

**Report of the  
Boulder Faculty Assembly Administrator Appraisal Committee<sup>1</sup>  
Concerning  
Robert Davis, Dean of the College of Engineering and Applied Science**

**Spring, 2007**

**SURVEY DESIGN**

The Administrator Appraisal Program (AAP) seeks to provide in-depth feedback with a high rate of faculty response, to assure a representative survey. Faculty has the opportunity to provide AAP feedback to the review/ reappointment process when the president, chancellor, provost, or the dean of their school or college is undergoing the third- or fifth-year review. Faculty are also requested to complete and return a “BFA Satisfaction Survey” addressing campus-wide concerns such as salary and benefit programs. With regard to the appraisal of administrators, the questionnaire contains items addressing the effectiveness of each administrator’s performance in key areas. Fifteen items--addressing general administrative style, salary process, and meeting diversity goals--are common for all administrators. The remaining questions are performance-based and tailored to the specific circumstances of the administrator being reviewed and his/her school or college. Faculty members respond to the items using a 5 –point effectiveness scale, in which *1 = very ineffective*, *3 = effective*, and *5 = very effective*, plus a "Don't Know" option. In addition, space is provided for faculty members to write open ended comments.

The evaluation process of Dean Davis was designed to take into account different levels of faculty interaction with the dean. Some faculty members and administrators have regular contact with the dean and therefore have an intimate knowledge about many aspects of his performance. Other faculty, having less frequent contact with the dean, may be less well informed about these issues.

To address the problem of different levels of familiarity with the dean’s performance, the AAP Committee sent the questionnaire to all College of Engineering and Applied Science faculty designated as eligible by the BFA (the population of interest), as well as a subsample of faculty especially likely to be knowledgeable about Dean Davis's role as dean (“knowledgeable sample”). The latter group includes faculty members from colleges/schools other than engineering.

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<sup>1</sup> The members of the committee are Arturo Aldama, Sedat Biringen, M. Deane Bowers, Paul Erhard, Lawrence Frey, Anne Heinz, Ken Iwamasa (Vice Chair) Jeff Schiel, Robert Schulzinger (Chair), Daniel Sher.

## **SURVEY PARTICIPATION**

The AAP Committee and Boulder Faculty Assembly have agreed, on the advice of faculty who specialize in survey methods, that a 60% return rate is needed for a representative statistical study. The knowledgeable subsample met this requirement, with an 85% response rate (17 responses from 20 faculty surveyed) and the entire population sample met this requirement with a 64% response rate (117 respondents from 182 faculty surveyed).

## **AIMS OF THE AAP EVALUATION**

The AAP Committee seeks to provide a developmental picture of strengths and weaknesses for administrators standing for review or reappointment in AY 2006-2007. Broadly viewed, we considered four general categories in evaluating responses regarding Dean Davis:

**Strengths to Build On** represent items rated as highly effective by a substantial majority of the faculty (60% or higher 4 or 5 ratings).

**Assets to Protect** are items where at least half of the responding faculty found the dean's performance to be better than effective (50% - 59% of respondents gave ratings of 4 or 5). Thus, any reallocation of effort to correct weaknesses or changes in priorities should try to protect these strengths.

**Issues to be Mindful Of** are items judged to be effective or better by the majority of the respondents, but less than effective by a significant minority of respondents (25% - 39% ratings of 1 or 2).

**Areas that Need Improvement** are items judged by a significant fraction of the faculty as unsatisfactory (40% or more 1 or 2 ratings).

## **OVERVIEW**

On 19 of 21 questions, more than 60% of the "population" sample gave the dean ratings of 3-4-5; more than 60% of the knowledgeable respondents gave the dean ratings of 3, 4, or 5 on all the 21 questions. On three items, the population sample gave more than 40% 1-2 ratings, qualifying these items as areas that need improvement; in the knowledgeable sample none of the items received more than 40% 1-2 ratings and therefore there were no areas that need improvement. Similarly in the population sample responses, 10 of the 21 items received 25-39% 1-2 ratings, qualifying these items as issues to be mindful of, whereas none of the items were qualified in that category by the knowledgeable's responses.

### **Strengths to Build On (60% or more ratings of 4 or 5)**

The committee defined these to be areas in which 60% or more of the respondents gave ratings of 4 or 5. The dean received ratings in this category on 15 of the 21 questions in the knowledgeable sample. These strengths are:

- *Supporting high-quality research*
- *Making decisions in a timely fashion*
- *Being receptive to concerns of faculty*
- *Being receptive to concerns of students*
- *Managing conflicts among faculty*
- *Treating faculty fairly and inclusively*
- *Appropriately involving faculty in decisions*
- *Acting with integrity*
- *Fostering equitable salary system*
- *Overseeing faculty personnel matters*
- *Providing for faculty development/support*
- *Providing leadership in setting objectives*
- *Promoting research in core/emerging areas*
- *Promoting educational excellence/learning experience*
- *Overseeing the college budget*

According to the population sample responses, there were two areas that received more than 60% of ratings of 4 or 5 and qualify as strengths to build on:

- *Making decisions in a timely fashion*
- *Overseeing the college budget*

### **Assets to Protect (50 - 59% of ratings of 4 or 5)**

The remaining six areas fell into the category of assets to protect in the knowledgeable sample. These were:

- *Supporting high-quality teaching*
- *Supporting high quality service*
- *Creating an atmosphere of trust*
- *Managing conflicts among staff*
- *Appropriately involving faculty in decisions*
- *Making progress towards diversity goals*

In the population sample, there were also six areas that can be grouped as assets to protect:

- *Supporting high-quality research*
- *Acting with integrity*
- *Overseeing faculty personnel matters*
- *Providing leadership in setting objectives*
- *Promoting research in core/emerging areas*
- *Promoting educational excellence in student learning experience*

### **Issues to be Mindful Of (25- 39% of ratings of 1 or 2)**

In the knowledgeable group responses, no area fell in this category. However, in the population sample, 10 items received 25 - 39% ratings of 1 or 2:

- *Supporting high-quality service*
- *Being receptive to concerns of faculty*
- *Being receptive to concerns of staff*
- *Being receptive to concerns of students*
- *Managing conflicts among faculty*
- *Treating faculty fairly and inclusively*
- *Appropriately involving faculty in decisions*
- *Fostering equitable salary system*
- *Providing for faculty development and support*
- *Providing leadership in setting objectives*

### **Areas In Need of Improvement (40% or more ratings of 1 or 2)**

In the knowledgeable group responses, no items fell in this category. In the population sample, 3 items received 40% or more ratings of 1 or 2 and were identified as areas in need of improvement:

- *Supporting high-quality teaching*
- *Creating an atmosphere of trust*
- *Managing conflicts among staff*

### **Open-ended Comments**

In addition to responding to the 21 items included on the questionnaire, respondents were given the opportunity to provide open-ended comments regarding Dean Davis. Forty respondents provided written comments, all of which were submitted verbatim to the provost. There were 44 open-ended responses, of which roughly 50% had a positive tone and 50% had a negative tone; three respondents declined to make comments as they were

hired very recently and were new to this environment; one respondent had no comments. As strengths, the respondents cited integrity, fiscal responsibility, mastery of college budgetary details, effective organizational and management skills, preparedness, and promoting high standards through a set of new evaluation metrics. As regards weaknesses, the respondents very frequently cited overemphasis on achieving numerical targets and measuring faculty performance somewhat rigidly by adherence to preset quantitative measures. A significant proportion of respondents felt that a better defined vision for the college and more emphasis on quality would improve faculty morale and improve the working atmosphere in the college.

## **BFA SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS**

The BFA also asked the respondents in the College of Engineering and Applied Science to complete a satisfaction survey which asked 20 questions about the general level of university support, rated on the same 5-point scale. The return rates were 63% for the population sample and 85% for the knowledgeable. The sample means and standard deviations are provided for each item (arranged from highest to lowest for the population sample): A mean score of 3.51 or greater indicates satisfaction (S), a mean score of 2.50-3.50 indicates neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction (N-neutral), and a mean score of 2.49 or less indicates dissatisfaction (D). In addition, items are identified with respect to the four categories previously identified: (a) strengths to build on (60% or more ratings of 4 and 5), (b) assets to protect (50-59% of ratings of 4 and 5), (c) issues to be mindful of (25-39% of ratings of 1 and 2), and (d) areas that need improvement (40% or more ratings of 1 and 2). These results are summarized in the attached table and reveal that there was mostly relative agreement between the two samples on items categorized as satisfaction and neutral. In the population sample there were no items in the dissatisfaction category, and only one (*current health plan*) appeared in the knowledgeable sample. *Library access to outside resources, relationships with colleagues, teaching responsibilities* were regarded as strengths in both samples; in the neutral category for both groups, the following items are identified: *other benefits, technical support in teaching, faculty governance, efforts to recruit and retain diverse faculty, efforts to recruit and retain diverse undergraduate, space and facilities, number of graduate students assisting in teaching, departmental support services, support for soliciting outside money, evaluation of teaching and salary compared with peer institution salaries.*

## **CONCLUSION**

Dean Davis received high ratings from the knowledgeable sample for all items included on the administrator appraisal questionnaire. There were no items in the areas in need of improvement category and no items were rated as issues of which to be mindful. All items were rated as strengths to build on or assets to protect. The responses from the population sample were less positive with the majority of the items rated either as issues to be mindful of or areas in need of improvement. In accordance with the open-ended response from the raters, the main strengths of Dean Davis were *making decisions in a timely fashion* and *overseeing the college budget*. Dean Davis also received high ratings

from the population sample in six items whereas ten items were rated as issues of which to be mindful. Among these, *being receptive to concerns of faculty*, *appropriately involving faculty in decisions*, and *providing leadership in setting objectives* were also identified as areas of concern in the open-ended responses. Finally, Dean Davis received ratings in the areas in need of improvement category for the following items: *supporting high-quality teaching*, *creating an atmosphere of trust*, and *managing conflicts among staff*. The discrepancy between the ratings given by the knowledgeable group and the ratings given by the population is somewhat significant. This difference may be due to a perception in the population group stemming from less than ideal intensity of communication between the Dean and the faculty. It is apparent that Dean Davis is a respected Dean who has excelled in his effective management of the college resources and budgets. He has successfully established objective and quantitative measures for evaluating faculty performance. It is likely that if his vision for the college and his empathy for the faculty are better communicated to his colleagues, most of the criticisms concerning his interactions with the faculty will be avoided and a more harmonious working atmosphere will prevail in the college. Overall, Dean Davis is seen as an effective administrator by knowledgeable faculty in almost all respects.