◀	N/A	◀	N/A	N/A	▶	◀	◀	◀	N/A	N/A	women	white	N/A					
Tenure reasonableness	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A					
Promotion	3.46	◀	◀	N/A	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	N/A	assoc	women	foc	N/A					
Leadership: Senior	3.25	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶	tenured	assoc		white	N/A					
Leadership: Divisional	3.19	▶	▶	▶	▶	◀	▶	◀	▶	▶	tenured	assoc	women		N/A					
Leadership: Departmental	3.41	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	tenured	assoc			N/A					
Departmental collegiality	3.84	▶	▶	◀	◀	▶	◀	▶	▶	▶				foc	N/A					
Departmental engagement	3.58	▶	▶	◀	◀	▶	▶	▶	▶	▶					N/A					
Departmental quality	3.60	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀			men	foc	N/A					
Appreciation and recognition	3.25	◀	◀	◀	▶	◀	◀	◀	◀	◀	tenured	assoc		foc	N/A					

*A group named in the Within Campus Differences rated the survey item lower than its comparison group. Coloration reflects the magnitude (effect size) of the difference. Additional explanation of effect size differences can be found in the “Background and Definitions” section of this report.

Source: COACHE Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey: Provost's Report, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2015.

- *Interdisciplinary work:* Less than a third of faculty agreed that budget allocations, campus facilities, or the merit, promotion, tenure or evaluation processes promote interdisciplinary work. Nevertheless, VCU faculty scores for these items were similar or higher than at other participating institutions.
- *Mentoring:* The relatively low overall benchmark score for mentoring is driven primarily by low ratings by tenured faculty for the following items: there is effective mentoring of tenured associate professors in their department (18 percent satisfied), and there is support to be good mentors (14 percent satisfied). Furthermore, 12 percent of tenured/tenure-track faculty reported receiving no mentoring within or outside their department. Despite these concerns, most faculty who received mentoring felt it was effective and most faculty who served as mentors found it fulfilling.
- *Personal and family practices:* Faculty satisfaction was highest with: having a flexible workload or modified duties for family reasons; family leave; and work/life balance.⁵ Satisfaction was lowest for housing benefits, tuition waivers, and spousal/partner hiring (roughly half of respondents who rated their satisfaction were satisfied with these benefits). Tenured faculty were less satisfied than tenure-track faculty with housing benefits and tuition waivers, associate professors were less satisfied with spousal hiring and childcare benefits, and female faculty were less satisfied with family leave.

Comparison to Peers

Data from other institutions provide context for interpreting VCU's performance and can also highlight areas of distinction. COACHE identifies areas for which faculty ratings are first or second among a selected "peer" comparison group⁶ and in the top 30 percent of all COACHE institutions as areas of strength (identified by green triangles in Figure 3). Areas of concern reflect those areas for which faculty ratings are fifth or sixth within the peer group and in the bottom 30 percent of all COACHE institutions (shown as red triangles in Figure 3).

VCU did not have any areas that met COACHE's threshold for areas of strength; however, there were areas in which VCU faculty had positive results relative to *either* its peer group *or* all COACHE institutions: interdisciplinary work and collaboration; senior and divisional leadership; and departmental collegiality and engagement.

Two areas were identified as concerns for tenured/tenure-track faculty at VCU based on benchmark scores that were lower than peer institutions⁷ and most similar sized institutions:

- *Nature of work: service:* Compared to faculty at peer institutions, VCU faculty were less satisfied with the number of committees on which they serve and their discretion to choose committees (differences for other items were small)(Table 5). Faculty satisfaction with items in this benchmark ranged from 33 percent for support for faculty in leadership roles to 68 percent for number of student advisees. Tenured associate professors were less satisfied than full professors with the number of students they advise.

⁵ Excludes faculty who did not know, declined to answer, believed the policy was not offered at VCU, and for whom the item was not applicable. However, examining the percentages of faculty who selected those responses may provide some indication of the importance of the policy for different sub-groups.

⁶ VCU's peer group consists of the following institutions: U. of Alabama, U. of Connecticut, U. of NC – Chapel Hill, U. of Virginia, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

⁷ It should be noted that several institutions in this group are aspirational peers.

- *Departmental leadership*: VCU's benchmark score was lower than all six peers and was in the bottom decile for all COACHE institutions. In fact, VCU's scores were lower than other institutions for nearly all sub-groups of faculty (Figure 4). Despite comparing unfavorably with other institutions, the majority of faculty were satisfied with items in this benchmark. Faculty satisfaction ranged from 51 percent (for stated priorities) to 64 percent (for fair evaluations). Tenured associate professors were least satisfied with departmental leadership.

TABLE 5: TENURED/TENURE-TRACK FACULTY AREA OF CONCERN: NATURE OF WORK - SERVICE

Benchmark Item	Compared to Peers (◀) All COACHE (▶)	Mean		Percent Satisfied	
		VCU	Peer	VCU	Peer
Number of student advisees	◀▶	3.62	3.44	68%	65%
Attractiveness of committees	◀▶	3.42	3.44	53	52
Time spent on service	◀▶	3.33	3.35	52	55
Number of committees	◀▶	3.30	3.41	50	56
Discretion to choose committees	◀▶	3.32	3.53	49	52
Equitability of committee assignments	◀▶	2.99	3.02	40	41
Support for faculty in leadership roles	◀▶	2.68	2.69	33	39

Note: Areas of strength denoted by green triangles. Areas of red denoted by red triangles.

FIGURE 4: DEPARTMENTAL LEADERSHIP BENCHMARK RESULTS COMPARED TO PEERS, SPRING 2015

	YOUR RESULTS COMPARED TO PEERS ◀					AREAS OF STRENGTH IN GREEN				
	YOUR RESULTS COMPARED TO COHORT ▶					AREAS OF CONCERN IN RED				
	mean	overall	tenured	pre-ten	full	assoc	men	women	white	foc
Benchmark: Leadership: Departmental	3.41	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶
Head/Chair: Pace of decision making	3.36	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶
Head/Chair: Stated priorities	3.29	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶
Head/Chair: Communication of priorities	3.37	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶
Head/Chair: Ensuring faculty input	3.40	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶
Head/Chair: Fairness in evaluating work	3.66	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶	◀▶

Source: COACHE Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey: Provost's Report, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2015.

Within Campus Differences

Even if the campus performs well compared to other institutions in a particular area, differences between subgroups can suggest a problem. Disparities based on rank, race, or gender can be masked in an overall benchmark score (especially if a particular sub-group had fewer responses). The right side of Figure 3 highlights differences across sub-groups of faculty. The name of the group with the *lower* rating appears in the cell. The color of the cell indicates the magnitude of the difference, as noted in the figure. Ideally, this section of the figure would be blank, suggesting parity across sub-groups.

There are several notable differences among sub-groups at VCU:

- Tenured faculty reported lower scores than tenure-track faculty, especially for research and all levels of leadership.⁸

⁸ The large difference in the mentoring benchmark scores for tenured versus tenure-track faculty reflects low ratings by tenured faculty for two items that were not rated by tenure-track faculty (see p. 3 of this report).

- Among tenured faculty, associate professors provided lower ratings than full professors, especially for research and teaching, mentoring, collaboration, promotion, and appreciation and recognition.⁹
- Female faculty reported slightly lower scores than male faculty in a number of areas, including service, personal and family policies, interdisciplinary work, mentoring, tenure policies and clarity, promotion, and divisional leadership.
- Faculty of color reported lower scores than white faculty in a number of areas, especially health and retirement benefits, departmental quality, and departmental collegiality.

Term Faculty Satisfaction

Term faculty benchmark scores were highest for departmental collegiality, health and retirement benefits, and teaching; and lowest for research, divisional leadership, and interdisciplinary work (Table 6). There were several significant differences in faculty perceptions of their work-life among sub-groups of term faculty at VCU (sex and race), and also when compared to tenured and tenure-track faculty at VCU.

TABLE 6: VCU TERM FACULTY BENCHMARK SCORES COMPARED TO OTHER VCU FACULTY AND TERM FACULTY AT OTHER COACHE INSTITUTIONS

Benchmark	Overall Mean	Sex	Race	Term v. Tenured	Term v. Tenure-Track	VCU Term v. All COACHE
Departmental collegiality	3.96	female	FoC	tenured	tenure-track	COACHE
Health and retirement benefits	3.86			tenured	tenure-track	COACHE
Leadership: Departmental	3.76	female	FoC	tenured		
Nature of work: Teaching	3.76		FoC		tenure-track	
Facilities and work resources	3.62	female	FoC	tenured		
Collaboration	3.58		FoC		term	
Departmental engagement	3.57	female	FoC			COACHE
Departmental quality	3.53		FoC			
Nature of work: Service	3.43		FoC	tenured	tenure-track	
Personal and family policies	3.35	female	white	tenured	tenure-track	
Appreciation and recognition	3.29	female	FoC	tenured	term	
Leadership: Senior	3.26			tenured	term	
Mentoring	3.24			tenured		
Nature of work: Research	3.21	female	FoC	tenured	term	
Leadership: Divisional	3.13	female			term	VCU
Interdisciplinary work	2.89	female	FoC	tenured		

Note: Groups named in the table rated the benchmark lower than its comparison group. Coloring denotes effect size of differences (no color = small, yellow = medium, and orange = large).

⁹ According to COACHE, dissatisfaction experienced by these mid-career faculty is common across institutions. Achieving tenure is often accompanied by an increased teaching load, greater expectations for service and advising, a more competitive market for grants, new requirements to track student progression, and the disappearance of mentoring programs.

VCU term faculty benchmark scores compared most favorably to other COACHE institutions in the areas of departmental collegiality; health and retirement benefits; and departmental engagement.¹⁰ Their benchmark score was lowest relative to other institutions for divisional leadership:

- *Divisional Leadership:* Among the items in this benchmark, VCU’s mean scores were lower than at other institutions for each item (Table 7). Less than half of term faculty were satisfied with their Dean or division head’s: pace of decision making, stated priorities, communication of priorities, and ensuring faculty input. Only 26 percent agreed they received sufficient support from their Dean to adapt to changing priorities.¹¹

TABLE 7: TERM FACULTY AREA OF CONCERN: DIVISIONAL LEADERSHIP

Benchmark Item	Mean		Percent Satisfied	
	VCU	Peer	VCU	Peer
<i>My dean’s or division head’s:</i>				
Pace of decision-making	3.11	3.36	40%	48%
Stated priorities	3.17	3.38	45	50
Communication of priorities	3.14	3.34	43	49
Ensuring opportunities for faculty input into school priorities	3.07	3.24	43	45
Sufficient support for adapting to changing mission ¹	2.49	2.74	26	32

¹ Related item not part of benchmark score.

Shared Governance

COACHE provides a *Leadership and Governance Report* which summarizes results for VCU term and tenured/tenure-track faculty in five areas related to effective academic governance.¹² Across the five governance benchmarks, overall faculty ratings were highest for shared purpose, followed by trust, productivity, understanding, and adaptability (Figure 5). As shown in Figure 5, tenured faculty provided lower ratings for almost every item, especially the overall effectiveness of shared governance and faculty and administration having equal say in decisions. Table 8 shows VCU faculty ratings for select shared governance survey items (and provides results for other participating COACHE institutions for context).

¹⁰ Term faculty feedback was collected as part of an optional module. Item and benchmark results are available, but COACHE does not provide a dashboard highlighting strengths and challenges for these faculty.

¹¹ Percentages exclude those who declined to answer or for whom the question was not applicable.

¹² COACHE is still testing the validity of these new survey items. While COACHE provides comparison data from other institutions, it suggests the utility of this data may be limited due to varying governance cultures and expectations.

FIGURE 5: COACHE SHARED GOVERNANCE DASHBOARD, 2015

Virginia Commonwealth University

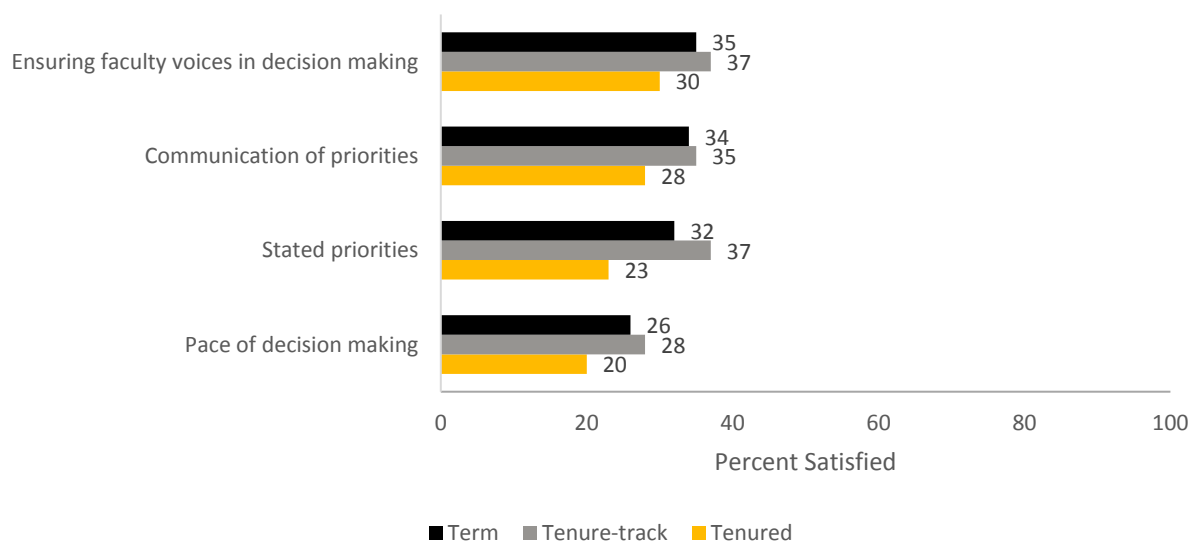
	Virginia Commonwealth University		2015 cohort		% rank relative to all institutions	pre-tenure compared to tenured	<i>Effect Size Differences between Groups</i>			
	mean	sd	mean	sd			small	moderate	large	faculty of color compared to white faculty
							ntt compared to tenure stream (ten-strm)	assoc compared to fulls	women compared to men	
Governance: Productivity	2.85	0.99	2.95	0.23	35%	tenured	ten-strm	assoc	men	
Overall effectiveness of shared governance	2.70	1.22	2.83	0.30	37%	tenured	ten-strm		men	w hite
My committees make measureable progress towards goals	3.17	1.00	3.24	0.16	35%	tenured	ten-strm		men	foc
Public recognition of progress	2.78	1.04	2.86	0.23	45%	tenured	ten-strm	assoc		
Governance: Trust	2.91	0.94	3.03	0.20	27%	tenured		assoc		
I understand how to voice opinions about policies	2.81	1.20	3.11	0.24	4%					
Care rules about the roles of faculty and administration	2.94	1.12	2.99	0.23	43%	tenured				
Faculty and admin follow rules of engagement	3.10	1.06	3.11	0.24	51%	tenured	ten-strm			foc
Faculty and admin have an open system of communication	2.84	1.08	2.91	0.25	45%	tenured	ten-strm	assoc		
Faculty and admin discuss difficult issues in good faith	3.06	1.06	3.08	0.28	51%	tenured		assoc		
Governance: Shared Purpose	2.96	0.96	2.99	0.26	49%	tenured	ten-strm	assoc		
Important decisions are not made until there is consensus	2.52	1.11	2.57	0.28	51%	tenured	ten-strm			w hite
Admin ensures sufficient time for faculty input	2.94	1.05	2.89	0.25	61%	tenured		assoc		w hite
Faculty and admin respectfully consider the other's view	3.06	1.05	3.03	0.28	53%	tenured	ten-strm			
Faculty and admin have a shared sense of responsibility	3.28	1.08	3.41	0.29	37%	tenured	ten-strm		men	foc
Governance: Understanding	2.81	0.94	2.89	0.22	37%	tenured	ten-strm	assoc		w hite
Faculty governance structures offer opportunities for input	2.81	1.13	2.98	0.23	24%	tenured	ten-strm			
Admin communicate rationale for important decisions	2.86	1.08	2.89	0.25	49%	tenured		assoc	men	w hite
Faculty and admin have equal say in decisions	2.57	1.12	2.61	0.30	51%	tenured	ten-strm	assoc		w hite
Faculty and admin define decision criteria together	2.93	1.08	2.94	0.24	53%	tenured	ten-strm	assoc		
Governance: Adaptability	2.79	0.86	2.76	0.21	57%	tenured	ten-strm			
Shared governance holds up in unusual circumstances	2.75	0.97	2.76	0.26	45%	tenured	ten-strm			
Institution regularly reviews effectiveness of governance	2.76	1.04	2.60	0.23	82%	tenured	ten-strm			
Institution cultivates new faculty leaders	2.83	1.02	2.91	0.26	39%			assoc		

TABLE 8: FACULTY RESPONSES FOR SELECT SHARED GOVERNANCE ITEMS

Survey Item	VCU	2015 Cohort
The shared governance system is effective	33%	40%
Faculty leaders and administrators regularly. . .		
Have an open system of communication for making decisions	29	29
Share a sense of responsibility for the welfare of the institution	51	52
Discuss difficult issues in good faith	37	37
Have an equal say in governance matters	22	20
Respectfully consider one another’s views before making decisions	29	35
Important decisions are not made until consensus is achieved	22	18
Senior administrators regularly ensure there is sufficient time for faculty input	33	28
Understand process by which they can express opinions about policies	34	40

The report also compares faculty ratings of University and faculty leadership at VCU. Similarly to the other levels of leadership, faculty rated their satisfaction with the faculty governing body’s:¹³ pace of decision making; stated priorities; communication of priorities; and faculty voices in decision making. Overall, faculty were less satisfied with faculty leadership than with senior, divisional, and departmental leadership. VCU ratings for faculty leadership were also in the bottom 25 percent of participating COACHE institutions; however, COACHE cautions that varying governance cultures and expectations may make cross-institutional comparisons less useful than internal comparisons. Within VCU, tenured faculty were least satisfied with faculty leadership (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6: TENURED FACULTY LEAST SATISFIED WITH FACULTY LEADERSHIP



¹³ Respondents identified their faculty leadership as: Faculty Senate (69 percent), faculty of the whole (24 percent), and other (7 percent).