Launch Committee Program
Summary Report of Launchee Data
ADVANCE Program at the University of Michigan
October 2015

INTRODUCTION
Launch committees provide support and guidance to new junior faculty in STEM fields (launchees) as they begin their careers at the University of Michigan. The ADVANCE Launch Committee Program was modeled after a similar and very successful effort at Case Western Reserve University; it began as a pilot at UM in AY2013 and then became a fully-functioning program in AY2014. Each Launch committee consists of five members: the launchee's department chair, a senior faculty member in the department with research interests aligned with the new junior faculty member, a senior faculty member from outside the department in a related field, an ADVANCE convener, and the launchee. Committees meet monthly with the new faculty member from the time of hire until the end of the first year.

The committee focuses on areas that are essential for a new hire to be successful:
- Lab space, equipment and computing resources
- Funding
- Lab personnel, including students
- Integration into the university
- Teaching
- Service
- Mentoring plan for the probationary (pre-tenure-review) period

As of fall 2015, the ADVANCE Program has organized and facilitated 79 Launch committees: 45 in the College of Engineering (CoE), 26 in the College of Literature, Science and Arts (LSA), 5 in the School of Information, and 3 in the School of Dentistry. The committees have comprised 267 faculty members from nine UM colleges and schools (52% from the CoE, 34% from LSA, 6% from the Medical School, 4% from the School of Information, 3% from the School of Dentistry, and 1% from other professional schools).

EVALUATION
The Launch Program is evaluated annually by the ADVANCE Program via an online survey. The survey asks participants to report about their experiences with the committees and, in the case of the launchees, with their first-year experiences at UM more generally. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the value of the Launch Program for participants and identify any areas of the program that may need improvement. All committee members are asked to complete these surveys at the end of the yearly program, generally in April. The launchee survey is comprised of both closed and open-ended questions, which cover a range of topics including: transition to UM, department life, mentoring and advice, and job and overall satisfaction.

This report provides a summary of the launchee's survey responses. To date, we have surveyed launchees from AY2012 (the pilot year) through AY2015 (3 committee cycles). Forty-six of 49 launchees completed the survey (94% response rate).

Pilot Year Evaluation
The pilot program was assessed in May 2013. The survey went to all first year STEM assistant professors in CoE and LSA Natural Sciences who participated in the pilot (N=8) and a comparison sample of first year STEM assistant professors in the same schools who did not (N=25). Twenty-one faculty responded to the survey (84% response rate) including all eight of the launchees. The respondents in the final sample were equally divided between CoE (N=11) and LSA (N=10); four of the CoE faculty and four of the LSA faculty were launchees. The respondents were also equally divided by gender (10 female and 11 male faculty). However, women (N=6) were significantly more likely to be part of the Launch program than men (N=2).

In the pilot year, we examined differences in responses between those new faculty who had participated in the Launch Program (N=8) and those who had not (N=13). Because women were fairly evenly divided between the two groups (6 launchees and 4 non-launchees) we also examined differences between female participants and non-participants.

Initial Experiences. Respondents were asked about their early experiences at the University (e.g., how welcomed did they feel when they first arrived, how satisfied were they with the orientations within their departments as well as within the college and/or university, and how integrated they feel into their departments). The ratings across the respondents were fairly high (see Table 1; tables are appended at the end of this report), ranging from 3.40 to 3.84 (on a four-point scale with 1 representing 'not at all' to 4 representing 'very'). There were no statistically significant differences in these ratings between those who participated in the Launch Program and those who did not.

Satisfaction with Teaching. The first-year faculty were also asked about their level of satisfaction with different aspects of their teaching, including teaching load, quality of undergraduate and graduate students, and support for developing teaching skills on a five-point scale (1=very dissatisfied to 5=very satisfied). Again, mean ratings across all faculty were relatively high, ranging from a low of 3.38 for quality of undergraduate students to a high of 4.33 for support for developing teaching skills (see Table 2). There were no statistically significant differences in the ratings of these items between launchees and non-launchees.

Satisfaction with Research. Respondents also rated their level of satisfaction with 13 areas related to their research (e.g., amount of time to conduct research, availability of collaborators, amount and quality of lab space, assistance with grant writing) on a five-point scale (from a low of 'very dissatisfied' to a high of 'very satisfied'). Mean ratings across respondents were quite high (see Table 3). The lowest rating (3.14) was for amount of time to conduct research; the highest rating was for administrative and/or grant staff support (4.48). Comparisons of mean ratings by participation on Launch

Committees revealed no statistically significant differences. However, there was a trend (p<.09) for those on Launch Committees to report higher satisfaction with research equipment compared to non-participants.

The new faculty were asked how long it took for their research space to be fully ready for use after they arrived and, if their space was not yet fully available, when it was expected to be ready. All of the launchees had space fully available for use within six months of their arriving. Two of the comparison faculty reported that it took more than six months for their space to be ready and three others did not have fully useable space at the time of the survey (two of these faculty did not arrive on campus until January). This group difference was statistically significant.

The first-year faculty were also asked to describe any problems they had with their research space at the time of the survey. Ten faculty responded to this question. Most (six) reported that they had no problems or minor problems that were quickly resolved; of these, five were launchees. The remaining four faculty were in the comparison group (non-launchees) and noted more significant problems.

Department Satisfaction. Both groups of new faculty rated their level of satisfaction with different aspects of their department, including their sense of their chairs' and other senior faculty in their departments' commitment to their success, interest in collaboration from department faculty, and their required level of service (on a five-point scale from a low of 'very dissatisfied' to a high of 'very satisfied'). Mean ratings were generally very high (see Table 4). The lowest rating was for 'interest in collaboration expressed by department faculty' (3.90); the highest rating was for 'chairs' commitment to their success' (4.57). There were no differences in ratings between launchees and non-launchees. However, women participants reported significantly higher ratings for the level of service they were asked to perform compared to women non-participants.

Department Climate. The faculty were asked to report their level of agreement with 11 statements about the climate in their respective departments (e.g., the criteria for reappointment and tenure are clearly communicated, I fit in well in my department, I have a hard time obtaining the resources I need) on a five-point scale from a low of 'strongly disagree' to a high of 'strongly agree.' Mean ratings were moderate to high in the case of positively worded statements and low to moderate in the case of the three negatively worded statements; see Table 5. The most positively rated item was 'my colleagues create a respectful work environment' (4.43); the most negatively rated item was 'criteria for reappointment are clearly communicated to junior faculty' (3.57).

There were no significant differences in the responses of faculty who did and did not participate in the Launch Program for these items. However, when we limited the analyses to women, female launchees were significantly more likely than their counterparts to agree that their colleagues create a respectful work environment.

Finally, respondents were asked to rate their departments overall as a place for junior faculty to work (on a five-point scale from a low of 'very negatively' to a high of 'very

positively'). Almost all rated their departments either very positively (43%) or positively (48%); the remaining 10% were neutral. Launchees' ratings of their departments were not significantly different from those of the comparison group.

Mentoring and Networking. The faculty reported general satisfaction with the mentoring they are receiving at UM: 38% indicated that they were very satisfied and 43% were satisfied; the remaining respondents were either neutral (10%) or dissatisfied (10%) with their mentoring at UM. Most of the respondents (81%) indicated that their departments had formal mentoring programs and, of these, most (94%) reported that they were assigned mentors (one was not). Similarly 86% of respondents indicated that they had informal mentors. Half (47%) had one informal mentor inside their departments; nearly as many (41%) had two, and the remaining reported three or more informal mentors inside their departments. Moreover, almost half of these faculty had one (45%) or two (45%) informal mentors outside their departments. One respondent reported three or more informal external mentors. Responses from participants and comparison faculty were not significantly different on these items.

The faculty were also asked how many senior UM faculty they knew outside of their departments. One-third (38%) knew three or more external senior faculty and nearly a quarter (23%) identified two faculty members outside their departments. The remaining respondents knew one (19%) or zero external senior faculty (19%). A follow up question asked, 'If you have a question about how to get something done, how easily could you identify a senior colleague to ask?'(on a three-point scale from 'not at all easily' to 'very easily'). Two-thirds (67%) indicated that they could identify a senior faculty member very easily and the remaining reported that it would be somewhat easy. Launchees reported knowing significantly more senior faculty outside their departments than their counterparts; there was also a trend (p<.10) for them to report more ease in identifying a senior colleague to answer questions.

Summary of Pilot Year Launchee Data. All of the faculty reported quite positive early experiences at UM. Most felt very welcomed when they arrived, felt well-integrated into their departments, and rated their departments positively as a place for junior faculty to work. Similarly, levels of satisfaction with various aspects of teaching and research were also quite high for all faculty.

Ratings of department satisfaction and climate were also generally positive across groups. However, women launchees reported significantly higher satisfaction with the amount of service they are asked to perform and were more likely to agree that their colleagues create a respectful work environment compared to their female colleagues who did not participate in the program. Moreover, Launch faculty had their research space fully functional before faculty in the comparison group. There was also a trend for Launch participants to report more satisfaction with their research equipment.

Both groups of faculty were generally satisfied with the mentoring they are receiving. Most reported having formal mentoring programs within their department as well as informal mentors. However, launchees reported knowing significantly more senior UM

faculty outside their departments and there was a trend suggesting more ease for them in identifying a senior colleague to help with a question.

AY2014 and AY2015 Evaluation Data
In AY2014, the Launch Program was fully initiated in the CoE and LSA STEM departments. All first year assistant professors in those departments participated in the program (N=25). In AY2015, in addition to all new CoE and LSA STEM assistant professors (N=19), one new full professor in the CoE and a new assistant professor in the School of Dentistry also participated in the Launch Program. Of these, 41 had fall start dates and were sent their evaluation surveys in May, after completing their first academic year at UM; those with different start dates will be surveyed upon completion of their first academic year. Of the 41 AY2014 and AY2015 launchees surveyed, 38 responded (93% response rate). The respondents were split nearly equally by gender; twenty respondents were male and the remaining eighteen were female. Two-thirds of the respondents (68%; N=26) were new CoE faculty members and the remainder were from LSA (32%; N=12). In addition to frequencies of responses, we also assessed differences in responses from the AY2014 and AY2015 launchees by cohort year and gender; no significant differences emerged.

The surveys for the AY2014 and AY2015 launchees were shorter than the pilot year survey, but addressed similar issues (e.g., transition to UM, research space and equipment, teaching and courses, mentoring and advice, and overall satisfaction). Both AY2014 and AY2015 launchees were asked to respond to the same questions.

Initial Experiences. Similar to the pilot year survey, AY2014 and AY2015 launchees were asked about their early experiences at the University (e.g., how welcomed did they feel when they first arrived, how satisfied were they with the orientations within their departments as well as within the college and/or university, and how integrated they feel into their departments). The ratings across the respondents were fairly high (see Table 6), ranging from 3.05 to 3.59 (on a four-point scale with 1 representing 'not at all' to 4 representing 'very').

Transition to UM. In addition to these closed-ended questions, faculty were provided an opportunity to describe any difficulties they encountered in their transition to UM.

AY2014: Eight faculty described problems with their research space and/or equipment, including difficulties getting their space ready and challenges in purchasing equipment, including administrative delays. Nine faculty mentioned issues related to teaching and students, including the need to teach during their first semester and how much time teaching took, unclear expectations about teaching, and difficulties attracting graduate students to work with them. Administrative concerns were noted by four of the faculty; these concerns related to insufficient grant and other administrative staff, too much bureaucracy related to procurement, lack of clarity about basic administrative matters such as obtaining an id and p-card, and difficulties obtaining a courtesy appointment.

AY2015: Three AY2015 launchees noted no particular issues with their transition. Similar to comments from the previous year, another three identified problems associated with learning new systems and procedures (e.g., for grants, administrative support, etc.). One launchee had difficulties understanding the department's Ph.D. admissions process and another was surprised by the amount of extra service required. No one identified problems with their research space and equipment.

Suggestions for an Easier Transition. Launchees were then asked, in open-ended format, what would have made their transition to UM easier.

AY2014: Most suggestions for making the transition easier were related to better orientation and/or support for getting settled (mentioned by six faculty). These suggestions focused on clearly identified points of contact for different work responsibilities. Five made suggestions related to their research, particularly getting equipment/computers ordered early (i.e., before their arrival) and identifying unattached graduate students who could join their labs. Two wanted more opportunities to socialize with colleagues. Finally, one respondent expressed appreciation for the opportunity to discuss lab space concerns with their Launch Committee on a monthly basis.

AY2015: Similar to what was mentioned in AY2014, three of the faculty suggested compiling critical information in a checklist or handbook that would be available, particularly as part of the new faculty orientation. One would have liked a faculty member to monitor their research and teaching and another thought it would have been better to start teaching in the fall.

Things Launchees Wished They Would Have Known. The new faculty were also asked if there were things they wished they had known when they started at UM. Those that answered 'yes' were then asked to identify, in open-ended format, what they wished they had known.

AY2014: Nine of the AY2014 launchees (36%) agreed there were things they wished they had known when they started their appointment at UM. Three wanted to know more about how the University operated (e.g., procurement, construction services, etc.). Three were interested in knowing more about teaching and expectations about teaching, including how teaching and GSI assignments are made, teaching loads, and testing policies; a fourth wished they had recruited a postdoc prior to starting at UM. One would have liked a better understanding of tenure and promotion policies and another learned that it was important to be persistent and not assume things had been taken care of.

AY2015: Four AY0215 launchees (31%) agreed there were things they wished they had known when they started their appointment at UM and, of these, three provided an open-ended explanation for their response. The issues they raised were slightly different from those mentioned by the previous cohort. One wanted information about how to transfer grants from their previous institution. Another would have liked a reminder that it is ok to feel overwhelmed by the transition and that little research can

get done in the beginning. Finally, one thought it would have been helpful if they had started teaching during the first semester of their appointment.

Satisfaction Variables. Both groups of launchees were also asked to rate their satisfaction in three areas (teaching loads, the courses they have been asked to teach, and mentoring they are receiving at UM) and also to rate their department as a place for junior faculty to work (from negative to positive). For each of these four variables the response scales changed from five points in AY2014 to four points in AY2015; the neutral response option was removed in the later version. To be able to look across years, scores for these variables were normalized by computing Z scores; this converts data to a common scale with an average of zero and standard deviation of one. For ease of interpretation the data were then converted to a mean of 5.

Satisfaction with teaching load and courses they are asked to teach was generally high for these new faculty members; mean ratings were close to the maximum rating in both cases. Teaching load satisfaction ratings ranged from a low on the standardized scale of 2.12 to a high of 5.95 (with mean of 5.00) and satisfaction with courses asked to teach ranged from a low of 1.51 to a high of 5.89.

Similarly, ratings on satisfaction with all of the mentoring they are receiving at UM ranged from a low of 2.58 to 5.82. Ratings of their own department as a place for junior faculty work showed slightly more range, but, again, the average rating (5.00) was close to the maximum rating (range of 2.44 to 6.10). Table 7 shows the range, mean and standard deviation across samples for each of these four variables.

Problems Related to Teaching. Faculty were also asked, in an open-ended format, about any problems they had related to their teaching.

AY2014: In AY2014, three launchees identified the courses they were asked to teach; similarly, three reported that the lack of GSI assistance was a problem. Two faculty also mentioned the need to gain confidence and a better understanding of students' expectations and one would have liked to buy out of teaching. Four indicated that they had no problems associated with their teaching experiences.

AY2015: Similarly, three of the AY2015 launchees identified the time teaching took; one in particular noted how time consuming grading was. Another suggested more GSI support as well as a two-course teaching load.

Problems Related to Research Space, Equipment, Funding and Lab Staffing. All of the new faculty were also asked to describe any research space, equipment (including equipment they needed to purchase as well as equipment on campus they needed access to), funding, and lab staff problems they had at the time of the survey.

AY2014: Six of the faculty indicated that their space is currently insufficient and/or temporary. Seven faculty described problems with equipment; most (four) described administrative difficulties and delays with purchases and one was frustrated at needing

to purchase expensive equipment that is normally considered part of the infrastructure. One was challenged by working in temporary space. In terms of staffing the labs, five of the faculty had difficulty identifying graduate students to work with them and two had trouble housing their students. Faculty also described problems they had related to securing the necessary funding for their research. Six indicated no problems and three reported success with internal funding. Four reported no success with external grants and one found was having difficulty identifying collaborators. Three indicated they were still learning about the process and some of them identified a need for support and advice in this area.

AY2015: The AY2015 launchees raised similar, but fewer concerns. Two of the new faculty noted that they were still acquiring equipment (with some delays in processing orders) and two reported that they were using swing space or sharing lab space with another faculty with no problems (except perhaps some overcrowding). One launchee described the department space as "limited" and another had some clearing out to do from the previous occupant. None of the launchees reported any problems with equipment they requested for their research at the time they accepted the position. However, four noted difficulties finding graduate students to work with them and one reported that it took a long time to recruit a suitable postdoc. None of the launchees identified any problems securing funding for their research.

<u>Best Things about Participating in a Launch Committee.</u> Finally, Launch participants were asked, in open-ended format, to describe the best things about participating in the Launch Committee and to identify what might be done differently or better in the future.

AY2014: Seven of the AY2014 launchees valued the networking opportunities that Launch provided and another seven faculty noted that the Launch Committee provided important access to their chairs. Six expressed appreciation for the time to ask questions, discuss issues of concern to them and learn important information. Another six enjoyed gaining viewpoints from different faculty members (e.g., "It was a great source of advice from people with different perspectives"). Similarly, five of the junior faculty valued the advocacy, support and advice they received from the committee members.

In addition, thirteen launchees identified ways in which the Launch Program might be improved in the future. Of these, five mentioned the frequency of the committee meetings; four preferred less frequent meetings and one indicated that they would have benefited from more frequent meetings. Three launchees commented on the committee composition; two recommended that the chair not attend every meeting and one suggested that the committees could include 3-4 regular members who attend every meeting as well as a "guest" committee member who would join individual meetings. AY2014 launchees (one in each instance) also reported that they would have appreciated a stronger agenda for the meetings, additional teaching support and advice, and an opportunity to meet with the dean or associate dean. Finally, one launchee noted that the meetings felt very formal at times and recommended adopting a less formal format (e.g., coffee, lunch) for some meetings.

AY2015: All of the AY2015 launchees commented on the valuable advice from the committee members. Some launchees also mentioned the value of feedback on their progress as well as specific advice surrounding teaching, establishing their research program, and negotiating the University. Others appreciated meeting other faculty, especially those from outside their unit, and having several faculty serve as mentors and share their perspectives. Two welcomed the opportunity to meeting regularly with their chair and one particularly appreciated the work of the ADVANCE convener. None of the launchees had suggestions for ways to improve the Launch experience with the exception of one who recommended the opportunity for additional feedback early in winter term.

CONCLUSIONS
These results continue to support the value of the Launch Program for new junior faculty members. Nevertheless, they highlight the persistent difficulties in ensuring that research space is ready within one year of a new faculty member's arrival (surely a conservative goal, given their short probationary period). This is perhaps the area of greatest concern highlighted by these generally positive findings.

Table 1: Initial Experiences *(AY2013: Pilot Year Data)*	N	Mean[a]	St. Dev.
How welcomed did you feel when you first arrived in your department?	19	3.84	.375
How satisfied were you with the orientation you received to the department?	20	3.50	.688
How satisfied were you with the orientation you received to the College and College/University?	20	3.40	.821
How integrated into the department do you feel now?	20	3.60	.598

[a]Based on a four-point scale from "1=not at all" to "4=very"

Table 2: Satisfaction with Teaching *(AY2013: Pilot Year Data)*	N	Mean[b]	St. Dev.
How satisfied are you with your teaching load?	21	3.62	.973
How satisfied are you with the quality of undergraduate students?	16	3.38	1.258
How satisfied are you with the quality of graduate students?	20	3.85	1.137
How satisfied are you with support for developing your teaching skills?	21	4.33	.856

[b]Based on a five-point scale from "1=not at all satisfied" to "5=very satisfied"

Table 3: Satisfaction with Research *(AY2013: Pilot Year Data)*	N	Mean[c]	St. Dev.
amount of time to conduct research	21	3.14	1.153
support for your research within your department	21	4.10	.944
availability of research collaborators	21	4.19	.928
intellectually stimulating environment	21	4.38	.805
resources available to support your research	21	4.29	.717
amount of lab space	18	4.06	1.162
quality of lab space	17	4.35	.702
research equipment	16	4.13	.885
physical infrastructure	19	4.11	.994
technical/research staff	15	4.33	.724
administrative/grant staff	21	4.48	.602
assistance with grant writing	20	3.75	1.070
advice about locating funds	20	3.45	.999

[c]Based on a five-point scale from "1=not at all satisfied" to "5=very satisfied"

Table 4: Department Satisfaction *(AY2013: Pilot Year Data)*	N	Mean[d]	St. Dev.
chair's commitment to your success	21	4.57	.676
senior faculty members' commitment to your success	21	4.52	.814
interest in collaboration expressed by faculty in your department	21	3.90	1.044
level of service you are asked to perform	21	4.10	.944

[d]*Based on a five-point scale from "1=not at all satisfied" to "5=very satisfied"*

Table 5: Department Climate *(AY2013: Pilot Year Data)*	N	Mean[e]	St. Dev.
Criteria for reappointment and tenure are clearly communicated to junior faculty.	21	3.57	.978
I have received mixed messages about tenure requirements from senior colleagues.	21	2.67	.796
I fit in well in my department.	21	3.81	.928
My department colleagues value my contributions.	21	3.90	.625
I am ignored in my department.	21	1.81	.680
My department colleagues include me in new collaborative initiatives.	21	3.81	1.078
I receive constructive feedback about my performance.	21	3.67	1.197
I have a hard time obtaining the resources I need.	21	2.00	.837
The climate and opportunities for underrepresented minority faculty are at least as good as those for majority faculty in my department.	21	4.05	.805
The climate and opportunities for female faculty are at least as good as those for male faculty in my department.	21	4.14	.964
My colleagues create a respectful work environment.	21	4.43	.676

[e]*Based on a five-point scale from "1=strongly disagree" to "5=strongly agree"*

Table 6: Initial Experiences *(AY2014 and AY2015 combined)*	N	Mean[f]	St. Dev.
How welcomed did you feel when you first arrived in your department?	37	3.59	.686
How satisfied were you with the orientation you received to the department?	37	3.05	.941
How satisfied were you with the orientation you received to the College and College/University?	37	3.49	.692
How integrated into the department do you feel now?	37	3.43	.765

[f]*Based on a four-point scale from "1=not at all" to "4=very"*

Table 7: Satisfaction *(AY2014 and AY2015 combined)*	N	Range[g]		Mean	St. Dev.
		Low	High		
How satisfied are you with your teaching load?	38	2.12	5.95	5.00	.986
How satisfied are you with the courses you have been asked to teach?	38	1.51	5.89	5.00	.986
How satisfied are you with all of the mentoring you are receiving at UM?	38	2.58	5.82	5.00	.986
How do you rate your department as a place for junior faculty to work?	38	2.44	6.10	5.00	.986

[g]*Based on normalized data across years*