

Compensation and Promotional Survey Results

Presented to Academic Staff Assembly: April 13, 2015

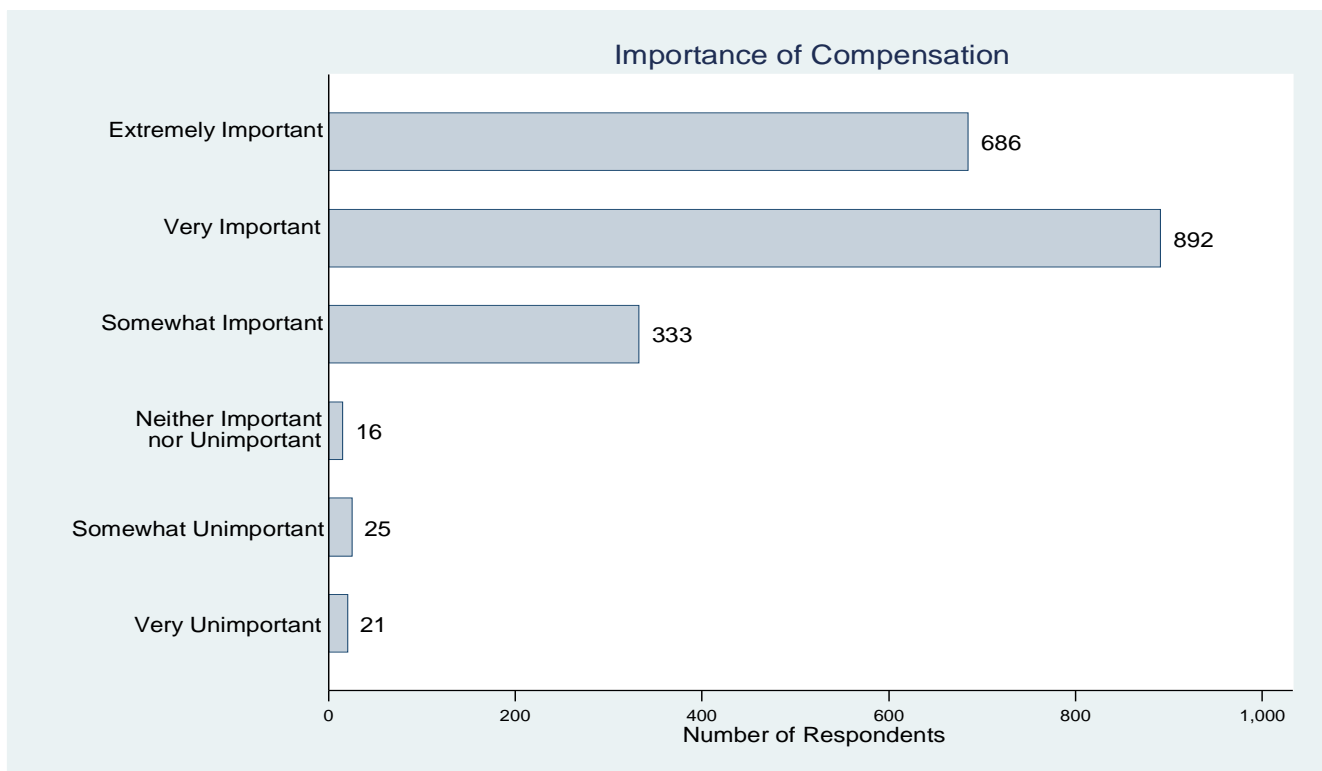
Introduction

On May 19, 2014, the Compensation and Economic Benefits Committee (CEBC) distributed a campus-wide survey to gather feedback from Academic Staff (AS) members across campus regarding the existing AS title and promotional structure. 2,036 AS responded to the survey. The survey intended to gather data that could be shared with the AS Assembly and campus leaders prior to the broad classification and compensation survey scheduled to commence in 2015 with the implementation of HR Design. The following reflects the major themes that emerged from our quantitative and qualitative analysis of the survey results. This is not meant to be a comprehensive, quantitative review as the Committee members are not survey specialists.

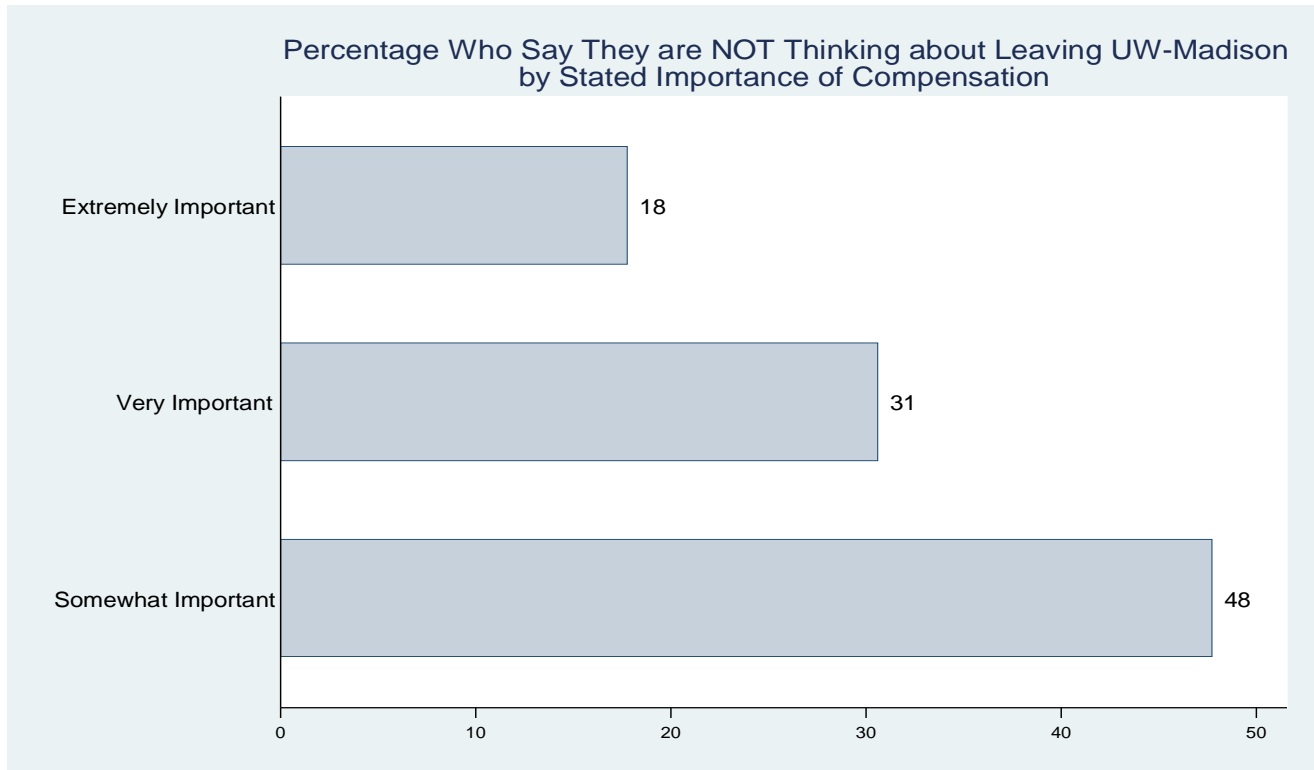
Broad Themes

Compensation Matters

While our survey was focused on title and promotional issues, it was very clear from both the comments and the quantitative answers we received that our respondents consider compensation to be much more important than either of those issues. **80% of survey respondents said compensation was either "Very Important" or "Extremely Important"** and 61% of respondents said their desire for promotion was either "Very Much" or "Almost Entirely" driven by a desire for higher compensation.



Placing a high importance on compensation appears to be correlated with lower morale in the current environment. 68% of respondents who indicated compensation is “Somewhat Important” said they would recommend working at UW-Madison to others, but only 54% of those who indicated compensation is “Extremely Important” would do the same. 48% of respondents who indicated compensation is “Somewhat Important” said they were not thinking about leaving the University, but only 18% of respondents who indicated compensation is “Extremely Important” could say the same.



Many respondents conveyed their sense that the UW-Madison campus does not compensate its employees competitively.

“Many of the titles and pay structures do not take into consideration what the market rates are for people coming from outside the university... It is unreasonable to expect established professionals to take significant pay cuts for the privilege of working at the university. This is a particularly hard sell when you know that there will be few opportunities to receive pay raises after they are hired.”

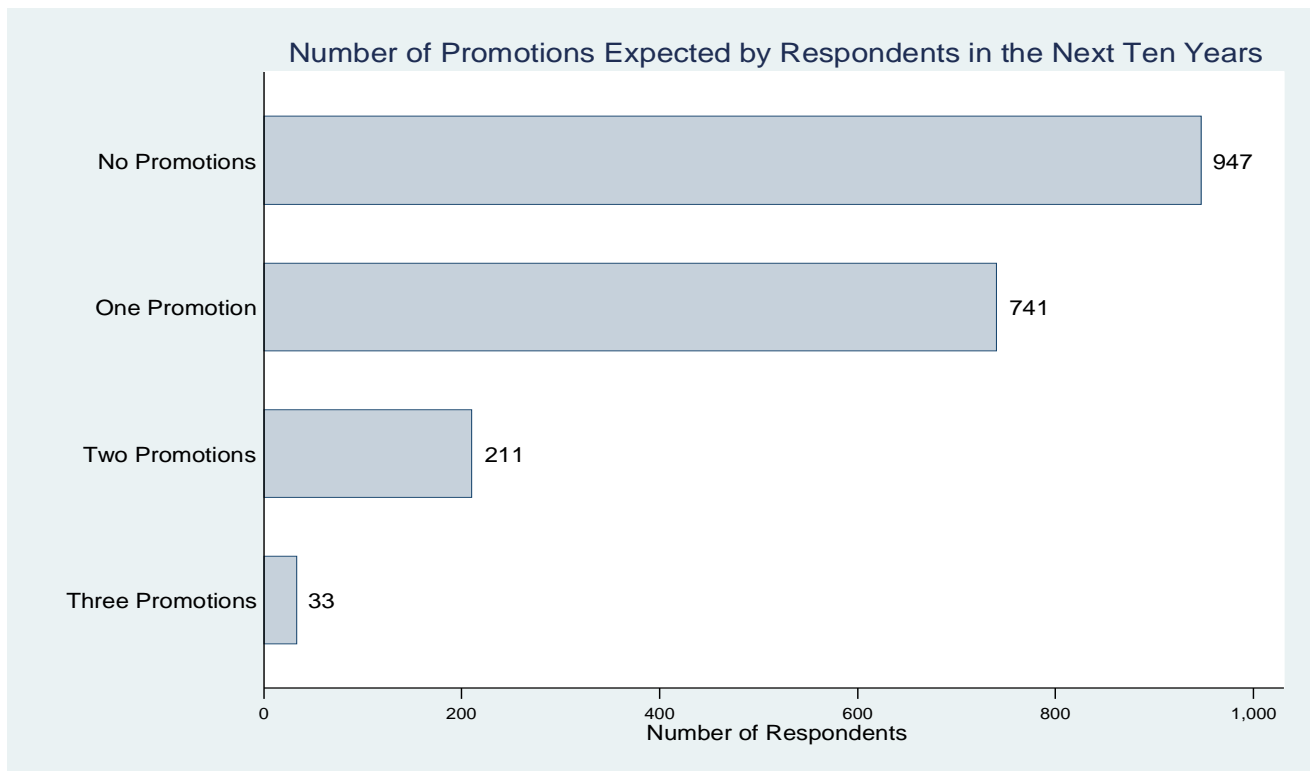
Other comments suggested that compensation equates to perceived value and, consequently, has significant impact on morale. **One respondent said that it “feels like we don’t matter, and we are replaceable.”**

Given the budget cuts we currently face, it may be tempting to see the voluntary departure of employees who value compensation as a positive development, in that leaving their positions unfilled will prevent layoffs. However, this would reduce staff more or less at random rather than in alignment with the University’s strategic priorities. If we assume that our most productive employees are the most likely to find jobs elsewhere, it would also lower the quality of the

University's workforce. Faced with major state budget cuts in 2011-2012, the University chose to require that units cut their budgets by slightly more than was necessary to deal with the budget cuts from the state and used the money thus made available for the Critical Compensation Fund. This allowed the University to try to retain key employees and preserve the quality of its workforce despite the overall budget situation. Our survey results suggest the same need still exists today.

A Sense of Being “Stuck”

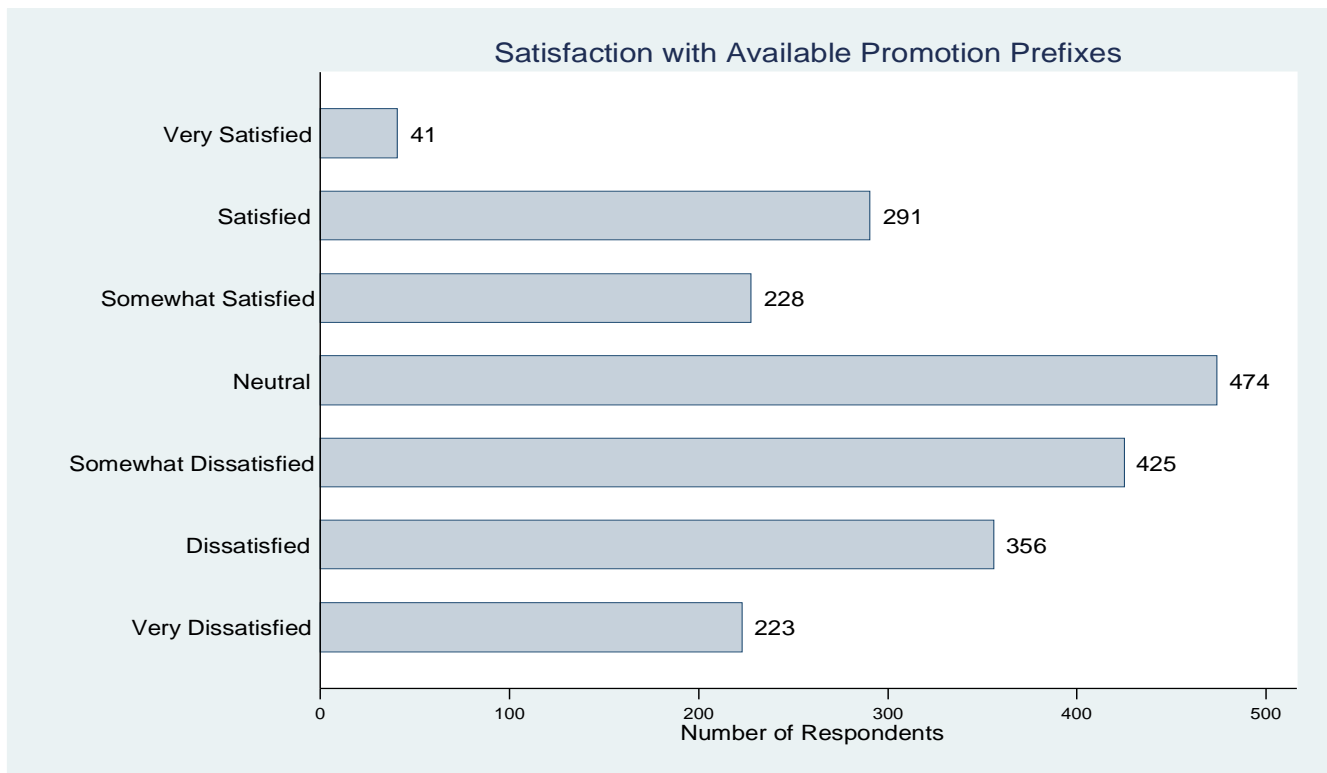
Many survey respondents expressed frustration that the current title and promotional system does not give them sufficient opportunities to advance. **49% said they did not expect any further promotions in the next ten years under the current system.** This includes 34% of respondents who had been in their current position for two years or less, and 74% of those who had been in their current position for more than ten years. Only 13% of respondents expected more than one promotion in the next ten years, and only 3% of those who have been in their current position for more than ten years.



Respondents also suggested that the existence of a title that is unattainable by most (e.g. distinguished) was very frustrating; making it impossible to the vast majority of staff at the senior level to advance. One respondent said “I was told that no one is ever going to be given the distinguished prefix”. Others expressed disappointment that they were hired at the highest level in their series and thus there were limited to no advancement opportunities available, whether advancement was defined as salary increase or title promotion. Some respondents report that they were denied promotion due to funding concerns, for example: “Department chairperson

said ‘your performance is indicative of promotion, but without funding to commit to such a promotion we cannot do it’.”

Overall, 27% of respondents said they were satisfied with the promotional opportunities available to them (“Somewhat Satisfied” or higher), compared to 49% who were dissatisfied. However, only 38% of those who anticipate at least two promotions were dissatisfied, and only 37% of respondents who had been in academic positions at UW-Madison for two years or less expressed dissatisfaction. While these are still high levels of dissatisfaction, they do suggest that simply adding more promotional steps would be an improvement. Only 6% of respondents expressed opposition to doing so. The ideal system would offer opportunities for advancement to employees at every stage of their careers.



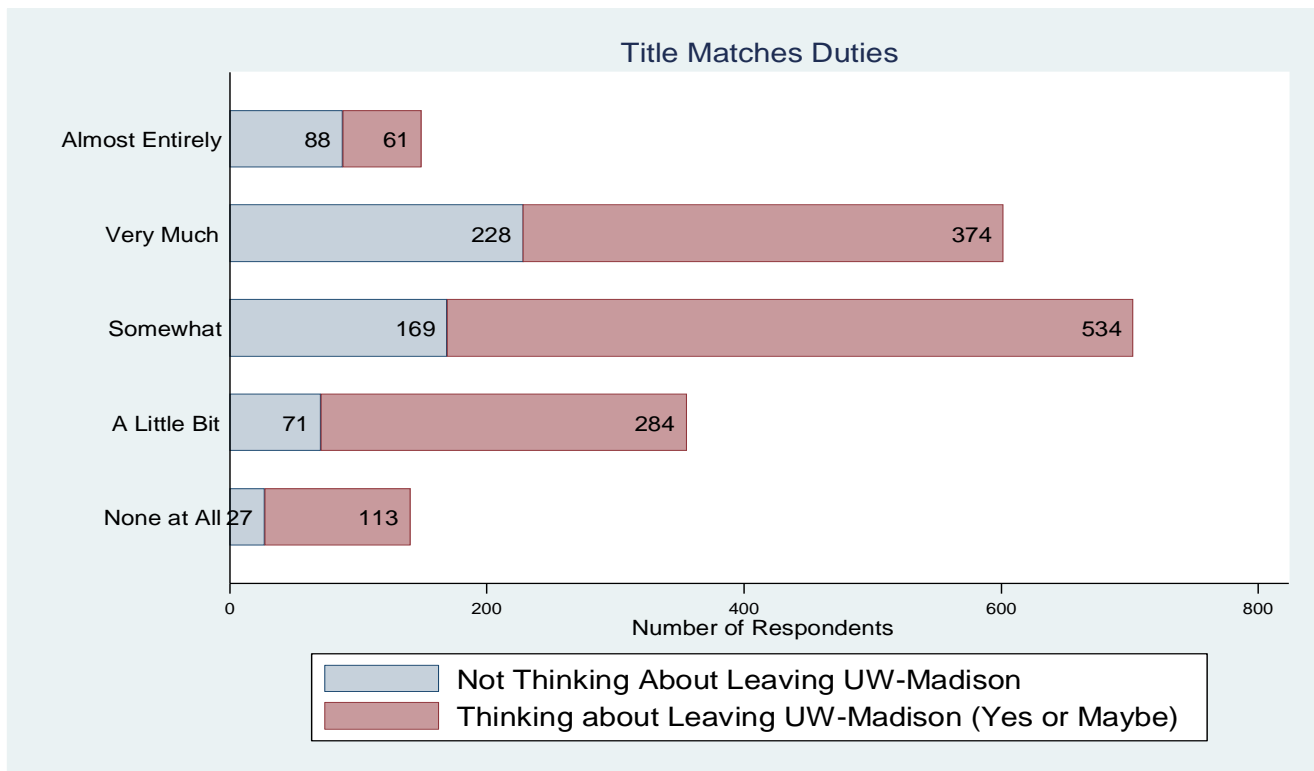
The current system offers just two promotions for most academic staff (Associate to No Prefix and No Prefix to Senior) and in most cases they are both used within the first ten years of the employee’s career. 46% of respondents have worked in academic jobs at UW-Madison for more than ten years, and are most likely at the senior level with limited opportunities for further advancement. 17% of respondents have worked on campus for more than twenty years and likely have no opportunities for advancement within their current title series. CEBC feels that this system is inadequate and confirms the lack of advancement opportunities perceived by academic staff on campus. It may also contribute to unproductive “job hopping” as the only way to advance.

Another factor that contributes to the perception that the current system can leave AS "stuck" is the narrow pay bands for many Category A AS titles. 10% of respondents report being at the maximum salary for their title, and of those 41% report being at the maximum for two years or more. (Not all of respondents are in Category A.) 24% report being concerned that they will reach

their maximum in the next five years. 60% of those who are concerned about hitting the cap are dissatisfied with the current system compared to just 45% of those who are not. We note that Category B titles have minimum salaries but no maximum salaries; it is difficult to determine how the University benefits from the constraints upon its own choices imposed by Category A salary maxima.

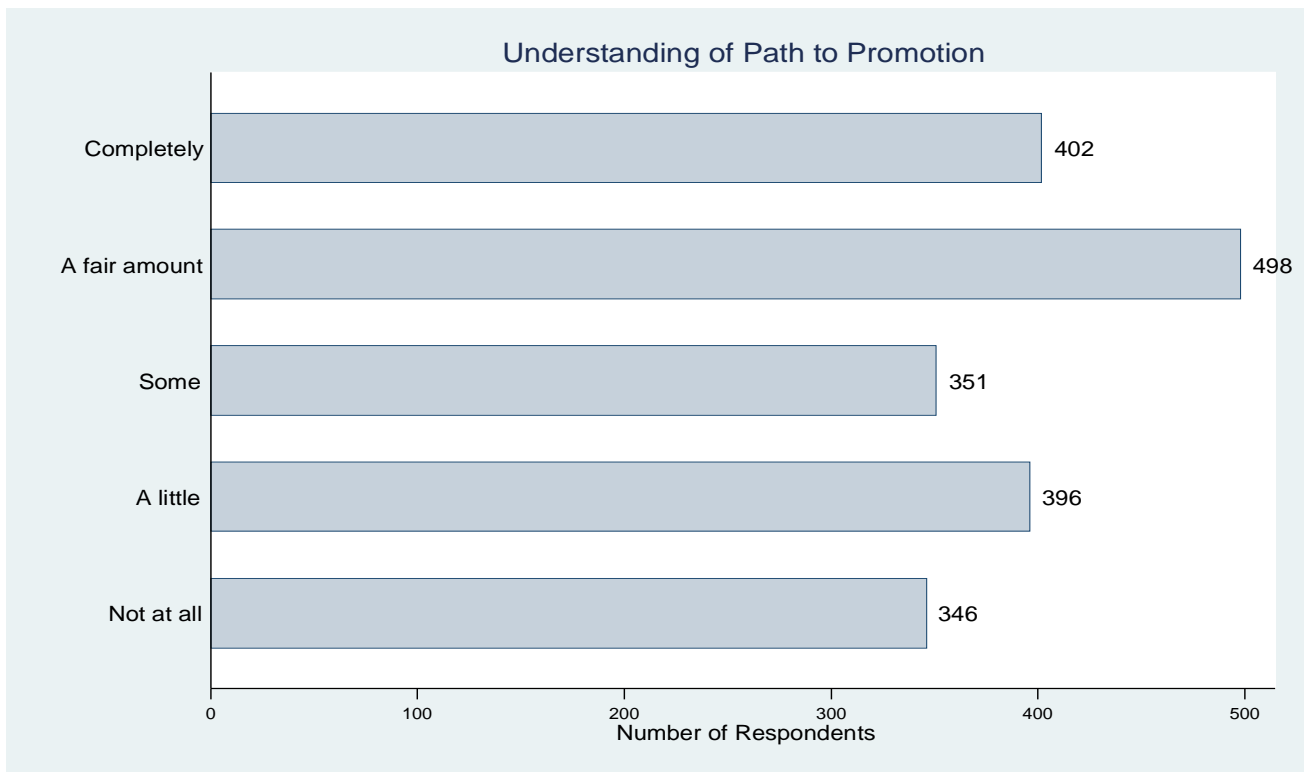
Official Title Matters, but Not as much as Compensation

24% of respondents said that their title was either “Very Important” or “Extremely Important” to their decision to remain at UW-Madison, suggesting that for most, AS titles are much less important than compensation. However, there is evidence that having a title that actually matches the employee’s job duties is valuable: 59% of respondents who said their title “Almost Entirely” reflects their job duties were not thinking about leaving UW-Madison, compared to just 19% of those who said their title did not reflect their job duties at all. This is problematic because **62% of respondents said their title only “Somewhat” reflected their duties or less.**



“Mystical and Complicated” Path to Promotion

Only 20% of respondents indicated they “Completely” understood the path to promotion within their title series, 43% understood “A fair amount” or “Some”, and 37% said they had “A little” understanding or “None at all”. 66% of respondents who had worked at UW-Madison for two years or less had “A little” understanding or “None at all,” suggesting that many academic staff receive their first promotion before they understand the system for receiving it, making that promotion useless as an incentive.



When respondents were asked what they felt the basis for promotion was within their unit, there was evidence of considerable confusion. Merit, time in a position, and supervisor discretion were all selected at approximately the same rate, **but the most popular answer was “Don’t Know.”**

The open ended comments here indicated many felt promotion criteria are inconsistent. Respondents expressed the need for more continuity and a more defined process. This recommendation was based on the perception that supervisory decisions were discretionary, and thus there was a common desire for a more balanced and defined process. Repeated comments mentioned either supervisor discretion, departmental favorites or even dean’s/divisional office level inconsistencies as reasons for not receiving a promotion:

“Process for promotions and salary increases is a black box in our department”

“Un-monitored, departmental delegated authority allows for inconsistent and biased implementation with the potential of discriminatory impact.”

One broadly cited perception by the survey respondents is contradictory: staff on GPR funding believe that those on grant/soft funding receive unfair advantages, and *vice versa*.

Several open ended comments conveyed that seniority and the *quality* of their contributions (i.e. merit) should have a greater bearing on rate and title changes. 41% of respondents who said merit was a criterion for advancement in their unit said they were not thinking about leaving UW-Madison, compared to 24% of respondents who did not say merit was a criterion. This suggests a merit-based system could improve retention.

Elements to Retain

While many of the individuals that responded to our survey had significant frustrations with the current system, there was also considerable positive feedback. Many respondents indicated that the UW was a great place to start a career. Many respondents indicated that they believed in and cherished the university's mission. The data suggest there is value to the promotional series and 58% of respondents expressed support for increasing the number of prefixes with only 6% opposed. Staff that received raises and had promotional opportunities provided very positive feedback. Many staff indicated that recent implementation of the CCF exercise was positive as well. These and other types of market raises continue to be highly valued by employees.

Overall Summary

Taken together, the survey data confirm that the current title and promotional structure is poorly understood and does not give AS adequate opportunities to advance over the course of a career. Both of these facts contribute to poor morale, but inadequate compensation is most important.

Recommendations

Based on the responses to the survey, the CEBC recommends the following:

- The redesigned title and promotional system should be transparent, easily understood and clearly communicated
- Titles should reflect the duties Academic Staff actually perform. This will require a titling system that is sufficiently flexible to accommodate the diverse functions performed by Academic Staff.
- The new system should provide more than three levels in a promotional series along with mandatory post-progression reviews and a review of compensation at least once every five years. Growth opportunities should be available at any level of a position to ensure all employees have incentive to perform.
- Pay bands for Category A titles should be much broader or maxima eliminated entirely, making them similar to Category B titles.
- Merit should formally be a criterion for both advancement and compensation increases.
- Compensation must be a priority despite budget cuts.
- Campus should study various models for a future state HR compensation and promotional structure and allow campus governance groups the opportunity to provide feedback before adopting a structure.

Post Hoc Note:

CEBC was actively reviewing the survey data and compiling this report when Governor Walker announced historic budget cuts to UW System. Despite the anticipated difficult short-term challenges the budget cuts present, the Committee strongly felt these data and recommendations regarding an improved future HR structure should be considered by campus with a goal of providing UW-Madison with a long-term, sustainable and flexible HR structure.