UMES ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE SURVEY REPORT

Prepared by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2014 University of Maryland Eastern Shore’s (UMES) Organizational Climate Survey (OCS) was initiated by the UMES Senate, coordinated by a committee, and approved by Dr. Juliette Bell, President of UMES. The purpose of this census of faculty and staff was to obtain an assessment of their shared perceptions and/or experiences, feelings, and attitudes concerning the work atmosphere and to provide feedback to the administration for supporting its efforts in sustaining a positive learning and working environment. The survey instrument comprised 13 organization climate themes/components including job satisfaction, communication, interpersonal relations, customer service, management/leadership, training and professional development, teamwork, mentoring, reward/recognition and other activities impacting UMES’ learning and working environment. A Likert type rating scale of 1 to 5 was used where 1 represents very poor, very dissatisfied or strongly disagree and 5 represents strongly agree, excellent, and very satisfied. Seven hundred and twenty nine faculty and staff were invited to participate in the online survey/census and 441 responses (47.5%) received are the basis of the findings that follow.

1. The general assessment is that faculty and staff give an overall rating of between satisfied fair/neutral and agree/good, represented by an overall average rating on a five-point scale for the 13 themes/components of organizational climate survey. The overall average ratings/scores range from 2.6 for rewards/recognition and mentoring to 3.5 for management/leadership and interpersonal relations (see figure 1 and Tables 1-14). Therefore, a careful review of UMES’ performance on each theme/component is needed to identify areas that need improvement.

2. More than 7 in 10 faculty and staff express satisfaction and high satisfaction with their jobs at UMES including their duties giving them a feeling of personal accomplishment, being proud to work for UMES (almost 7 in 10); and their job making use of their skills and abilities (almost 7 in10). On the other hand, a majority feel that morale is low at UMES (almost 3 in 5), and women indicate lower overall morale than men. Although it is counterintuitive that personal morale is high while overall morale is low, UMES should explore ways to improve overall morale in order to increase productivity and institutional effectiveness.
3. More than 7 in 10 faculty and staff indicate that they understand their department’s goals and objectives, and that faculty/staff departmental meetings are held frequently. On the other hand, faculty and staff feel that communication across divisions and institutional level needs to be enhanced to reduce perceived silo mentality and increase teamwork and civility.

4. More than 7 in 10 faculty and staff indicate that they have developed close and meaningful relationships with other employees at UMES and that they are not intimidated by their supervisors or management. However, a significant number (almost 3 in 10) do not feel that the special needs of employees are well met at UMES and are unaware of the UMES conflict resolution process.

5. More than 7 in 10 faculty and staff indicate that they understand their department’s goals and objectives and that faculty/staff departmental meetings are held often enough to share information. A significant number (i.e., between 1 in 5 for usually hearing about important changes through management/formal communication rather than rumors and 3 in 10 for my division communicates well with other departments) that are neutral provide an opportunity for the administration to positively impact the UMES working environment with improved and more effective communication.

6. A majority of faculty and staff (73.4%) feel that they have developed close and meaningful relations with other UMES employees and are not intimidated by their supervisor or management (71.1%). Overall, faculty and staff interpersonal relations at UMES are sound.

7. Almost 3 in 5 faculty and staff indicate that they provide high overall customer service within their divisions. However, a significant percentage (45.2%) indicate that the overall quality of interdepartmental customer service and overall customer service to students (30.7%) is poor, confirming the existence and frequent use of the negative term “Hawk Shuffle” to describe how students in need of help are moved from office to office. This study cites cases of outright rudeness and unhelpfulness of faculty and staff to each other and to students. There is need for improving the quality of customer service not only for students but for the entire university community as well as for external stakeholders to support and promote the UMES brand.

8. With an overall average rating on a five point scale of 3.5, management/leadership is one of the two highly rated climate themes/components at UMES (i.e., the second theme with a similar rating is interpersonal relations), with almost eight out of 10 faculty and staff indicating that they have a positive working relationship with their manager/supervisor, that their supervisor/manager values their feedback (almost 7 out of 10) and that their
supervisor empowers them to make effective decisions. However, a significant proportion (almost 2 in 5) indicate that UMES leadership needs to be willing to change to better meet current and future needs of the institution.

9. A significant percentage (47.0%) of faculty and staff indicate that UMES invests in its employees through training and professional development. However, a significant proportion (2 in 5) indicate that UMES does not use a systematic process for professional development needs and solutions and that the PMP and faculty evaluations are not effective tools for identifying professional development needs (3 in 10). Given the overall average rate of 3.1 on a five-point scale for professional development opportunities, there is need for empowering faculty and staff through professional development opportunities.

10. Over 8 in 10 faculty and staff indicate that mentoring is valuable, especially for those employees at the beginning of their careers. However, almost 1 in 2 faculty and staff indicate that departments/units do not have an organized mentoring program/process or appropriate orientation programs. UMES should consider developing an appropriate process and a well-organized mentoring program to support professional development and good customer service.

11. A majority of faculty and staff (74.9%) indicate that their departments have high levels of teamwork. However, almost 2 in 5 feel that all divisions could work together better to accomplish the University’s mission of providing high quality education to individuals from diverse backgrounds including low income and first generation. Accordingly, suggestions for improving teamwork have been made, especially in areas that cut across divisions, departments or operational units. More specific suggestions are provided under the section on teamwork.

12. Only 51.8% of faculty and staff indicate that they are treated fairly by their supervisor when it comes to rewards and recognition and 40.3% feel that employees are treated with respect regardless of their job title. Almost 3 in 5 indicate that UMES salaries do not attract and retain productive employees; and the pay scale is not competitive with similar institutions in the region. Also only 1 in 2 faculty and staff feel that employees are promoted based on performance. With an overall average rating of 2.6 on a five-point scale, rewards and recognition are given the lowest rating and need to be reviewed to ensure employee morale and productivity.

13. Almost 2 in 5 faculty and staff give a fair, good or excellent rating for UMES’ reputation nationally, the effectiveness of UMES Faculty Assembly and Senate, and its reputation in Annapolis (i.e., the legislature). Given an overall rating of 3.4 on a six-point scale (i.e., this converts to 2.8 on five-point scale), it is clear that something needs to be done to
enhance UMES’ reputation in Maryland and nationally to achieve UMES’ transformation from excellence to eminence. In addition, the Faculty Assembly and Senate need to review their performance and come up with strategies for enhancing their effectiveness in addressing important issues affecting faculty and staff.

14. Almost 7 in 10 faculty give a good or excellent rating to their teaching in their department/unit; and almost 3 in 5 rate their research good or excellent with an overall average of 3.6 on a six-point scale (3.0 when converted to a five-point scale). On the other hand, the quality of research and academic advising was rated good or excellent by only 55.6 and 44.6%, respectively. Extant research shows that academic advising plays a very important role in student achievement of academic goals. UMES needs to continue working on the improvement of teaching, research and other services.

15. A significant percentage of faculty and staff (45.2%) indicate that students are the best thing about UMES. They find working with students to be incredibly rewarding. Having so many faculty and staff with deep interest in student welfare and academic success is a great asset for UMES. This asset needs to be nurtured and well supported because it is such people that can, among other things, provide effective mentoring and proactive advising processes to support student persistence and success.

16. Finally, faculty and staff have suggested some changes for the UMES administration to consider based on the results of this survey. These suggestions are provided in the last section of the analysis—“What Faculty and Staff Would Like to Change” and also in Appendix C.

A complete understanding of an institution’s organizational climate should include students who are the main reason for UMES’ existence. Therefore, it is important for the University to conduct a Student Satisfaction Survey to corroborate some of the findings of this survey.
Figure 1: Overall Average Rating of UMES Organizational Climate by Theme/Component

* These average rating themes/components are based on six-point scale and have been converted to five-point scale.