FACULTY PERCEPTION OF INSTITUTIONAL FUNCTIONING at the University of Hawaii and Five Peer Institutions

Angela Chaille

The purpose of this article is to further examine the University of Hawaii's portion of a comparative study of faculty perceptions of institutional functioning which was performed in early 1983. It is necessary to first provide an abstract of the complete study so that the Hawaii portion can be understood in its context.

The complete study compared perceptions of selected faculty on how their institutions were functioning. To gather comparable data, a standardized instrument, the Institutional Functioning Inventory, was used, and comparisons were made between subscale scores by institution and by common personal characteristics. The problem that the study sought to answer was whether faculty at institutions with similar support systems and missions differed significantly in their perceptions of institutional functioning.

The population which the study sought to generalize was the faculties of six universities with similar missions and other organizational and student characteristics. All of the universities were state-controlled, coeducational, urban universities within a class of major research and teaching universities in the United States. The universities were chosen because of their similarities to the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and consisted of the University of Hawaii, the University of Colorado, the University of Connecticut, the University of Oklahoma, Washington State University, and Florida State University.

A stratified random sample of faculties was drawn from the population. Each sample was chosen to proportionally represent the number of faculty within each college of a university so that there would be a good fit between each sample and its parent population.

Surveys, answer sheets, and letters of participation were mailed directly to each faculty member in the sample. Return envelopes were provided. Sufficient responses were received to provide a 95 percent confidence level. The answer sheets were hand-scored using cut stencils, and data were recorded manually and keypunched into the University of Hawaii Computing Center.

A Cochran's C test was used to show that the respondents were relatively homogeneous. The majority of respondents were found to be full professors, had been at their universities over twelve years, and taught nine credit hours or less. The Chi Square test showed only two significant differences between the descriptive characteristics of the faculties, in Academic Rank and Years of Service. For nine of 11 identified descriptive characteristics, there were no significant differences among the groups.

The first hypothesis examined whether significant differences existed among the six faculty groups on scores of the 11 subscales of the Inventory. This hypothesis was tested using the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The means of the faculties varied significantly on eight of the subscales. A Scheffe test was
used to determine which of the six universities varied from the others. Significant differences were found on seven subscales for the University of Hawaii, three for Washington State University, one each for the University of Colorado and the University of Connecticut. (See Table 1) As a result, the null hypothesis that no such differences would be found was rejected. This led to a major conclusion of this research that in spite of similarities of mission and support systems, commonality of many internal and external factors, and relative homogeneity of faculty characteristics, faculty perceptions of their universities do differ significantly.

The Inventory utilized a four-point Likert-type scale. Thus, if one uses the midpoint (2.5) as the point of balance between a scale of positive- to-negative perceptions, the subscale scores above 27 could be considered to be toward the negative end of the perceptual continuum, while those responses below would indicate a more positive view. The possible range of each subscale score was from a low of 11 to a high of 44. It must be noted that directionality in scores may also have reflected institutional priorities so that, in some cases, negative responses may be consistent with the institutional goals of a particular university. Examination of the numerical values of the mean responses, in conjunction with the differences found, lead to the conclusions which follow.

There were five subscales for which all groups had means in a range of near 30, indicating some negativity toward the factors measured by those subscales. The five were Freedom, Undergraduate Learning, Democratic Governance, Institutional Esprit, and Concern for the Improvement of Society.

The Freedom subscale dealt with the perceived academic freedom of faculty and students in their university and personal lives. While no significant differences were identified among the groups, all six groups responded near 30 on this subscale. This would indicate that all of the faculties perceived some restriction in their academic freedom and that this was a common perception at all of the universities examined.

Undergraduate Learning stressed the degree to which the universities dealt with undergraduate education. Scores at the six universities were again 30 or higher on this subscale, but no significant differences were found among them. High scores on this subscale may well be related to the purposes and missions of the universities. The studied universities all had major graduate and research programs, in addition to their undergraduate teaching; therefore, high scores may indicate consistency with their missions rather than criticism of the undergraduate education programs.

The Democratic Governance subscale was designed to measure the extent to which members of a university community feel they participate in decisions affecting them. The scores at the six universities ranged from 28 to 32 on this subscale, with the University of Hawaii significantly different at 32. These high scores seem to indicate that faculty at all six universities, and at the University of Hawaii in particular, do not perceive that they have a great deal of participation in decisionmaking activities.

The subscale designed to measure shared purposes and high morale, Institutional Esprit, was of particular interest to the researcher because of the amount of attention these factors have been receiving in recent literature. The high mean scores of

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Subscale Score</th>
<th>University of Hawaii</th>
<th>University of Colorado</th>
<th>Florida State University</th>
<th>University of Connecticut</th>
<th>Washington State University</th>
<th>University of Oklahoma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>30.3086</td>
<td>30.6939</td>
<td>30.5454</td>
<td>30.5246</td>
<td>30.6879</td>
<td>30.2115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Diversity</td>
<td>28.9412*</td>
<td>27.2449</td>
<td>27.8909</td>
<td>27.9508</td>
<td>27.9375</td>
<td>28.1731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Learning</td>
<td>30.5147</td>
<td>30.4286</td>
<td>30.7818</td>
<td>30.7213</td>
<td>31.0625</td>
<td>30.6731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Governance</td>
<td>32.0000*</td>
<td>30.2449</td>
<td>28.3454</td>
<td>28.9344</td>
<td>30.4844</td>
<td>28.1538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for Innovation</td>
<td>29.9412</td>
<td>30.0000</td>
<td>30.3091</td>
<td>30.2787</td>
<td>30.1563</td>
<td>30.8577</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates groups that were significantly different at the .05 level.
The highest mean score was for the Intellectual-Aesthetic Extracurriculum subscale, with a mean of 6.330. This suggests that faculty members felt there were sufficient opportunities for intellectual and aesthetic activities. Significant differences were found among the universities in their perception of the availability of these activities, with the University of Hawaii scoring significantly higher than the other universities.

Concern for the Improvement of Higher Education, which focuses on shared purposes, exhibited the second highest mean score of 5.712. This subscale measured the extent to which the faculty perceived a sense of shared purpose. Significant differences were found among the universities, with the University of Hawaii scoring significantly higher than the others.

The third highest mean score was for Democratic Governance, with a mean of 3.560. This subscale assesses the faculty's perception of the functioning of the institution. Significant differences were also found among the universities, with the University of Hawaii scoring significantly higher than the others.

Concern for the Improvement of Higher Education, Democratic Governance, and Self-Study and Planning subscales showed significant differences among the universities. The University of Hawaii scored significantly higher in these subscales compared to the other universities.

In summary, the data indicate that morale at the University of Hawaii is generally higher than at the other universities, particularly in terms of perceived availability of shared activities, involvement in governance, and the functioning of the institution. The Columbia definition of morale appears to be more positive at the University of Hawaii compared to the other universities visited. This suggests that the University of Hawaii may be more successful in fostering a sense of shared purpose and involvement in governance than the other universities.

The second hypothesis examined was the belief that four other subscales showed differences based on the Columbia definition of morale. The data showed that these subscales, Intellectual-Aesthetic Extracurriculum, Concern for the Improvement of Higher Education, Democratic Governance, and Self-Study and Planning, were significantly different among the universities. These findings reflect a general lowering of faculty morale at the other universities compared to the University of Hawaii.
significant differences existed on scores when grouped by the various characteristics. The characteristic linked to the most differences was Field of Affiliation. It showed significant differences on eight subscales. The variable Years of Service showed significant differences on six subscales, and Academic Rank showed significant differences on three. The variable Age showed significant differences on three subscales, and Workload showed difference at the p≤.05 level for only one. (See Table 2) The null hypothesis was not rejected because only these 21, of 55 possible, significant differences were found.

Regression analysis was performed to answer ancillary question one, which asked whether linear relationships existed between the characteristic variables (or groups of variables) discussed in the second hypothesis and the subscale scores. Two regression analyses were used for this question, first looking at the entire sample, and then at those universities within the sample for which significant differences had been identified in the first hypothesis. Relationships were found which could be used for the development of predictive equations, most of the coefficients of determination were in a range from five to 15 percent.

The analysis of the second ancillary question looked for significant differences in subscale scores when grouped by three additional variables: College of Affiliation, Stress of Assignment, and Undergraduate/Graduate Matriculation. Few significant differences were found.

The number of significant differences found for the University of Hawaii group of the sample led to further questions. Would it be possible to identify particular segments of the UH sample who were significantly different from the others when grouped by the various measured characteristics? Were faculty in a particular field, of a particular age or rank more, or less, positive in their responses? These questions were approached through re-coding and re-testing of the Hawaii portion of the data; and Analyses of Variance were performed.

When you begin to break a comparative study up into parts, you begin to threaten validity. In this instance, subgroups became small and some cell sizes were too small for consideration.

Only those variable combinations for which Hawaii had significantly differed from other universities were re-tested. No significant differences were found within Hawaii's faculty when examined by Field, Rank, or Workload. This indicates that the significant difference from the other universities represented a common expression of Hawaii's faculty perceptions.

Faculty who had worked seven to 12 years, or more than 12 years, differed significantly from faculty who had worked up to six years on scores on the Human Diversity subscale. This subscale has to do with the degree to which the faculty and student body are heterogeneous in their backgrounds and present attitudes. Faculty who had worked three to six years (and 12 or more years) varied significantly from the other groups in their scores on the subscale, Concern for Advancing Knowledge. This subscale reflects the degree to which the institution—in its structure, function, and professional commitment of the faculty—emphasizes research and scholarship aimed at extending the scope of human knowledge. Years of service did not show significant differences on the remaining re-examined subscales.

Significant differences were shown between all of the age groups on the subscales, Intellectual-Aesthetic Extracurriculum and Meeting Local Needs; the former refers to the availability of activities and opportunities for intellectual and aesthetic stimulation outside the classroom, the latter refers to an institutional emphasis on providing educational and cultural opportunities for adults in the surrounding area—as well as meeting needs for trained manpower on the part of local businesses and government agencies. No other significant differences between age groups were found in the six re-tested subscales.

The University of Hawaii is unique in many ways and there are many possible reasons why its faculty would differ significantly from other universities' faculties. Speculation has no place in this research, but further study may reveal the answers. It does appear that on most perceptions members of the University of Hawaii faculty do not differ significantly among themselves. This relative commonality of perception may be said to reflect a strength which could be used for collectively working for quality at the University of Hawaii.

Citations

Chaille, Angela. Faculty Perception of Institutional Functioning at Six Selected Universities Throughout the United States, doctoral dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1983.


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