

Every three years, the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA conducts a national survey of faculty members, to measure their activities, satisfaction, and perceptions about their roles. What follows is a synopsis of thematic areas in which GVSU faculty members’ responses were significantly different (on average) from those of faculty at comparable participating universities*.

Invitations to take the online survey were sent to all benefit-eligible GVSU faculty during the Winter 2020 semester. Of 1,200 invitees, 472 (39%) responded. Because participation is voluntary, the GVSU respondent population is not representative of the full GVSU faculty. In addition, tenured and tenure-track faculty comprise more of the GVSU response population compared to the peer respondents (81.1% vs 67.6%). That imbalance may explain part or all of the differences noted here.

All GVSU responses were collected before instruction was shifted to remote on March 11, 2020.

Satisfaction: The most salient pattern in the data is that GVSU respondents express more satisfaction with the terms and conditions of their employment than respondents from comparison schools.

% indicating they’re either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with...	GVSU	Peers
Salary	73.9%	50.1%
Teaching Load	69.7%	54.1%
Relative Equity of Salary & Job Benefits	58.0%	45.0%
Retirement Benefits	85.1%	74.8%
Opportunity for Scholarly Pursuits	63.5%	50.3%
Health Benefits	84.7%	77.3%
Prospects for Career Advancement	59.4%	49.0%
Institutional Support for Work-Life Balance	57.3%	52.8%
Overall Job	82.5%	78.0%

In addition, GV respondents’ ratings were significantly more positive than peers’ regarding relationships with administration, respect for student affairs staff, institutional support for faculty development, and clarity of promotion criteria. They also indicate less stress related to job security. All of these are almost surely biased by the high proportion of tenure-stream GVSU faculty though.

This is the first year since 2004 or earlier that GV respondents did not express above-average satisfaction with the quality of students. This year, 76.2% were satisfied or very satisfied, compared to 76.0% (NSD) of peers.

Teaching Load: GVSU respondents were less likely to report teaching four or more courses in the winter 2020 semester (22.3% vs 30.1%). GVSU respondents are more satisfied with their teaching load and fewer reported “extensive” stress resulting from teaching loads (16.8% vs 24.9%). The weekly time GVSU faculty reported spending on scheduled teaching (ordinal mean 3.72 vs 3.68 NSD) and preparation for teaching (o.m. 4.23 vs 4.17 NSD) was not less than peers, however.

Research Productivity: GVSU respondents reported more published articles (62.3% with 3 or more vs 52.7%) and more published professional writings in the last 3 years (59.7% with 2 or more vs 49.0%). GVSU respondents report more satisfaction with their opportunities for scholarship, and report spending more hours weekly on research and scholarly writing (ordinal mean 2.52 vs 2.35). However, they were also more likely to report stress from research or publishing demands (73.4% vs 63.5%).

Advising: Some differences between GVSU’s faculty advising model and those of participating peers are apparent in the results. GVSU respondents were more likely to say they had more than 10 advisees (42.8% vs 33.5%), but their average weekly time investment was similar (ordinal mean 2.20 vs 2.27 NSD), and among “full-time undergraduate faculty” the percentage who reported spending 5+ hours per week was significantly below peers

(24.8% vs 30.2%). GVSU respondents indicated less activity than peers in advising students about high impact academic opportunities (ordinal mean 2.35 vs 2.48), career and post-completion goals (o.m.2.54 vs 2.63), or academic support options (o.m. 2.35 vs 2.45). Fewer GV faculty indicated that they had advised a student group involved in service or volunteer work (44.8% vs 51.6%).

Community Engagement: The HERI construct “Institutional Priority: Civic Engagement” indicates a small but statistically significant advantage for GVSU over peers (weighted ordinal mean 51.3 vs 50.0), based mostly on higher perceived institutional emphasis on partnerships with surrounding communities (o.m. 2.78 vs 2.57).

Inclusion & Diversity: More GVSU faculty indicated that they felt unprepared for conversations about diversity issues in their classrooms (28.7% vs 21.3%). GV respondents were less likely to say they included readings on race/ethnicity issues (ordinal mean 1.92 vs 2.16) or gender issues (o.m. 1.82 vs 2.04) in their courses. They indicated a lower perceived institutional priority on “develop[ing] an appreciation of multiculturalism” (ordinal mean 2.71 vs 2.85), but they also indicated that our hiring practices are effective at increasing faculty diversity (o.m. 2.92 vs 2.76). They were less likely than peers to accept responsibility for educating students on certain inclusion-related issues, but please see below on that subject.

Role of faculty in Student Development: Similar to past years, GVSU respondents indicted a less important role for faculty in most facets of student development:

Ordinal mean: Agreement that it is their role to ...	GVSU	Peers
Develop students’ moral character	3.03	3.22
Provide for students’ emotional development	2.96	3.14
Help students develop personal values	3.09	3.26
Enhance students’ knowledge & appreciation of other racial/ethnic groups	3.23	3.36
Encourage respect for different beliefs	3.56	3.64
Prepare students for graduate or advanced education	3.43	3.51

GV respondents are also perceive a low institutional priority on developing students’ leadership ability (ordinal mean 2.64 vs 2.76) and developing an appreciation of multiculturalism. The fact that there are none of these priorities in the survey to which GVSU faculty assign higher value than peers (even nominally, much less with statistical significance) leads me to wonder about the proper interpretation. The responses may indicate a different implicit scale among the GVSU respondents, rather than a lower valuation of the goals, so I advise particular caution.

* Comparator institutions: Highly selective 4-year public colleges participating in 2019-20 HERI survey ...California State Univ Maritime, California State Univ Long Beach, Georgia Coll & State Univ, Truman State Univ. References above to “peers” mean responding faculty from these institutions.

All reported comparisons refer to statistically significant differences (p<0.05) unless “NSD” (no significant difference) is noted.