Recommendations of the COACHE Working Group

Final Report 2024



Executive Summary

The Queens College COACHE (Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education) Working Group was formed in response to the 2023 COACHE Survey of Faculty Satisfaction. The Working Group consists of eight faculty members – two from each of the Academic Schools – and three partners from the Academic Administration. We were tasked with using the COACHE Survey results to develop initiatives to improve faculty life on campus. We used the data and open responses to group the results by topic and develop initiatives. We then sought feedback on the initiatives from full-time faculty through a follow-up online survey instrument; this survey had 199 respondents (an impressive 36% response rate, even more than the initial COACHE Survey) and every initiative earned agreement from over 70% of the respondents.

We pared these initiatives into a final collection of proposals that earned agreement from over 85% of the respondents, which is the focus of the following pages. We recognize that improving faculty satisfaction requires contributions throughout the greater Queens College community, and as such we have developed action items for faculty, departments, schools, support offices, the administration, and CUNY Central. See the chart on the next page. In the subsequent pages, we detail the justification for the initiatives based on the data and the free responses from the surveys.

Our committee would like to thank Provost Price and Associate Provost DeLongoria for the opportunity to be an integral part of analyzing the COACHE data and leading the development of initiatives. We propose an accountability and reporting structure be created to ensure that progress is made toward agreed-upon initiatives that will outlive this ad hoc committee. We suggest that a person in the academic administration and a committee of the College P&B be tasked with ensuring progress towards these initiatives and providing transparency about the process and progress through regular reports to be shared with the faculty. Assuming progress toward initiatives we propose, this process will increase goodwill between faculty and the administration. Furthermore, the increased awareness of the COACHE process will result in better data in the next COACHE cycle in 2027.

We conclude with a word of thanks to Lizandra Friedland in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, whose work has been extremely valuable in analyzing, visualizing, and clarifying both the COACHE data and the data collected in our follow-up survey.

Suggested Actions

For the Administration:

- Re-open the Agora Café.
- Support research through course releases, funding travel, grant application assistance.
- Develop annual awards for research and service.
- Increase transparency of processes, rationale, and accountability for decisions affecting faculty.
- Implement shared governance: Include faculty voice in decisions and in administrative roles.
- Address the poor state of the bulletins.
- Streamline implementation of cross-disciplinary courses.
- Protect courses with low enrollment and small class caps.
- Encourage and support active participation in the Queens College community.
- Ensure affordable food options for students.
- Assign a person to oversee progress towards agreed upon initiatives with regular updates.

For Support Offices:

- General: Improve responsiveness of and availability of administrative staff.
- General: Include contact information on website for faculty requests and needs.
- DEI: Increase transparency in DEI processes and incorporate faculty in decisions.
- DEI: Adopt a more sustained, balanced and inclusive approach to initiatives.
- IT: Increase transparency and feedback prior to major changes in technology.
- IT: Develop and maintain a professional website.
- Comms: Highlight Faculty! Share their research through stories and interviews.
- OIE: Keep track of faculty DEI KPI's: minority %, new hire minority %, minority attrition, satisfaction of minority faculty
- CETLL: Provide training for Interfolio
- CETLL: Re-establish Teaching Showcase.

For CUNY Central:

- Implement a 3-2 workload for professorial faculty and a 4-3 workload for lecturers.
- Increase transparency and faculty feedback prior to major changes in technology.

For College P&B:

- Develop clear expectations for promotion, tenure, in research, teaching, and service.
- Create an oversight committee to ensure progress towards agreed upon initiatives.

For Academic Schools:

- Organize social events to build crossdepartmental connections.
- Organize mini-conferences and poster sessions to promote research.

For Departments:

- Organize regular events and initiatives that promote interaction.
- Mentor and provide course releases for faculty approaching promotion to Full.
- Protect courses with low enrollment and small class caps.
- Improve contact information on webpages.
- Address the inequitable burden of various service roles on minoritized faculty.

For Faculty:

- Participate in policy decision making with the administration.
- Participate in events and initiatives run by College, Schools, and Departments.
- Participate in the Academic Senate.

For the Strategic Planning Committee:

- Develop and publish a coherent vision for Queens College centered around our strength as an engine of social mobility.
- Address the inequitable burden of various service roles on minoritized faculty.
- Discuss the shared governance structure of the campus.

Detailed Recommendations

I. Teaching

As an upward mobility-providing college, the faculty understands the importance of teaching. In the original COACHE survey results, faculty had little to no concerns with student quality or colleagues, but they did ultimately express ways in which their teaching could be improved.

With class size increases and student education interruption due to COVID, teaching high-quality courses is more complex and more taxing. Additionally, with the mass number of retirements, there is an increased need for and demand for service. There is a genuine need to implement a 3:2 workload for faculty and reduce the lecturer workload to 4:3. A large majority of 92% of faculty expressed the need for this initiative to meet the growing needs of service and to devote more time to research. Research, too, leads to improvements in high-quality courses.

Furthermore, the faculty at Queens College want the opportunity to teach together. Interdisciplinary approaches are innovative and bring unique educational experiences to our students. This initiative was nearly unanimously supported by 95% of faculty respondents. However, the process is highly cumbersome and challenging to navigate. Streamlining the process for cross-disciplinary course implementation would enable our fantastic faculty to work together to create new and extraordinary classes.

The students and their educational journey from course innovation and focus to their protection are at the center of faculty concerns. Faculty are concerned with canceling low enrollment classes, which ultimately leads to delays in graduation for our students. Therefore, the third teaching initiative is to protect low enrollment and small capacity classes by abiding by the bylaws, leaving course cancellations at the department level. Our focus needs to remain on the students, and the departments understand the students' course needs better than the administration.

- CUNY Initiative
 - o Implement a 3:2 workload for professorial faculty and reduce lecturer faculty workload to 4:3. This would have a two-fold effect on the relationship between faculty and administration: align us with practices from peer institutions and would allow faculty to devote more time to research and service.
- COLLEGE Initiative
 - Streamline the process for cross-disciplinary course implementation so that our amazing faculty can work together to create new and extraordinary classes.
- DEPARTMENTS / DIVISIONS / ADMINISTRATION
 - o Protect courses with low enrollment and small class caps (upper level, Ws, etc.) by abiding by the bylaws leaving course cancellations at the department level

II. Community

As a public commuter institution dedicated to fostering social mobility, Queens College faces the intricate task of building and sustaining a sense of community amidst limited resources and without the traditional residential college culture. To enhance our sense of community and belonging in such zeitgeist, we propose several key initiatives focused on improving communal spaces and encouraging interaction across the college. Firstly, faculty have expressed concerns about the lack of accessible, central areas for gatherings, highlighting a significant gap in fostering within- and cross-departmental interactions and strengthening community bonds, as well as supporting collaborative research and teaching efforts.

Concerns are also raised about the absence of affordable indoor dining options for members of the college, underlining a critical need for spaces that support a sense of community. While it may be common, if not the norm, at universities nationwide for faculty and, at times, invited students to gather over lunch for research meetings or office hours in campus dining halls, such a practice is not feasible at our institution. This lack of communal areas is a barrier to connection and interaction, significantly impacting the overall college experience—a concern echoed by an overwhelming 95.9% of follow-up survey respondents who endorsed the idea of reopening the faculty dining room. Additionally, there's a perceived need for more organized events and initiatives to enhance interaction and mentorship among the faculty.

The final concern touches on the observation that a sizeable subset of the faculty remains less active ostensibly without facing any repercussions, which not only results in an uneven distribution of work but also leads to feelings of demoralization and frustration among those who are more engaged members of the community. This lack of accountability for participation exacerbates workload disparities and undermines the morale and unity at Queens College, calling for a reassessment of engagement expectations and contributions across the board to ensure a fair, supportive, and motivated campus environment. Echoing this sentiment, 94.8% of the follow-up survey participants support the initiative to foster more equitable and active interactions and mentorship among faculty members.

- College
 - O Considering our reality as a commuter institution, we highly prioritize the establishment of inviting indoor communal spaces. These areas, equipped with dining and relaxation amenities, should be designed to cultivate a sense of community among the faculty, which should stand us in good stead as we aim to boost faculty satisfaction.
 - We suggest reactivating the Agora Café (or a similar venue) for faculty and staff use. For faculty members, the focus is perhaps less on expansive food offerings, and more on the availability of reliable, centralized spaces that facilitate gatherings. Such locales are indispensable for facilitating interactions that span different departments, thereby enriching the fabric of our academic community.
 - o Furthermore, we advocate for the reestablishment of Student Union cafes that offer economically viable dining options for our student body and the larger campus community. These venues play a

critical role in engendering a sense of belonging and connection among our commuter students and faculty, addressing their profound need for engagement within the college's communal life.

• College, Schools, and Departments

Emphasize equitable active participation among faculty by highlighting the essential role of consistent engagement in fulfilling our institutional mission. It is crucial to address chronic absence or disengagement, which, in some cases, appears to have unfortunately been normalized, by developing strategies that not only incentivize actively sustained involvement but also impose consequences for persistent avoidance of community commitment, perhaps affecting tenure, promotion, and resource allocation. By implementing such measures, we ensure that all faculty members contribute to, and benefit from, our vibrant community equitably, reinforcing the value of shared commitment to institutional goals.

Schools and Departments

o Facilitate a range of structured events and programs aimed at bolstering interaction within our academic community. Proposed activities include 'Meet and Greet' sessions designed for broadening professional networks beyond direct colleagues, inter-departmental gatherings to encourage extensive connections, and exhibitions of pedagogical innovation that illuminate advanced strategies in interdisciplinary research and education.

III. Faculty-Administration Relationship

In compiling this report, the domain of faculty-administration relationships emerged as the most consistently voiced area of concern among respondents, signaling it as paramount for improvement and underscoring a unified call for action. Three key areas of improvement have been identified in this domain. Firstly, faculty concerns underline the necessity for *transparently* and *consistently* shared governance to bolster communication and collaboration between—as well as among—faculty and administration. This concern is amplified by the perception that decisions are often made without adequate faculty input or transparency, even in instances where faculty participation in decision-making and policy development is ostensibly welcomed.

There is also unease over the perceived absence of accountability in administrative decisions, particularly those directly affecting faculty, such as resource distribution and hiring. Reportedly, faculty often feel excluded, with decisions seemingly made unilaterally by the administration and no clear way to challenge them, lacking rationale or consideration of the impact on faculty. It is therefore not surprising that 97.3% of the follow-up survey respondents call for enhanced communication efforts by the administration, while an astounding 100% unanimously advocate for improvements in transparency and accountability.

Finally, concerns have been raised regarding a subset of faculty members shouldering an unfair share of service responsibilities, frequently justified as a means to diversify committee membership. However, paradoxically, this does not necessarily appear to ensure that their perspectives are included in decision-making processes. Although minoritized and junior faculty often bear these burdens, it is a wider issue affecting various members of the academic community. This issue highlights the necessity for equitable faculty participation in governance and decision-making processes, without adding to the workload or continuing the disparities among faculty members. This is underscored by the follow-up survey results, where 91.7% of respondents strongly emphasized that the voices of minoritized and junior faculty must be *actively* integrated and reflected in the decisions. This highlights a collective call for a move beyond symbolic inclusion to ensure meaningful participation. We propose that adopting this service model should not add to the overall faculty workload but, instead, be offset by adjusting current responsibilities, such as teaching loads, and be recognized in material ways in tenure and promotion evaluations.

Proposed Initiatives:

College and, to a Lesser Degree, University

Establish and disseminate a shared governance framework that ensures administration maintains utmost transparency and actively seeks—and honors—faculty input toward continuous improvement of the college. This approach aims to enhance mutual collaboration and informed policy development and problem-solving across the institution. Along the same vein, ensure the faculty community has full transparency into the processes, rationale, and crucially, accountability regarding decisions that impact them, such as resource allocation, equipment purchases, and hiring—including line allocation and targeted hiring initiatives. This will address the current perceptions of top-down and opaque decision-making by the upper administration.

Address the burden of excessive service responsibilities frequently affecting specific segments of the faculty, a concern that spans across demographic groups, though often more visible among minoritized members and junior faculty in the quest for diverse committee composition. Ensure all faculty members are given the opportunity to opt into committee roles voluntarily, supported by fair workload recalibrations. This approach aims to dissolve power imbalances, allowing faculty to effectively manage their duties and contribute to reducing systemic disparities without accruing extra tasks. Valuing each faculty member's decision to participate—or not—in specific service domains is crucial. Seamlessly incorporating their input into decision-making fosters a genuinely inclusive and equitable environment across the academic spectrum.

Schools and Departments

As intermediaries, continuously monitor decisions impacting faculty and regularly provide updates, including explanations for each decision and any available recourse. Also, implement a system for monitoring and balancing service assignments to ensure equitable distribution of labor. Offer a model for service with: (a) keen sensitivity to equitable distribution of service responsibilities across all members of the school and department to prevent subsets of the faculty from being overburdened; and (b) clear expectations of each committee's scope and workload, allowing faculty to make informed decisions about their participation.

IV. Technology

Faculty are dependent on technology for almost all areas of work at the college and CUNY at large. The COACHE data and follow-up faculty survey revealed a large majority who are dissatisfied with the state of technology at the college, and the lack of support for their use and maintenance. The following proposals have overwhelming support from faculty who responded to the follow-up survey (over 75% for all and over 90% for some). First, faculty found the QC website to be poorly designed and confusing, and found the lack of a college bulletin unconscionable. We are requesting that the college regularly update and maintain the forward-facing Queens College website, including a yearly-updated graduate and undergraduate college bulletin.

Second, faculty also found many offices unresponsive to various requests. Therefore, we are requesting that clear contact information for offices and departments be posted, with specific information for whom to contact for different purposes.

Third, given the use of technology for almost every area of work at the college, we are requesting much more staffing at CETLL and ITS, and regular training for these staff.

Finally, faculty felt strongly that many changes to technology (e.g., G-suite removal, email changes) were made haphazardly and abruptly, and therefore are requesting faculty input prior to any further changes to technology.

Some faculty comments from the COACHE and follow-up survey follow:

"The thing my institution can do to improve my workplace is to improve problem-solving and technology. As part of that, they can improve the technology infrastructure so that technology helps more than is a barrier, and the communication infrastructure so that there is communication among and across groups."

"The state of the QC website and digital technologies is an embarrassment."

"Too many changes with opaque reasoning."

- Staffing- Increase administrative staff in offices that support faculty and improve the training and responsiveness of that staff. Include contact information on office websites for whom to contact for various faculty requests and needs;
- Input- Gain faculty input prior to making any major changes in technology from email to learning management systems;
- QC website- Maintain a professionally developed website that includes annually updated graduate and undergraduate bulletins;
- In the SOE, we are requesting that the college pay for anthology, since that is mainly used for SOE accreditation.*

V. Promotion

Faculty, especially FOC (Faculty of Color) and women, felt under-supported in areas related to tenure and promotion, especially promotion from associate to full professor. To improve faculty satisfaction in this area we are requesting that faculty research be recognized and supported by course releases and funding for travel, grant applications, and open access journals, clear expectations for promotion from the College P&B and Committee of Seven that recognizes the varying responsibilities in different schools across the college, and providing mentoring and support for faculty approaching promotion, including course releases and TAs. Further, the requirement of service should be made clear to faculty and should be recognized by the College P&B and Committee of Seven as an essential part of the body of work for promotion purposes.

Respondent comments:

"The College does not sufficiently recognize teaching and service contributions in the promotion process. There is no real effective evaluation of teaching at all--the online course evaluations are not well administered, and are routinely discounted in the promotion process due to an insufficient number of responses. Moreover, it is clear that the only real benchmark for promotion to Full Professor is scholarly productivity. Many Associate Professors spend years devoted to their teaching, advising, departmental administration--all necessary to the proper functioning of the university, but not rewarded at promotion time."

"Faculty are often having to fill in gaps left by the lack of administrative support across the college. This puts many more faculty doing administrative tasks, either formally or informally, which keeps people from working in their area of expertise."

- Recognize the importance of faculty research, and support faculty in their research, including course releases (as promised), funding for travel, grant application assistance and open access publication;
- Provide clear expectations for promotion (including expectations of the Committee of Seven) in terms of research, teaching, and service, while recognizing the different requirements for service in different departments/schools (e.g., ongoing CAEP reviews in the SOE);
- Make the expectation clear for promotion that service is not optional (e.g. serving on one committee per year, advising students) and guarantee that service is considered in decisions of promotion and tenure.
- Provide mentoring and support for those approaching promotion, including course releases and teaching assistants, and training for use of Interfolio.

VI. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Faculty members express concerns regarding the current approach of the Office of Compliance and Diversity (OCD) towards diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), reportedly feeling that it could benefit from deeper expertise and a more engaged, supportive, and scholarship-informed approach. Faculty surveyed observe that current DEI workshops and strategies, which primarily showcase "featured" topics and demographic groups in a superficial and performative manner, are mundane and outdated. These strategies lack the necessary rigor, expertise, and engagement to truly value each individual's unique contributions and foster harmonious community building. A significant majority of follow-up survey respondents, 76.1%, advocate for greater involvement of faculty in DEI initiatives. An even larger proportion, 79.2%, recommend integrating faculty expertise into these efforts, rather than retaining non-scholar consultants who typically appear to merely regurgitate generic information, such as implicit bias, while remaining unaware of the specific faculty dynamics, let alone Queens College. Along the same vein, 84.8% of respondents endorse the idea of offering grants and other incentives for faculty to conduct research and teaching-related professional development, particularly to alleviate the current challenge where non-expert staff members lead these efforts that are frequently misaligned with the faculty needs and expectations. This signals the need for a shift towards a DEI approach that is not only more comprehensive, rigorous, caring, and evidence-based but also actively involves both minoritized and nonminoritized members of the faculty. The emphasis on engaging scholarly experts underscores a commitment to applying scientific insights to strengthen DEI efforts, ensuring they are tailored to meet the distinct needs and challenges of Queens College.

Moreover, a unified faculty voice calls for structural reforms to improve OCD's effectiveness in fostering an equitable, collaborative, and transparent DEI landscape. Faculty are particularly concerned with enhancing the transparency and consistency of DEI processes and ensuring that the strategies employed are more reflective of the college's diverse faculty community, with 86.1% of the follow-up survey respondents calling for transparency along this domain. The proposed reforms include refining and articulating faculty and executive hiring practices clearly vis-a-vis DEI, creating equitable promotion pathways, and addressing specific faculty challenges in the realm of DEI more directly. Integrating expert scholars to develop DEI-affirming policies, curricula, and pedagogy aims to thoroughly incorporate DEI principles into our ethos. This approach seeks to create an academic environment where diversity is genuinely celebrated, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued, fostering a united and inclusive community.

Proposed Initiatives:

College

OCD should break away from the current segmented and tokenistic "group of the month" approach. Instead, organizing regular, thought-provoking, and intellectually rewarding DEI dialogues led by expert Queens College scholars on relevant professional, sociocultural, and pedagogical issues through OCD, coupled with a feedback channel for faculty input, will ensure DEI initiatives are impactful and resonate with the academic community's genuine interests and concerns. Grants and other opportunities should be extended to the faculty to propose and deliver DEI-positive research, teaching, and professional development.

Addressing concerns about OCD's directive oversight in faculty and executive hiring is vital, but it is equally important to focus on supporting current faculty to foster a DEI-positive culture. The college should leverage both faculty and legal expertise, repositioning OCD as a partner that collaborates with, rather than unilaterally dictates, faculty efforts. This approach encourages OCD to work with faculty in enhancing DEI initiatives across all stages of faculty careers, not just at the hiring phase. This adjustment will enhance transparency and inclusivity. Establishing a feedback mechanism for faculty regarding their interactions with OCD will assist the college in addressing the academic community's needs and promoting DEI principles.

Schools and Departments

Schools and departments must not solely depend on OCD for DEI dialogues but, rather, proactively address their own DEI concerns as well, including minoritized faculty mentoring and retention. Collaborating openly with OCD will ensure DEI efforts truly reflect each unit's distinct perspective and needs. This proactive stance towards DEI, proposing a dynamic partnership with OCD, aims to create continuous engagement that aligns with the unique goals and challenges of each academic area. Faculty should be provided with access to grants and additional opportunities to develop and implement research and professional development initiatives that positively impact DEI. Leading in DEI advocacy demonstrates a commitment to fostering a culture where DEI is actively practiced and evolves within the academic community.

VII. Research

In our endeavor to foster a vibrant research culture at Queens College aligned with the COACHE survey, we have developed a strategy based on faculty feedback and empirical data. This proposal aims to enhance the visibility, collaboration, and recognition of faculty research efforts, thereby elevating our institution's academic prestige and impact.

1. Recognizing Faculty Research and Achievements

The importance of acknowledging faculty research is paramount. Our faculty have voiced concerns over the need for more recognition and support for their scholarly work. Specifically, faculty comments such as, "For decades QC had faculty who were stars in their fields of research. The only recognition of scholarship for our faculty now happens at the Graduate Center," highlights the need for enhanced acknowledgment at our college.

In alignment with these concerns, and supported by 90% of faculty who participated in the survey indicating the importance of course releases for research, we propose:

- Annual Awards for Distinguished Research: To honor the exceptional contributions of our faculty, fostering a culture of excellence and motivation.
- Course Releases for Research-Active Faculty: Addressing the faculty's call for "more course releases and the ability to buy out courses at a rate not proportional to their salary" to facilitate focused research time.
- Enhanced Visibility Through Media: With 80% of faculty who participate in the survey advocating for the showcasing of research through various platforms, we plan to utilize social media and press releases for wider recognition.

2. Highlighting Faculty Research Through Stories and Interviews

The call to "display faculty books. List faculty achievements on the website," coupled with a proposal for media features, reflects a critical method for amplifying faculty research visibility and influence, supported by 90% of faculty who participate in the survey. By creating and sharing stories about faculty research labs, including conducting interviews, we aim to spotlight the significance and impact of their work through:

- Media Features: To regularly highlight faculty research in institutional and external media.
- Faculty Spotlights: Developing a series of in-depth profiles on faculty members and their research endeavors.

3. Facilitating Research Day for Enhanced Collaboration

The effectiveness of hosting a Research Day, supported by 74% faculty suggestions for organizing divisional events to discuss research, resonates with the broader faculty desire for more collaborative opportunities. This initiative will:

• Encourage Intellectual Exchange: Organize mini-conferences and poster sessions to foster a sense of community and promote interdisciplinary research.

Conclusion

The initiatives proposed herein are designed in direct response to faculty feedback and supported by statistical data, aiming to enhance the research culture at Queens College significantly. By recognizing research achievements, increasing the visibility of faculty research, and encouraging collaboration, we will not only enrich our academic environment but also contribute to the broader field of knowledge.

Implementation and Feedback

The implementation of these initiatives will proceed in phases, with a strong emphasis on continuous evaluation and feedback to ensure their success and adaptability to our faculty's evolving needs. Through this comprehensive approach, Queens College is poised to significantly boost its research impact and faculty satisfaction, reflecting our commitment to academic excellence and innovation.

Afterword

While the COACHE Working Group created umbrella categories of recommendations, we also noted several recurring themes that permeate throughout faculty feedback that cut through multiple categories: First, a strong desire to have a sense of community and belonging; effective communications between various campus units or lack thereof; expectations of successful research, service, and teaching versus available support systems (availability/labor, compensation/incentive, training). We also want to emphasize how interconnected these themes are—i.e., the college's commitment and efforts to do well in one greatly impact the others—all as well related to the retention and success of our students. Therefore, it is crucial that the college invests in not just a selection but in all these initiatives to address the ecosystem of interconnected issues.

We also noted that many concerns shared by faculty can be seen as stemming from a lack of a coherent vision about the role of Queens College. We suggest that our community develops and publishes a coherent vision for Queens College centered around our strength as an engine of social mobility, starting with a clear Mission Statement that can infuse a consistent vision throughout all that we do.

As a faculty-centered survey, report, and set of recommendations, we particularly call on all faculty to contribute to these efforts, whether individually or collectively through units such as the Academic Senate as a model of shared governance with the potential power to have more currency in the success of these initiatives. We want to stress, however, that the success of these initiatives hinges on the participation and contribution of various campus stakeholders: administrators, faculty, staff, students, and all other members of the campus community.

Finally, we want to encourage stronger sustainability and continuity of the cyclical COACHE survey efforts, that the administration and future iterations of this working group refer to and maintain archives, files, methodologies, and that we invest in better awareness and promotion of this process.

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