Recommendations of Faculty Development Committee (FDC) 2025-2026

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Charges to FDC

Charge 1

IMPLEMENTING AI TO IMPROVE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE PAGES

 Based on recommendations provided in the 2024-2025 FDC Final Report Charge 1 (shown below as items 1, 2, and 3), in collaboration with the Provost's Office and Northeastern IT, develop an Action Plan to implement an integrated Faculty Resource Information Webpage (reference existing NU webpage links provided in Appendix A of the 2024-2025 FDC Final Report).

Prior to developing the Action Plan, the FDC shall thoroughly review the 2024-2025 FDC Final Report and examine the Northeastern resources that may already provide any of the 2024-2025 FDC recommendations.

1. Use AI to personalize resource suggestions for faculty
Integrate an AI-driven recommendation system into the faculty information page to enhance the user experience. By leveraging machine learning algorithms, the system would analyze faculty preferences and browsing behavior to provide personalized resource suggestions. For instance, if a faculty member regularly accesses research funding opportunities or tuition assistance, the system would highlight those resources or suggest related content. This approach not only saves time but also increases engagement by ensuring faculty members quickly find the most relevant resources.

2. Implement AI-Powered Search with Contextual Understanding

To make it easier to find resources, an AI-powered search should be added to the website. Using natural language processing (NLP), the search can understand what users are looking for and give more accurate results. For example, if a faculty member searches for "mental health support," the AI will show results for faculty-specific counseling and wellness programs. This will help faculty find what they need more quickly and accurately.

3. AI-Driven Resource Organization and Real-Time Updates
To keep the website up-to-date and active, use AI to help automatically manage and update content. AI can monitor linked pages, flag outdated or new resources, and alert administrators to review them. AI can also track user activity to find missing resources or suggest better ways to organize the content. This will ensure the site stays relevant and meets the changing needs of faculty.

Charge 2

IMPROVING FACULTY/ADMIN COMMUNICATIONS

The 2024-2025 FDC provided recommendations for improving faculty/admin communications in its Final Report (Charge 3).

Therefore, the 2025-2026 FDC shall:
1. Review the 2024-2025 FDC Final Report
2. Based on the recommendations provided (below), work in collaboration with college Deans to identify whether the recommendations are actionable.
3. For those recommendations that are considered actionable, identify steps required to operationalize the recommendations.
4. For those recommendations that are not considered actionable, report on reasons why.

1. Improve Transparency and Address Faculty Concerns:
Deans should communicate clear expectations regarding faculty working conditions, including available resources, benefits, and contract obligations (e.g., eight-month contracts and off-term expectations). Additionally, clear action plans should be communicated regarding reported workplace hazards or other unresolved faculty concerns, reinforcing trust and accountability.

2. Establish Regular, Predictable Communication:
Based on faculty preference and survey data, the Deans should send bimonthly or monthly emails to faculty. These communications should provide updates on faculty development, shared governance, and administrative decisions, ensuring transparency, and reducing the perception of unilateral decision-making.

3. Implement and Act on Anonymous Feedback Mechanisms:
Support the Faculty Senate in creating multiple avenues for faculty to provide anonymized feedback (emails, surveys, forums, etc.), ensuring that input reaches unit heads, deans, and upper administration. Deans should regularly review and publicly address key themes from this feedback to demonstrate accountability and responsiveness.

4. Strengthen Faculty Governance in Communication Channels:

Work with the Faculty Senate to develop a college-wide email list that is controlled by the Faculty Senate, ensuring direct and unfiltered communication between faculty and their Senate representatives. This allows faculty concerns to be heard at all administrative levels and fosters a sense of shared governance.

Charge 3

The 2025-2026 FDC shall investigate and report on the process and outcomes of the 2021 Worcester Polytechnic Institute policy adoption to convert teaching faculty to tenure track faculty.

Approach

The 2025-2026 FDC Committee comprises six members and one ex-offico from various colleges, each bringing diverse perspectives. The committee's first meeting took place on September 9, 2025, with subsequent meetings held every two weeks. To gather the necessary information for the recommendations, the committee consulted a range of sources.

Charge 1

The FDC began by conducting a comprehensive review of existing faculty resource compilations across Northeastern University, including college-specific webpages and centralized resource lists. While the volume and quality of information varied, the committee found no evidence of AI-driven search capabilities or personalized recommendation systems in the existing platforms.

To better understand current institutional efforts, FDC members met with Dr. Deb Franko, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, on October 14 and December 8. Dr. Franko directed the committee to an existing integrated repository of faculty resources — the Faculty Affairs Resources page on the Office of the Provost website — which consolidates many of the essential tools and information needed by faculty across campuses.

Following this guidance, the FDC compared resources available on the Provost's webpage with those recommended in the 2024–2025 Final Report. As part of this review, Dr. Franko approved the addition of two important resources — the Academic Calendar and Human Resources links — to enhance the completeness of the existing page. Dr. Franko also noted that implementing the AI-enabled features described in the committee's charge would require the involvement of Information Technology Services (ITS)and referred the FDC to the

institutional ITS project-request process for initiatives requiring technical infrastructure or engineering support.

Charge 2

The committee decided to analyze the survey responses from the faculty senate survey 2024 to determine responses by college, given that participants had indicated their college affiliation in the survey. The 2024 questions were not specifically geared to collect feedback about transparency and communication within college governance; to collect more specific feedback related to Charge 2, the committee added several questions to the Faculty Senate survey for 2025. These questions are provided in Appendix A.

The committee also prepared a brief set of questions to send to the various college deans or dean offices, aimed directly at identifying actionable recommendations based on our charges. The committee reached out to all Colleges asking the deans for feedback in late November. Unfortunately, the committee did not hear back from most of the college deans or dean offices to compile a comprehensive report. The questions and responses are provided in Appendix B.

Charge 3

 The FDC committee began this charge with an investigation of the faculty handbook.

Subsequently, a committee member connected with a colleague at WPI who has, since the 2021 policy change, transitioned from a teaching faculty line to a tenured teaching faculty line. This colleague is in an administrative position and answered our questions about how the process unfolded, the subsequent result, and the effect on the campus community.

Analysis

Charge 1

A preliminary analysis indicates that Northeastern University has made meaningful progress in consolidating faculty resources, particularly through the Faculty Affairs Resources page. However, the existing systems do not yet incorporate the three AI-driven capabilities outlined in the 2025-2025 FDC charge: personalized resource recommendations, contextual AI-powered search, and automated content monitoring with real-time updates. Faculty resources remain distributed across multiple units and websites, and although the Provost's page provides a strong foundation, faculty still rely heavily on external search

engines and informal communication channels to locate accurate information. This highlights both a discoverability challenge and an opportunity for more intelligent navigation.

The committee's review further confirmed that no current platform offers AI-based personalization tailored to faculty roles or browsing patterns. Likewise, the available search tools do not use natural language processing to interpret user intent or provide contextual matches. In addition, the university does not yet employ automated systems that monitor resource pages for outdated content, detect broken links, or surface newly relevant information. These gaps directly correspond to the objectives stated in the charge and show clear potential for enhancing the faculty experience.

From a technical perspective, the committee's review indicates that implementing AI-driven personalization, contextual search, and automated content monitoring would require coordinated infrastructure, data integration, and system governance across multiple university units. These capabilities depend on structured content, shared metadata standards, and ongoing maintenance — none of which are currently in place at a university-wide level. The committee also noted that while faculty often rely on external tools such as Google to locate information, these tools do not differentiate between current and outdated university resources nor adapt results to faculty roles or needs. This comparison underscores that AI-enhanced search and personalization could offer clearer institutional value but also highlights the scale and complexity of the technical work required to support such a system.

Charge 2

The 2024 Faculty Survey had 489 unique respondents— joint appointments were split into their respective colleges to account for 516 rows of data. The survey revealed widespread dissatisfaction with administration across Northeastern University, with **eight out of ten colleges scoring below 2.5** on the overall rating scale. The survey identified critical systemic issues in five key areas: trust in administration (1.98), response to faculty concerns (1.99), keeping faculty informed (2.12), feedback opportunities (2.14), and faculty participation in decision-making (2.14). Mills College at Northeastern performed particularly poorly with an overall score of 1.93, while College of Engineering (2.21), College of Science (2.22), School of Law (2.27), and D'Amore-McKim School of Business (2.31) also showed significant concerns. The only relative bright spot was academic freedom, which scored 3.08 across the university, suggesting that while faculty felt their scholarly autonomy was generally protected, they experienced serious deficits in administrative transparency, communication, and collaborative governance.

The data showed considerable variation across colleges, with Bouvé College of Health Sciences (2.78) and Khoury College of Computer Sciences (2.74) performing relatively better by consistently scoring higher across most metrics including workload clarity, merit processes, and responsiveness to concerns. However, even these top performers remained in the "moderate" satisfaction range rather than "high," indicating that no college achieved truly strong faculty satisfaction with administrative practices.

The 2025 Faculty Survey analysis is based on data from 569 unique respondents (joint appointments split accounting for 603 rows of data). The results revealed substantial improvement in faculty perceptions of college administration compared to 2024, with only one college (D'Amore-McKim School of Business at 2.28) scoring below the 2.5 threshold, compared to eight colleges in 2024. Six colleges achieved scores above 3.0, indicating moderate satisfaction, with Khoury College of Computer Sciences (3.43), College of Professional Studies (3.33), and Bouvé College of Health Sciences (3.27) leading the university. Despite this progress, collaborative decision-making emerged as the most critical university-wide concern with an overall score of 2.26, indicating that faculty across multiple colleges—particularly in Social Sciences and Humanities (1.81), D'Amore-McKim (1.91), and Engineering (2.01)—perceive administrative decisions as unilateral rather than participatory. Other areas requiring attention included anonymous feedback mechanisms (2.81), accountability and responsiveness (2.95), and timely updates (3.21), while dean communication clarity (3.32) represented the highest-rated area, though still leaving room for improvement.

Unique Respondents per College
(Joint appointments counted in multiple colleges)
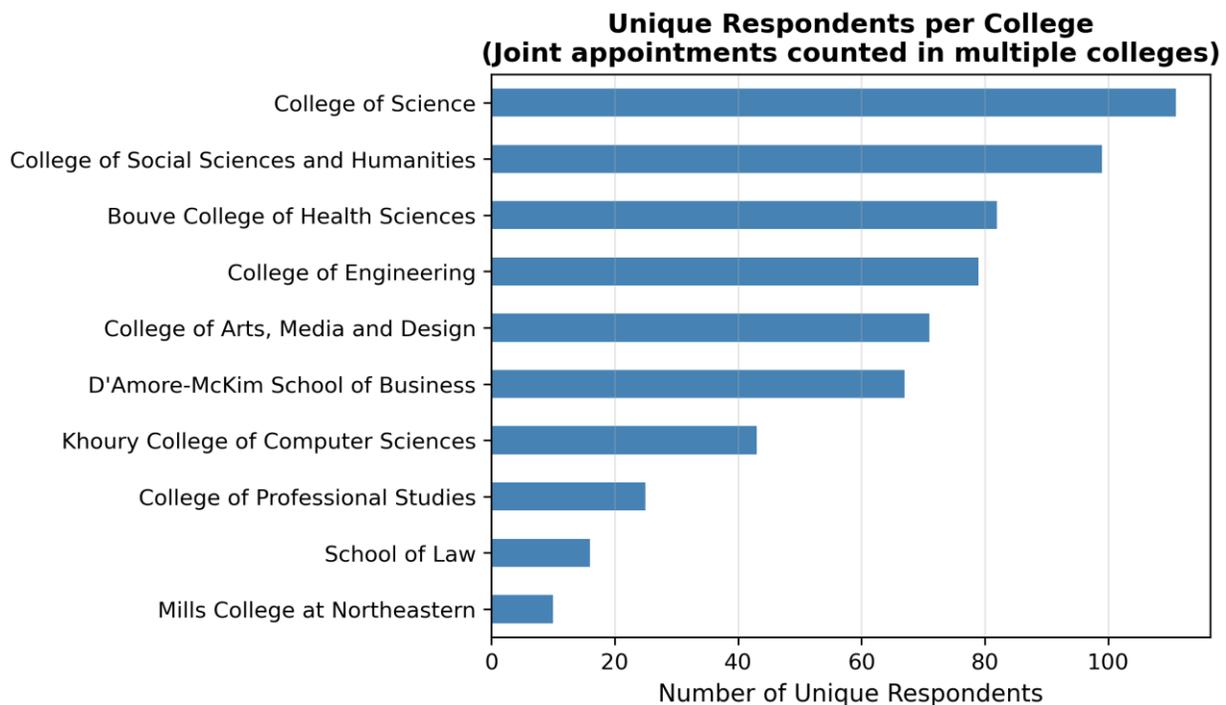
The survey data demonstrated significant variation in faculty satisfaction across colleges, with top performers like Khoury excelling in accountability and responsiveness (3.64) and collaborative decision-making (3.22), while D'Amore-McKim struggled across all five measured dimensions and requires immediate comprehensive intervention. Mills College at Northeastern showed a remarkable turnaround from its 2024 score of 1.93 to 3.02 in 2025, while maintaining the university's best rating for timely updates (3.70). The findings suggest that while the colleges have made meaningful progress in administrative communication and responsiveness, the persistent challenge of collaborative governance and faculty participation in decision-making processes represents a systemic issue requiring university-wide action.
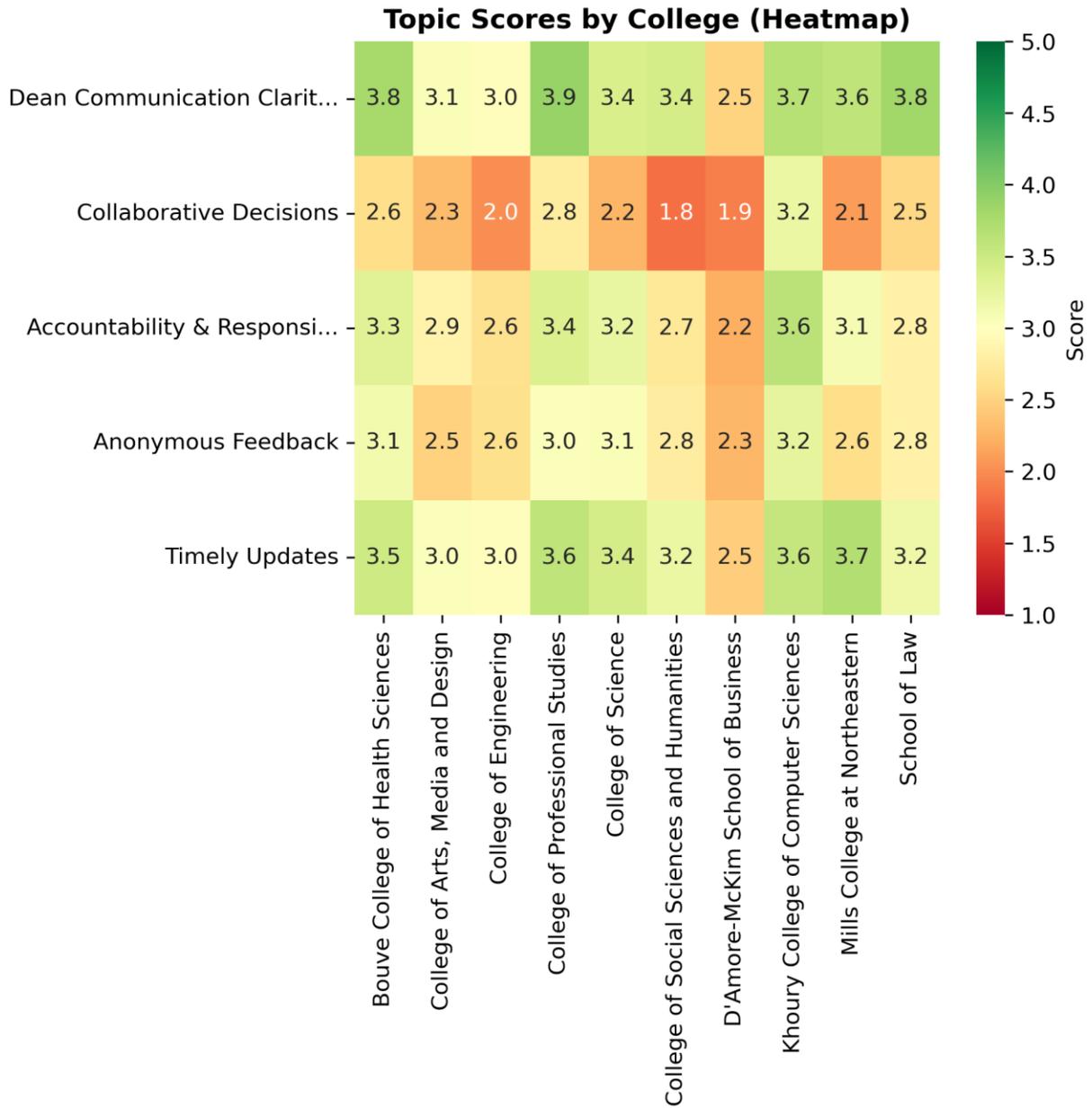
The FDC did not hear back from enough colleges to analyze responses—the response from the College of Professional Services has been provided in the appendix.

Overall Administration Rating by College
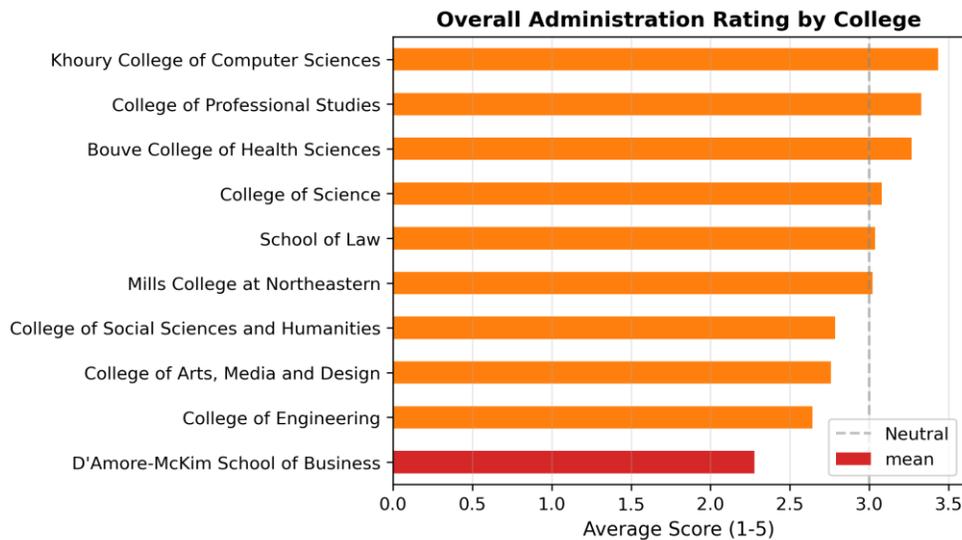
Generally, the faculty survey revealed concerns about transparency and communication. Thirty-nine respondents identified financial and budgetary concerns. Twenty-three respondents expressed the view that college deans lack authority and communication from university leadership. Twenty-six faculty members described decision-making as "top-down," with limited faculty consultation before implementation. One Bouve College faculty member stated, "The problem with transparency is not occurring at the college level but rather at the university level".

There were few calls for leadership change, including eight from DMSB and two each from COE and Mills. CAMD recognized that they had a new dean and were unable to fully assess communication at the time of the survey. Faculty across the university identified both systemic and operational issues, including unreturned emails, unclear processes, and

insufficient explanations for policy changes. Primary requests include financial transparency, inclusion in decision-making processes, responsive communication, and clear explanations of institutional challenges.

Topic Scores by College (Heatmap)

Topic	Bouve College of Health Sciences	College of Arts, Media and Design	College of Engineering	College of Professional Studies	College of Science	College of Social Sciences and Humanities	D'Amore-McKim School of Business	Khoury College of Computer Sciences	Mills College at Northeastern	School of Law
Dean Communication Clarit...	3.8	3.1	3.0	3.9	3.4	3.4	2.5	3.7	3.6	3.8
Collaborative Decisions	2.6	2.3	2.0	2.8	2.2	1.8	1.9	3.2	2.1	2.5
Accountability & Responsi...	3.3	2.9	2.6	3.4	3.2	2.7	2.2	3.6	3.1	2.8
Anonymous Feedback	3.1	2.5	2.6	3.0	3.1	2.8	2.3	3.2	2.6	2.8
Timely Updates	3.5	3.0	3.0	3.6	3.4	3.2	2.5	3.6	3.7	3.2

Charge 3

The 2025 Faculty Survey analysis is based on data from 569 unique respondents, including 332 non-tenure faculty members. Of these non-tenure respondents, 117 provided open-ended text feedback.

The committee analyzed the text feedback and found that a significant number of non-tenure faculty respondents expressed concerns about their job security.
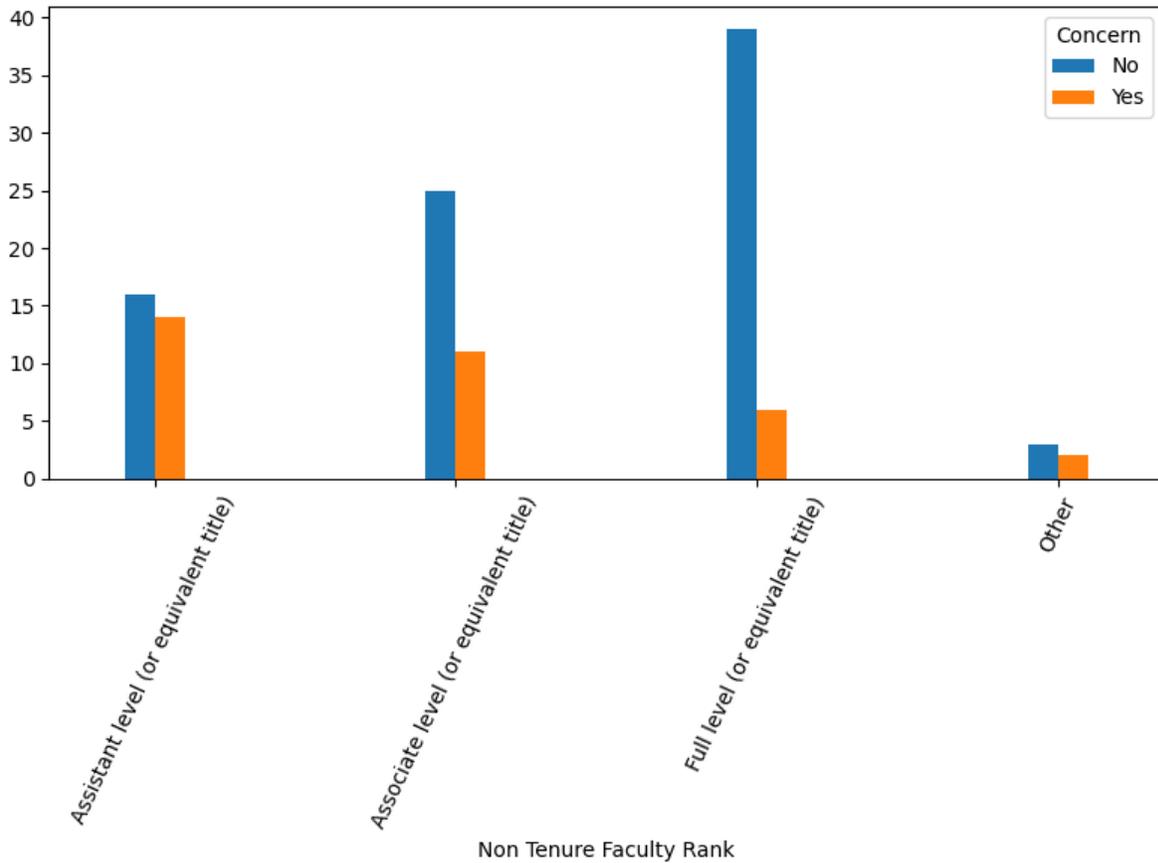
The committee decided to analyze other universities' tenure promotions for assistant and associate teaching professors

In 2025, six teaching professors were awarded tenure through the university's innovative tenure track for faculty who focus on excellence in teaching.

WPI launched the tenure track for teaching faculty in 2021 and first awarded tenure to teaching faculty members in 2024. [1]

The WPI process moved faculty from two streams (teaching and tenured faculty) to three streams, creating distinctive roles for teaching faculty on long-term contracts, tenured teaching faculty, and tenured research faculty. Faculty ranks are distinguished by their titles – contract faculty are "teaching professors" (i.e. Assistant Teaching Professor) and tenured teaching-track faculty are "professors of teaching" (i.e. Assistant Professor of Teaching). A major part of the process was clarifying and standardizing contracts for teaching professors, moving from less stable and less secure terms to standardized lengths that stepped up with each promotion / renewal (from 1 to 2 and then from 2 to 5 year contracts).

Many of the faculty in "professor of teaching" lines were converted from contract lines. This was not a uniform process, however. A finite number of tenured teaching lines were created in 2021, and existing faculty applied for conversion. The process was described as somewhat "haphazard" and each application was received and considered separately by department heads, deans and the provost. No caps existed for colleges and / or departments, and so the final distribution was somewhat random. Following the initial wave of conversions, some faculty were hired specifically into tenured teaching roles. Now that the total cap for tenured and tenure-track teaching faculty has been reached, conversions and direct hiring into tenured and tenure-track lines has been frozen.

Both "professors of teaching" and "teaching professors" teach eight classes per year (WPI operates on the quarter system), compared to a standard load of six for "dual mission" (traditional research-active tenured and tenure-track faculty). Promotion through the ranks of tenure for "professor of teaching" faculty mirrors the process for "dual mission" faculty. Candidates for promotion produce a dossier that, in addition to evidence of excellence in teaching, also demonstrates commitment to research / further education in teaching. These can, for example, include publication of teaching-focused textbooks, research on best-practices in teaching, etc. The focus is on measurable and high-profile contributions that can be assessed by an outside audience.

Recommendations for Charge 1

While the FDC was able to assist in expanding the Faculty Affairs Resources page on the Provost's website, the committee concludes that fully implementing the AI-driven

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[1] https://www.wpi.edu/news/wpi-announces-2025-faculty-promotions-and-tenure-awards
https://handbook.wpi.edu/chapter-3.html

capabilities outlined in the charge — personalized resource suggestions, contextual AI-powered search, and automated content monitoring — extends beyond the scope of this year's work without coordinated technical and administrative support. The committee therefore recommends that future development be formally sponsored by a Vice Provost–level or higher administrator and prioritized through the ITS Project Request process to ensure appropriate resources, expertise, and long-term sustainability.

As an important next step, the committee recommends that a future FDC cohort conduct a structured faculty survey or needs-assessment study. Such a survey would gather direct feedback on how faculty currently locate resources, where they encounter challenges, and their interest in AI-powered features such as personalized recommendations, contextual search, and automatic verification of up-to-date information. This user-centered evidence would provide valuable guidance for system design and would significantly strengthen any future proposal submitted to ITS or university leadership for the development of an AI-enhanced faculty resource platform.

In the meantime, the university may consider incremental improvements that strengthen the foundation for eventual AI integration, such as standardizing resource categories, improving metadata and tagging practices, enhancing navigation, and ensuring consistency across college-level resource pages. These enhancements would support a smoother transition to an AI-powered faculty resource platform in the future.

Finally, the committee recommends that future charges explicitly identify the university units responsible for collaboration — including Information Technology Services, Faculty Affairs, Academic Technologies, and Human Resources — to ensure sustained progress and clarity of roles.

Recommendations for Charge 2

University administration should consider implementing the following improvements:

1. Transform Decision-Making from Consultative to Collaborative: The administration must address the most critical finding from the survey: faculty perceive administrative decisions as unilateral rather than collaborative (2.26 overall, with three colleges scoring below 2.0). Establish formal decision-making frameworks where faculty input is required at defined stages before decisions are finalized, with transparent documentation showing how faculty perspectives shaped outcomes or clear explanations when faculty recommendations cannot be implemented. Create faculty advisory committees with

actual decision-making authority on matters affecting curriculum, hiring, working conditions, and resource allocation—not just consultative roles that can be ignored.

2. Enhance Faculty Governance Authority in Communication and Decision-Making:
Expand the role of Faculty Senate and elected faculty committees beyond using existing administrative channels to having independent communication structures and genuine decision-making authority. Create faculty-controlled communication channels (dedicated listserv or newsletter section) separate from administrative communications, and ensure faculty governance bodies have standing agenda items at town halls and coffee hours where they can directly address faculty concerns without administrative filtering.

3. Institutionalize Accountability Mechanisms and Response Commitments: Learn from colleges demonstrating strong performance—Khoury (3.43 overall, 3.64 on accountability, 3.22 on collaborative decisions), CPS (3.33 overall, 3.88 on dean communication), and Bouvé (3.27 overall, 3.78 on dean communication)—to understand what makes their governance and communication models effective. Create formal mechanisms for cross-college learning through faculty governance channels, document successful approaches in faculty handbooks and leadership training, and recognize college leaders who demonstrate excellence in collaborative governance and faculty engagement. Ensure these best practices are institutionalized across the university rather than dependent on individual leaders.

4. **College-Specific Committees for Operationalizing Recommendations:** The FDC committee recommends that that Faculty Senate develop College-specific committees, that can work with the respective college senators to address gaps in communication, transparency, and anonymous feedback mechanisms for individual colleges. This would help bridge the gap where certain colleges that seem to have the lowest scores on their governance and communication models. We believe that guidelines should be developed at the University level to ensure consistency in mechanisms within colleges.

Recommendations for Charge 3

We recommend that future committees investigate other institutions and systems that have sought to support teaching-track faculty. Systems such as the UC system and individual institutions such as Portland State University have sought to ensure secure employment that extends contract lengths, clarifies and standardizes processes for promotion, and focuses on ensuring that the academic freedom at the heart of the tenure system is extended to the broader university community.

We recommend that Each Assistant Professor of Teaching receives a combined review for tenure and promotion to the Associate Professor of Teaching .

We recommend that Each associate Professor of Teaching receives a combined review for tenure and promotion to the Full Professor of Teaching.

This is to recognize faculty for the outstanding contributions they have made through their teaching, advising and research.

Appendix A: Faculty Senate Survey 2025 Questions

Likert Scale Survey Questions

Questions to Add to Faculty Survey

- Please rank the following questions/statements using the scale 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. My dean clearly communicates expectations regarding working conditions, resources, and contract obligations.

- Please rank the following questions/statements using the scale 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Administrative decisions feel collaborative rather than unilateral.

- Please rank the following questions/statements using the scale 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. My college administration demonstrates accountability and responsiveness to faculty concerns.

- Please rank the following questions/statements using the scale 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. I have adequate opportunities to provide anonymous feedback to college administration.

- Please rank the following questions/statements using the scale 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. I receive regular, timely updates about faculty development, governance, and administrative decisions from my college dean.

Short Answer Questions

What is the single most important change your college administration could make to improve transparency and communication?

Appendix B: Communication with Colleges for Charge 2

Questions to the Colleges:

We would greatly appreciate your office's perspective on the following areas related to our committee's charges:

1. **Transparency in Faculty Working Conditions:** How does your college currently communicate expectations regarding faculty working conditions, available resources, benefits, and contract obligations? What processes are in place for communicating action plans regarding workplace concerns?
2. **Regular Communication Practices:** What is the current frequency and format of communications from the dean's office to faculty? What mechanisms exist for sharing updates on faculty development, shared governance, and administrative decisions?
3. **Faculty Feedback Mechanisms:** What avenues currently exist for faculty to provide feedback—particularly anonymous feedback—to college leadership? How is this feedback reviewed and addressed?
4. **Faculty Governance in Communication:** What role does the Faculty Senate and faculty governance currently play in communication structures within your college? Are there college-specific email lists or communication channels controlled by faculty representatives?

Response from College of Professional Studies:

CPS highly values transparent communication with our entire CPS community, particularly our faculty who are on the front lines of delivering high caliber learning for our students as leaders in their fields. The following is a brief summary of our efforts to ensure on-going timely feedback across and between all members of the community.

Transparency in Faculty Working Conditions: How does your college currently communicate expectations regarding faculty working conditions, available resources, benefits, and contract obligations? What processes are in place for communicating action plans regarding workplace concerns?

- CPS instituted a hoteling model for space in 2022/23. This process was initiated by conducting a survey of faculty asking them about space needs, (i.e. adjustable desks, privacy pods for meetings, collaboration space, etc.) The move towards a hoteling model was communicated via email to the faculty by the interim dean at

the time. Any updates or changes are communicated through announcements on the faculty listserv, the Dean's virtual coffee house, and quarterly town hall meetings.

Regular Communication Practices: What is the current frequency and format of communications from the dean's office to faculty? What mechanisms exist for sharing updates on faculty development, shared governance, and administrative decisions?

We use several channels to keep faculty informed and engaged on important college news and information:

- **Email updates** from the dean's office for major announcements and policy changes
- **Monthly Newsletter** distributed to all faculty, staff and students with a highlighted section specifically relevant to faculty updates
- **Quarterly Dean Virtual Coffee Hours** for more informal conversation and Q&A
- **Quarterly Town Hall Meetings** where we share updates and provide opportunities for discussion

In addition to these regular communications channels, we also invite faculty to participate in voluntary community and professional development events. These include everything from The Engagement Ambassador (T.E.A.) social gatherings (both virtual and in-person) to monthly AI Voices sessions where faculty learn from each other related to the continually evolving space of AI in their fields and the monthly offerings of the Professional Development and Support Committee.

Faculty Feedback Mechanisms: What avenues currently exist for faculty to provide feedback—particularly anonymous feedback—to college leadership? How is this feedback reviewed and addressed?

- Faculty can at any time provide feedback and share questions and concerns through the faculty elected Professional Development and Support Committee. Additionally, the Committee sends an annual anonymous survey to faculty asking them about their professional development needs and interests.
- CPS faculty have two primary avenues for providing anonymous feedback: the always available anonymous feedback suggestion box on the Dean's Sharepoint site & the annual anonymous engagement survey. In both cases, feedback is considered by the Dean and, often, the senior leadership team and discussed at College Town Halls and Dean's Coffee Hours. Appropriate actions are implemented because of the feedback.
- In addition, CPS faculty can contact the University Ombuds when needed.

Faculty Governance in Communication: What role does the Faculty Senate and faculty governance currently play in communication structures within your college? Are there college-specific email lists or communication channels controlled by faculty representatives?

- Faculty Senate currently plays an indirect role in communication at CPS: The two faculty senators do not own the channels, but they use existing college channels like Shared Governance meetings or Town Halls to circulate information.
- Anonymous Qualtrics surveys are sent out by the Chair of the All-College Committee (elected faculty member) on a recurrent basis asking for input to Shared Governance meetings agendas and any concerns that faculty and staff that they would like to bring to Dean's attention.