Report of the Boulder Faculty Assembly Administrator Appraisal Committee Concerning

James Williams, Dean of the University Libraries

Spring, 2013

Administrator Appraisal Program

The Administrator Appraisal Program (AAP) of the Boulder Faculty Assembly (BFA) seeks to provide substantive feedback about administrators based on a high rate of response reflecting a representative survey of the faculty. Faculty members have 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.

Administrator Appraisal Questionnaire

The administrator appraisal questionnaire (posted at http://www.colorado.edu/pba/aap/index.htm) contained 27 items addressing the effectiveness of the administrator’s performance in key areas, such as administrative/leadership style; support for teaching, research, and service; meeting faculty, staff, and student concerns; and making progress toward diversity goals. Faculty members responded to these items using a 5-point Likert-type effectiveness scale (5 = Very Effective, 4 = Effective, 3 = Neither Effective nor Ineffective, 2 = Ineffective, 1 = Very Ineffective), plus a “Don’t Know/Not Applicable” option, with higher scores indicating more effectiveness. In addition, space was provided for respondents to write open-ended comments about the dean. The questionnaire was completed online.

Respondents and Response Rates

All University Libraries faculty members (44 people), the population of interest (hereafter referred to as the “Population”), designated as eligible by the BFA were sent an e-mail requesting that they complete the online administrator appraisal questionnaire. In keeping with past practices, the AAP Committee requested Dean Williams to nominate a separate sample (12 people) judged especially likely to be knowledgeable about Williams’s role as dean (hereafter referred to as the “Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated”) to complete the questionnaire.1

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1 The members of the committee are Sanjai Bhagat (Chair), Andrew Cooperstock, Judith Packer Jesudason, Henry Kapteyn, Roger “Buzz” King, Susan Nevelow Mart, Page Moreau, Charles Rogers, Daniel Sher, Steven Vanderheiden. The committee thanks Frances Costa of the Office of Planning, Budget, and Analysis for her assistance. Questionnaire responses were submitted online directly to the Office of Planning, Budget, and Analysis, where the data were analyzed. A summary of the statistical data, along with the open-ended comments, with people’s name removed, was provided to the AAP Committee.
The AAP Committee and BFA have agreed, on the advice of faculty who specialize in survey methods, that a 60% return rate is needed for a representative statistical study. For the Population (excluding Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated), 26 of the 32 people surveyed completed the administrator appraisal questionnaire, a response rate of 81%. For the Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated, 8 people completed the questionnaire, a response rate of 67%. Hence, both the Population and the Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated met and exceeded the desired response rate.

Results of the Administrator Appraisal Questionnaire

Preface

It is important to point out that the administrator appraisal questionnaire was designed for performance appraisal of degree-granting colleges/schools at the University of Colorado at Boulder, and not units such as University Libraries, which encompass Norlin, Business, Earth Sciences, Engineering, Math, and Music libraries. This unit does not have its own students or degree-granting programs, which may account for the 20-30% missing/not applicable responses on 5 items related to providing leadership for high-quality teaching (regarding undergraduate, professional master’s, and research-oriented master’s and doctoral programs) and constructively acting on students’ concerns (undergraduate and graduate). Instruction in the libraries generally takes place in response to requests from academic units for 1-2 orientation sessions, although a few library faculty sometimes teach research methods courses for credit.

Statistical Results

The statistical results of the administrator appraisal questionnaire for Dean Williams are presented in the table at the end of the report. Both the mean score and standard deviation for each of the 27 items assessed on the questionnaire are presented for the Population (with members of the Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated excluded for this and all other Population analyses) and for the Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated. The means and standard deviations are listed in descending order according to the Population responses.

The table also provides a categorization for each item based on the percentage of the Population and the percentage of the Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated who used the scale points of (a) 1 or 2, (b) 3, and (c) 4 or 5. In keeping with past practices, these categories are labeled as: (a) Strengths to build on represent items rated as effective or very effective by a substantial majority of the faculty (specifically, 60% or higher of respondents gave a rating of 4 or 5 on the scale); (b) Assets to protect are items where at least half of the respondents found the dean’s performance to effective or very effective (50-59% of respondents gave a rating of 4 or 5 on the scale); (c) Issues to be mindful of are items judged to be ineffective or very ineffective by a significant minority of respondents (25-39% of respondents gave a rating of 1 or 2 on the scale); and (d) Areas that need improvement (Need Improvements) are items judged by a significant portion of respondents to be ineffective or very ineffective (40% or more of respondents gave a rating of 1 or 2 on the scale). Items also are categorized as bimodal when they are rated such that they meet the criteria for two categories. A bimodal categorization means that the members of the Population or the members of the Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated are divided and view an item in potentially very different
ways (e.g., a significant portion seeing the item as a strength and a significant portion seeing it as an issue).

The table also indicates effects sizes and their direction (positive or negative) for each item (expressing differences in standard deviation units). The Population and the Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated for Dean Williams were compared. In interpreting effect sizes, a value of (a) .20 or less represents a small, unnoticeable effect; (b) .21-.49 represents a small-to-medium effect; (c) .50-.79 represents a medium-to-large effect; and (d) .80 or greater represents a large effect.

The results showed that the Population and the Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated both rated Dean Williams as demonstrating **Strengths** on 4 of the 27 items. The 4 Strengths were:

- Understanding faculty governance processes, university policies, and budget procedures
- Acting with integrity
- Responding respectfully and in a timely manner to all faculty inquiries
- Treating faculty of all ranks in a fair and inclusive manner

The 2008 survey of Dean Williams’s performance ([http://www.colorado.edu/FacultyGovernance//committees/REPORTS/williams08.pdf](http://www.colorado.edu/FacultyGovernance//committees/REPORTS/williams08.pdf)) also noted the above items as Strengths

The Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated identified Strengths in all of the 27 questionnaire items (including the 4 noted above).

The ratings by the Population identified 4 items that were categorized as **Assets**:

- Making decisions in a timely manner
- Constructively acting on concerns of faculty of color
- Making progress towards diversity goals
- Constructively acting on the concerns of women faculty

With respect to **Issues**, the Population identified 9 items:

- Constructively acting on undergraduate student concerns
- Rewarding high quality service
- Providing leadership for high-quality undergraduate teaching
- Providing leadership for high-quality teaching in professional master’s program
- Providing leadership for high-quality teaching in research-oriented master’s and doctoral programs
- Constructively acting on faculty concerns
- Having the vision to lead
- Constructively acting on staff concerns
- Positioning the School/College as a leader among AAU peers

With respect to **Need Improvements**, the Population identified 2 items:

- Constructively managing conflicts among staff
- Constructively managing conflicts among faculty

The 2008 survey also noted constructively managing conflicts among faculty as an item for Need Improvements.
Five items demonstrated bimodal responses by the Population, meaning that the members were divided in how they viewed these items. Specifically, the Population viewed 2 items as Strength/Issue (Sharing the bases of the major decisions. Fostering an equitable, merit-based salary system.) Also, the Population viewed 3 items as Assets/Issues: Taking responsibility for office logistics. Appropriately involving faculty in decision making. Earning the trust of faculty.

Comparisons for Dean Williams revealed that the Population rated him lower than did the Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated on all 27 items (with effects sizes medium to large for 3 items, and large for 24 items). However, the correlations between mean ratings of the Population and the Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated are positive; the Pearson parametric correlation is 0.62.; the Spearman non-parametric correlation is 0.53.

Open-Ended Comments

Regarding the written comments about Dean Williams’s performance, the total number of comments was so low as to make it difficult to compare to the numerical ratings given to Dean Williams, although there were certainly some correlations of certain negative comments with areas in the survey that were considered to be in the category of ‘issue’ or ‘need improvement’. The committee also noted that in the numerical ratings given to Dean Williams, there was a marked difference between the ratings given by the general population of respondents as compared to the ‘knowledgeable’ population.

In the comments that related specifically to Dean Williams’s performance, there were 3 positive comments coming from two respondents, both listed as knowledgeable respondents, 9 negative comments coming from seven members of the general class of respondents, and two comments from two respondents in the general class of respondents that can be viewed as mixed. In the comments that had to do with Campus-wide satisfaction issues, all had to do with areas not completely under the control of Dean Williams (the raise pool and related salary compression, a general lack of resources, and related understaffing), but these issues could certainly tinge in a negative way the overall satisfaction of the respondents with Dean Williams’ performance.

The positive comments in the survey remarked on Dean Williams’s strong leadership abilities (n=2), his engagement in the wider community of societies of library educators (n=1), and his personal integrity (n=1). A few positive comments are “I find Dean Williams to be an effective and inspiring leader for the Libraries. His engagement with not only the campus, but with national higher education bodies and professional societies is remarkable”, “Jim Williams has integrity--you can tell from the moment you shake his hand. He is honest and fair and he cares about the people in this organization”, and, with reference to his work with reorganization, “His work during the last few years is truly noteworthy.”

Negative comments noted Dean Williams’s lack of direction and failure to recognize low morale problems among staff (n=3), his failures to address inequities in salary structure in the library (n=3), a failure to consult with faculty, combined with an over-reliance on a few associate
deans and department heads, prior to making important decisions (n=3), related inequities in salary between a few high-level senior library faculty and younger faculty (n=2), a difficulty in dealing with conflict (n=2), and a negative view of his role in the reorganization of the library system over the past few years (n=4). Some representative comments that were negative are: “…the Dean needs to lead an effort to clean up the incompetence and make room for energetic new faculty or seasoned faculty who at least maintain appropriate professional skills” and (by the same respondent) “Long serving senior faculty, who no longer have appropriate skills to their job, seem to run roughshod over the Dean and damage the reputation of the library”.

It is interesting to note that one of the knowledgeable respondents commented how well Dean Williams handled conflict in the library, whereas two of the general respondents stated that he is ineffective in solving conflicts among faculty and staff. Likewise, one of the knowledgeable respondents commended Dean Williams on his vision for the future of the Library, whereas one of the general respondents complained about his leadership and vision. So the marked difference in numerical ratings between the knowledgeable vs. the general population carried over into the comments.

**Satisfaction Questionnaire Results**

The AAP Committee also asked the respondents to complete a satisfaction survey which asked 20 questions about the general level of university support. The 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).

The knowledgeable group rated twelve of the twenty satisfaction items as “a strength to build on,” as did the population for five of the twenty satisfaction items. Both groups rated the following five items highly (**Strengths**):

- Library access to outside resources
- Faculty involvement in the decision-making process about CU Libraries
- Collaborative relationships with colleagues
- Support and encouragement for research
- Education and training support offered by CU Libraries’ staff in new information technology

The population rated four of the twenty satisfaction items as **Assets**. These items are:

- Retirement benefits
- Health benefits
- Evaluation of teaching
- Faculty governance

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The population rated three of the twenty satisfaction items as Issues. These items are:

- Space and facilities
- Teaching responsibilities
- University efforts to retain a diverse undergraduate student body

The knowledgeable group rated three of the twenty satisfaction items in a bimodal manner Assets/Issues.

- University efforts to recruit a diverse faculty
- University efforts to retain a diverse undergraduate student body
- Equitable distribution of salary

The knowledgeable group rated one of the twenty satisfaction items as Issues.

- Salary relative to peers

The knowledgeable group rated none of the twenty satisfaction items as Need Improvements.

The population group rated six of the twenty satisfaction items as Need Improvements.

- Departmental support services
- Technological support in teaching
- Support for soliciting grants
- Equitable distribution of salary
- Salary relative to peers
- Number of graduate students assisting in teaching

**Conclusion**

Dean Williams received particularly high ratings (with means of 4.0 or greater) on the administrator appraisal questionnaire from both the Population and the Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated on his understanding of faculty governance, and acting with integrity. He also received high ratings (with means of 3.8-3.9) from both sets of respondents for treating faculty fairly and respectfully. Also noteworthy - the Population rated Dean Williams lower than did the Knowledgeables/Administrator-nominated on all 27 items in the questionnaire.

The open-ended comments confirmed many of these and other Strengths and Assets, with respondents perceiving Dean Williams as a positive, forward-looking dean with a significant national reputation. Respondents also expressed concerns about Dean Williams’s ability to constructively manage conflicts among faculty and among staff, make timely decisions, and acting on the concerns of faculty and staff. One difficulty (constructively managing conflicts among faculty) also was identified in the assessment of Dean Williams in 2008.

The survey results, thus, showed that Dean Williams has many Strengths and Assets. There are, however, some difficulties that are perceived by respondents to characterize his administration of the University Libraries, and one of these difficulties is the same as his 2008 review. The Administrator
Appraisal Program Committee believes that if Dean Williams can maintain his Strengths and Assets, and seriously confront the difficulties identified, his effectiveness ratings would significantly increase. As per the charge given to the Committee to provide an overall rating of “Exceeds Expectations,” “Meets Expectations,” or “Needs Improvement,” the Committee concludes, on the basis of the data reviewed, that Dean Williams Meets Expectations.