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2012

## The Administrative and Professional Faculty Experience at VCU

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## **Team Our Time**

### **Team Project**

**Administrative and Professional Faculty Experience at VCU**

**VCU Leadership Development Program**

**2012**

#### *Team Members:*

Leslie A. Bozeman, Global Education Office

Melanie A. Christian, School of the Arts

Colleen Androvich Davis, School of Business

Harold E. Harris, Jr., VCU Health Systems, Technology Services

Sydney Brodeur McDonald, University Counseling Services

Nicolle Parsons-Pollard, Virginia State University

**Team Our Time Executive Summary**  
**VCU Leadership Development Program 2012**

**Team Members**

Leslie A. Bozeman, Global Education Office  
Melanie A. Christian, School of the Arts  
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**Project Description:** At a time when Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) is striving to become a premier research institution, Administrative and Professional (A&P) Faculty are essential to the university's ability to provide and sustain the quality educational programs that are the foundation of the academic enterprise. While essential, A&P Faculty are not always factored into University efforts to the same extent as instructional faculty. Recognizing that A&P Faculty represent a population diverse in educational background, professional focus, role, responsibility, and contribution, Team Our Time conducted a mixed methods study on the experience of A&P Faculty at VCU.

**Project Goals:** The goals of the study were to: 1. Gain insight into the experience of A&P Faculty working at VCU, 2. Provide a profile of A&P Faculty at VCU, and 3. Provide information to the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute; VCU administration; and the VCU community that will assist the University in efforts to enhance the recruitment, retention, skills, talents, diversity, and productivity of this valuable university population.

**Strategies:** The methods used for this project included five focus groups and an online survey of a sample of A&P Faculty. The team believed that the use of focus groups would elicit in-depth discussion from participants about feelings and perceptions related to their experience, and that the survey would provide an overall view of certain characteristics of VCU A&P Faculty.

**Action Steps:** The team: 1. Consulted with long-standing and senior members of the University to ascertain if any similar efforts had ever been undertaken, 2. Brainstormed areas of the A&P experience to examine, 3. Crafted focus group and survey questions, 4. Sought feedback on the research tools from research faculty, 5. Sought feedback on interview and survey questions from senior A&P Faculty in and outside of VCU, 6. Made logistical arrangements pertaining to space; survey administration; focus group moderation; and participant incentives, 7. Conducted focus groups, 8. Identified themes within and across the focus groups 9. Incorporated certain findings into the survey, 10. Administered the survey, 11. Analyzed survey data, and 12. Synthesized findings.

**Outcomes:** Team Our Time succeeded in holding five focus groups in which 44 participants took part and collecting survey data from 129 respondents. The focus groups revealed participant feelings regarding their overall experience at VCU, ways in which they feel connected to the University at large, demonstrations of value for their work, and opportunities for advancement. In addition to position-related information, the survey reports information about the method in which the respondents are recognized for their work, their contributions to teaching; research; and service, their involvement in professional organizations, and their international engagement.

**Sustainability:** A focus on A&P Faculty can be sustained with the support and direction of the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Consequently, Dr. Tim Davey, Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Recruitment and Retention, has approached our team because of his interest in our findings.

**Resources:** In order to conduct this research, the team relied heavily on guidance from VCU Human Resources and the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs as well as access to basic personnel data. In particular, the assistance of Cindy Andrews, Assistant Vice President for Human Resources, and Amy Unger, Director of Human Resources Administration for Academic Affairs were instrumental to the completion of this project. The team also received support from their respective departments in the form of meeting space, research tools, and software.

**Recommendations:** In the near future, Team Our Time recommends that opportunities be developed to encourage communication and interaction among A&P Faculty and recognition of the important work accomplished by members of this category of faculty.

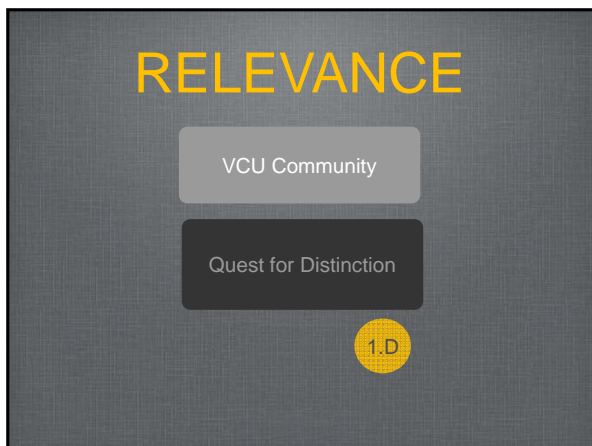
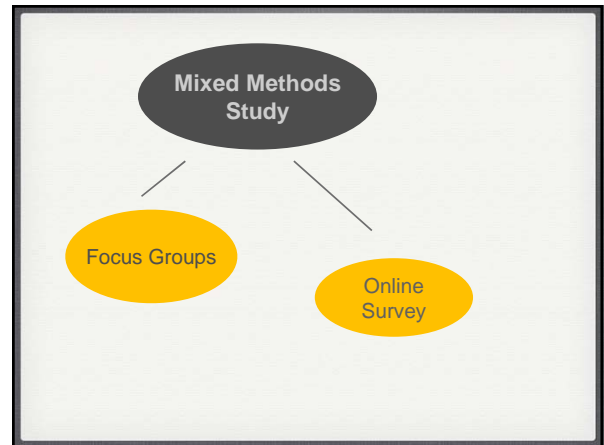
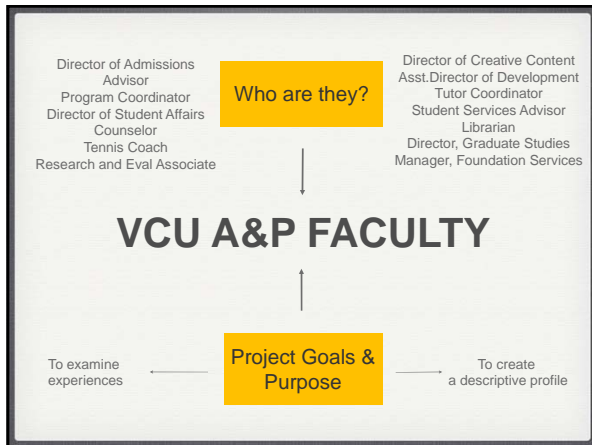
**Conclusions:** This team undertook a complex and necessary effort to gain insight into an essential population of the University. This resulted in previously undocumented data about the work and experience of VCU A&P Faculty. Participation numbers and participant feedback communicate that A&P Faculty appreciated being given an opportunity to be heard.

**Process Observations:** The team experienced enthusiasm and active support from senior administrators acting as advisors and substantial participation from the target population. For the team members, the negotiation of the components and steps of the project, while ultimately successful, proved challenging from both an implementation and personal standpoint.

# TEAM OUR TIME

Administrative and Professional  
Faculty Experience at VCU

- ## TEAM MEMBERS
- Leslie A. Bozeman, Global Education Office
  - Melanie A. Christian, School of the Arts
  - Colleen Androvich Davis, School of Business
  - Harold E. Harris, Jr., VCU Health Systems, Technology Services
  - Sydney Brodeur McDonald, University Counseling Services
  - Nicolle Parsons-Pollard, Virginia State University



## FOCUS GROUPS

- Systematic random sampling
- 44 total participants
- 2 sessions on East Campus
- 3 sessions on West Campus

## FOCUS GROUP THEMES

Committed      Appreciate Diversity

Appreciate AUTONOMY      Desire Increased Communication

lacking RESOURCES

Expected to do **more** with less

MORE Engagement is good      Faculty Senate

inconsistent evaluations

LACK OF RELEVANT ORIENTATION

concerns about Advancement

Moving out to move up

### SATISFIED SALLY

"I think an advantage of an A&P faculty position is that I can contribute more to the larger university community than traditional faculty members."

"I feel valued"

### APPRECIATIVE AL

"Coming to VCU has been a fantastic experience for me because I came from an institution where I didn't feel supported. My colleagues have made me feel very supported. It's been a refreshing change from the past."

"Working as an administrator, it's hard to balance everything. I'll be presenting at conferences and will hopefully have a paper ready for publication in a year- it is very difficult."

### Content, but critical, CARRIE

"I think my department knows the value of what we're doing but I don't see myself in Quest or the Diversity Action Plan and it makes me nervous that the university is not thinking about what I do."

"You have to take the initiative to do things here, you'll miss out if you don't!"

### Unhappy UMBERTO

"I was told (by a teaching faculty member) we are replaceable."

"There is no one else like me and I don't have a role model."

"Where are we? I feel disconnected and lost in the shuffle and as far as a community, it's not there."

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recognition system
- Connection, engagement, and inclusion
- Contracts
- Orientation
- Educational benefit
- Faculty Senate
- Evaluations
- Promotion
- Salary






## ONLINE SURVEY



- 497 Emailed
- 163 Responded
- 32.8% Response Rate

