MEMORANDUM

Prepared by: Annaia Bokungu Ndjoli, Tyler Clark, Gabriel Keney, Aileen Reid

Prepared for: Cerise Glenn Manigault, Julia Smith, Malcolm Schug, Shelly Brown-Jeffy

Date: March 7, 2022

Purpose: This memorandum provides a summary of the findings from the review of literature related to faculty exit interviews and job satisfaction.

Overview: The Spartans ADVANCE Evaluation team conducted a preliminary literature search on faculty exit interviews in an effort to enhance exit interview practices at UNCG. First, we reviewed the exit interview study conducted by the University of Michigan (ADVANCE Program, 2020) on their tenured and tenure-track faculty members. Subsequent studies provide additional insight on best practices related to exit interviews and their effectiveness. The findings of the literature search have been organized accordingly.

University of Michigan Exit Interview Study
The University of Michigan (UM) study is important because it is one of the only studies conducted by a university examining the many factors that influence faculty attrition. The study was conducted over the course of eight years, and a total of 218 faculty members were interviewed with the largest data collection in 2011. Of the existing sample, 43% were female and about 31% were faculty of color. The majority of those interviewed were either associate or full professors (63%) and the rest were assistant professors (37%). During this study, they found that several factors contributed to faculty attrition as well as the gender and racial involved within those factors; further findings can be seen below in the "results" section. (ADVANCE Program, 2020)

Results
The majority (94%) of staff stated that they left to pursue another academic position at a different institution. As for gender differences, women were more likely to report that fellow faculty members were supportive but concerned about their decision to leave. Women were also more likely than their male counterparts to seek advice from colleagues, mentors, and friends at the university. The reasons given for this decision to leave include the job climate such as poor work-life balance and negative interactions with other colleagues.

Within the study, there were also rank-specific differences for leaving. Half of the senior faculty left due to insufficient opportunities for leadership, and more than one-third of junior faculty members considered mentoring/professional development in their decision to leave. Further observations of racial and gender differences revealed that some female faculty members would have considered staying at UM if they had been given a counteroffer. Compared to their white counterparts, faculty of color who received counteroffers and declined did so because they perceived a more negative school/departmental climate at UM. Furthermore, faculty of color were more likely to suggest improvement to the school climate and better administrative accountability and transparency.

Although the University of Michigan study has proven to be a great example of how faculty exit interviews should be, they failed to mention what has actually been done to improve faculty retention at the University. The UM exit interview protocol is available to the general public here. However, given that the UM study did not mention best practices, we examined other studies to fill that gap.

Exit Interview Best Practices
Exit interviews must be standardized and assure confidentiality (Neal, 1989; Spain & Groysberg, 2016). But what is the most suitable time to conduct faculty exit interviews? Nelson (2021), argued that it is ideal to conduct exit interviews while the person is still engaged with the organization, however, it has also been suggested that it's best to do it once the departing employee has fully exited the organization (9 Essentials for Exit Interviews, 2008). The Harvard Business Review (2016) recommends conducting the interview while the employee is no longer engaged with the organization because they tend to be much more relaxed.

Some of the research on exit interviews have found that multiple factors impact honesty. One of them being fear of repercussions (Johns, 2006). Another factor impacting honesty is if the individual believes that there will be negative consequences for those who mistreated them or if they believe that the good of the company is intertwined with the good of the individual (Giacalone, Knouse, & Montagliani, 1997). Also, employees tend to consider their relationship with coworkers and supervisors when evaluating the effectiveness of an organization (Giacalone et al., 1997), and might withhold negative information to avoid hurting others (Knouse et al., 1996).

In terms of the best strategies needed to conduct an effective interview, the interviewer should be well trained and well aware of some of the biases that the exiting employee may have (Neal, 1989; Spain & Groysberg, 2016). Face-to-face interviews could be more ideal due to their high completion rate and higher quality data collection, however, open-ended questions might be too subjective and therefore hard to interpret (Nelson, 2021). Moreover, it has also been advised to conduct the exit interview with the use of an online survey because they tend to be less costly and easier to analyze. Online interviews might also be ideal because they are not prone to interviewer bias and feel less confrontational to the interviewee (Nelson, 2021; 9 Essentials for Exit Interviews, 2008). The Harvard Business Review (2016) has found that phone interviews are just as effective as in person interviews, however, they've been shown to render more honest responses from former employees (Spain & Groysberg, 2016).

In a study conducted by Zimmerman et al. (2020), they found that faculty who expressed intent to leave all have quite an identifiable profile. They typically leave for reasons related to lack of opportunities for growth in one's position and due to issues with supervision (Zimmerman et al., 2020). It is important to pay close attention to such trends and include items assessing the reasons given for leaving in order to develop strategies to improve within those problem areas (Klotz & Bolino, 2019). It has also been suggested to informally ask coworkers closest to the departing employees because they might provide more insight on why they've decided to leave (Klotz & Bolino, 2019). Paying close attention to what the former employee does upon departure might also provide some insight into their reason for leaving that might not be related to leadership or lack of growth opportunities (Klotz & Bolino, 2019).

References

ADVANCE Program, University of Michigan (2020, October). *Exit interview study of tenured/tenure track faculty: Exploring factors related to job satisfaction and departure.* https://advance.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/UM-ExitInterviewStudy2019ReportFInal-1.pdf

Giacalone, R. A., Knouse, S. B. & Montagliani, A. (1997). Motivation for and prevention of honest responding in exit interviews and surveys. *The Journal of Psychology Interdisciplinary and Applied, 131*(4), 438-448.

Johns, R. E. (2006). Exit interviews: Strategic tool or deceptive process?. In *Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management Conference*. ANZAM.

Klotz AC, Bolino MC. Do you really know why employees leave your company? *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2019/07/do-you-really-know-why-employees-leave-your-company. Published July 31, 2019.

Knouse, S. B., Beard, J. W., Pollard, H. G., & Giacalone, R. A. (1996). Willingness to discuss exit interview topics: The impact of attitudes toward supervisor and authority. *The Journal of Psychology, 130*(3), 249-261.

McDowell, E. E. (2000). An investigation of the academic exit interview. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED439472.pdf

Neal, J. G. (1989). Employee turnover and the exit interview. *Library Trends, 38*(1), 32-39. https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/7646/librarytrendsv38i1f_opt.pdf

Nelson, R. M. (2021). Faculty exit interviews. *Association of American Medical Colleges*. Retrieved from: https://www.aamc.org/professional-development/affinity-groups/gfa/faculty-exit-interview

Spain, E., & Groysberg, B. (2016). Making exit interviews count. *Harvard Business Review*, *94*(4), 88-95.

Video Education Australasia. (2017). 9 Essentials for exit interviews. https://fod.infobase.com/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=129141#

Young, C., & Hagerty, R. (2007, February). Blending qualitative and quantitative methods for program evaluation: The application and insights of the exit interview. In the 4th *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association Teaching and Learning Conference, Charlotte, North Caroline*.

Zimmermann EM, Mramba LK, Gregoire H, Dandar V, Limacher MC, Good ML. (2020). Characteristics of faculty at risk of leaving their medical schools: an analysis of the StandPoint™ Faculty Engagement Survey. *J Healthc Leadersh*. 2020;12:1-10. doi:10.2147/JHL.S225291.