Exit Interview Study of Tenured/Track-Track Faculty: Exploring Factors Related Job Satisfaction and Departure

ADVANCE Program, University of Michigan

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes findings from exit interviews conducted by the U-M ADVANCE Program for tenure-track faculty who have voluntarily left the University of Michigan for other opportunities from 2011 to 2019. Over this time period we interviewed a total of 218 tenure-track faculty to learn about their reasons for leaving, the factors they considered in accepting new positions, and their perspective on their new position compared to their former position with U-M.

The report and accompanying tables summarize findings across faculty as well as differences found by gender, race-ethnicity, rank and school or college. Analyses also assessed changes in faculty responses over time.

Decision to Leave

Over half the faculty interviewed described a gradual process of deciding to leave U-M. The factors cited the most often as reasons for leaving included a poor U-M climate as well as better research support and resources and more opportunities for promotion at their new institution.

More than one-third of the interviewees reported that they received a counteroffer; half did not receive a counteroffer. The remaining faculty reported that they told their unit not to provide a counteroffer. For those who received a counteroffer, about one-quarter indicated the counteroffer did not match financially (e.g., salary and/or research funds) the offer they had received. Smaller numbers noted that they did not accept the counteroffer because of the negative climate at U-M, they or their family members wanted to leave, and/or the competing institution offered better career opportunities for their partner. Junior faculty were more likely than senior faculty to cite family reasons. Faculty of color were more likely to report the poor climate at U-M as a reason for not accepting the counteroffer.

More than one-third of the faculty who received counteroffers said the offer could have been improved by increased salary or assistance with dual career needs. Among the faculty who did not receive counteroffers, more than half reported that a counteroffer might have encouraged them to stay. Women were more likely than men to report this.

Satisfaction at University of Michigan

Based on mean ratings of pre-identified items, the most highly rated aspects of interviewees’ experiences at U-M were: the kinds of courses they were asked to teach, support for tenure clock extensions, the quality of undergraduate students, research space and/or facilities, support for taking modified duties, fair or equitable treatment by department members, and teaching load. The lowest-rated aspects were opportunities for their partner, formal mentoring, performance of the dean, and support received from U-M dual career services.

On average, men were more satisfied than women with the funding they received, opportunities for collaboration, and ability to secure childcare on campus or in the area. Faculty of color reported greater satisfaction than their white colleagues with their department’s clarity of expectations and feedback about their performance. They were less satisfied with the performance of the unit head.
Compared to their senior colleagues, junior faculty were more satisfied with the funding they received. They were less satisfied with opportunities for collaboration and securing childcare.

When asked about the best features of their former UM units, more than half of interviewees indicated that their department climate was the best and about one third shared that their colleagues were the best. When asked to identify the worst features, nearly half of the interviewees cited a negative department climate and nearly one-quarter cited department leadership. Women were more likely than men to report department leadership as one of the worst things about their former unit.

Overall, most of the interviewees indicated that they would recommend that others take a job at U-M. For those who would not recommend U-M as a whole, over one-third stated it was because the University has a negative climate. Others shared that the University is a poor place to do research or develop as a scholar and that it has weak leadership. Those who left U-M as junior faculty were less likely than those who left as senior faculty to recommend taking a job in their former U-M unit.

Satisfaction with Current Position

Most of the interviewees indicated that their new position was, in general, a good professional and/or personal move. The aspects that faculty identified as being better at their current position most frequently included the availability of research resources, the academic environment, and opportunities for leadership. More recent faculty interviewees were more likely to say their current situation is better because of its climate; those interviewed earlier cited the location and opportunities for leadership as reasons that their current situation is better. Those interviewed earlier also more commonly reported that that their current situation is worse because of the department or overall University's academic environment.

Junior faculty were more likely than senior faculty to report various aspects of teaching (e.g. resources and teaching load) as well as the funding and quality of and number of students as better at their current institution. Senior faculty were more likely to report that their current position provides more opportunities for leadership. Women were more likely than men to report that the climate is better than what they experienced at U-M.

Conclusion and Key Takeaways to Improve Faculty Retention

As U-M continues to invest in its faculty and cultivate an inclusive and diverse environment, it is important to explore the factors that will help retain faculty. Generally, expanding and increasing equitable access to resources for research, funding, and opportunities for advancement are ways to improve the situation for all faculty and encourage less satisfied faculty to stay. Efforts to improve the climate and provide better mentorship and administrative transparency may be particularly instrumental in retaining faculty members of marginalized groups. Pre-emptive retention efforts are important; most faculty describe a gradual process of deciding to leave U-M. Improving the timeliness and transparency of the process of counteroffers could be influential for faculty who are considering a move. Specific attention should be given to improving leadership at all levels, difficult work climates, and dual-career opportunities.
Introduction

At the request of the Office of the Provost, the ADVANCE Program conducts exit interviews with tenure-track faculty as part of an ongoing assessment of issues that may affect faculty at the University of Michigan (U-M) and contribute to their decisions to leave. The first exit study was conducted in 2008; subsequently, data have been collected yearly since AY2011. This report summarizes aggregated interview data from AY2011-2019.

The study population was tenure-track faculty members who voluntarily left U-M between September 1, 2009, and July 1, 2019. The first data collection did not occur until AY2011 and that first study drew on faculty who had left U-M between September 2009 and June 2011. In subsequent years faculty who voluntarily left the previous year were asked to participate. The number of faculty meeting these eligibility requirements across all years was 491, and 218 of these faculty agreed to participate (a 44% response rate).

Data collection for this report occurred between July 2011 and October 2019. Because all of the participants had already left U-M, the study involved telephone interviews conducted by trained researchers from the U-M ADVANCE Program. Interviews were confidential, and interviewers were selected who had no direct or indirect relationship with the faculty member they interviewed. Notes were taken during the interviews and, when permission was granted, interviews were also audio-recorded. All interview notes and recordings were de-identified to preserve the confidentiality of the participants. A coding scheme was developed, and coding was completed by staff who achieved an acceptable inter-rater reliability.

Sample and Data Analysis Strategy

As previously described, faculty were generally surveyed within a year of their departure from UM; sample sizes were larger in the first two years of the study because they included faculty who had left the University a year or more prior to the collection. Of the 218 former U-M faculty members interviewed over the nine-year period, 35 interviews were collected in 2011, 44 in 2012, 15 in 2013, and 16 each in 2014 and 2015, 17 in 2016, 25 in 2017, 29 in 2018, and 21 in 2019. Forty-three percent of the faculty interviewed were female, and 31% were faculty of color1. These rates are similar to the pool of faculty eligible to participate in the study. Most were associate or full professors (63%) at the time that they left the University, and the remaining 37% were assistant professors. Thirty-four percent of the interviewees were from the Medical School, 34% were from one of the smaller professional colleges/schools2 within the University, and 25% were from the

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1 Of the 67 faculty of color, 31 identified as Asian/Asian American, and 36 identified as underrepresented minorities, 1 respondent did not indicate their race-ethnicity. Analyses were conducted to compare the responses of Asian/Asian American and underrepresented minority interviewees. These comparisons, however, revealed fewer significant differences than would be expected by chance alone, and are not reported.

2 The professional colleges/schools included A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, College of Pharmacy, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, Law School, Ross School of Business, School of Dentistry, School of Education,
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA); a smaller number previously held appointments in the College of Engineering (CoE; 8%). These percentages are similar to the pool from which the study interviewees were recruited (that is, all faculty who voluntarily left the University between September 1, 2009, and July 1, 2019).

The interviews contained questions about the circumstances under which faculty members chose to leave U-M, the factors they considered in their decisions, how their current situations compare to their U-M positions, and their assessments of various aspects of their experience at UM. We report frequencies and percentages by coding category in the appended tables, overall and by gender, race-ethnicity, rank, and college/school. Faculty members’ responses to a question often reflected multiple themes; thus, percentages in the tables may not sum to 100% in every category.

We also examined statistically significant differences in experiences and perspectives between female and male faculty, between faculty of color and white faculty, between tenured (associate and full) and untenured (assistant) faculty, and between faculty by college or school: Medical School, LSA, Engineering and the small professional schools/colleges combined. Additionally, we examined differences over time by comparing faculty interviewed between AY2011-2014 with faculty interviewed AY2015-2019 and examined differences across the two time periods by gender and race-ethnicity to determine whether the experience of women and faculty of color have changed over time. When asked about factors they considered in their decision to leave U-M, junior faculty (assistant professors) and senior faculty (associate and full professors) were asked to respond to slightly different follow-up questions; these follow-up questions reflect the different expectations and responsibilities experienced by junior and senior faculty.

In the results discussed below, any references to group differences (i.e. female to male, faculty of color to white faculty, junior to senior faculty, AY2011-14 to AY2015-19 and different colleges/schools) refer to differences found to be statistically different (p-values ≤ 0.05) using t-tests for continuous dependent variables and the chi-square tests for categorical variables. These are differences that would have emerged simply by chance (when there was truly no difference or effect) at or less than 5 percent of the time. This is a generally accepted standard of statistical significance in social science research.

**Exit Interview Responses: Considerations**

In this report we describe faculty members’ views of their motives and experiences, as they reported them to us. We recognize that the process of making any decision, particularly an important, life-changing decision, is complex, and social science research indicates that a broad range of factors influence how people experience complex decisions. For example, research indicates that people in the midst of a decision-making process report how they are weighing various factors somewhat differently than they do once the decision is made (when the motivation to justify the decision is much stronger). We emphasize that, in this study, we can only describe what individuals report to us about the key factors that motivated them and their feelings about both Michigan and their new environments. Viewed in light of the social science literature on normal decision-making processes, it may be that the interviewees view their current
environments more positively and look back on the Michigan environment somewhat more negatively than they did during the course of their decision-making process. That said, the interviewees did ultimately choose to leave UM, so in the course of their deliberations the attractive features of the new environments and the negative features of the old were likely quite relevant in most cases.

Finally, discussing this issue with faculty members who had recently left UM may well have had additional effects; for some it may have offered an opportunity to “unload” some negative feelings, and for others it may have offered a chance to provide an account of the reasons to leave, despite positive feelings about U-M. In any case, we recognize that people are normally strongly motivated to justify decisions they have made and that this motivation inevitably affects these results in ways we cannot directly assess.

Findings

Initial Decision to Leave

Consideration of new job

Most interviewees (94%) left U-M for another academic position; the remaining 6% moved to industry, private practice, or the government (see Table 1). More than half were recruited by other institutions and about one-third reported that they actively pursued other positions. Smaller numbers were recruited and pursued the position (10%) or preferred not to say (1%) (see Figure 1).

Most interviewees (86%) discussed the offer they received from their new institution with people at U-M before accepting it. Roughly half of them discussed the offer with their department chair (53%) and/or dean or other administrators (46%), and 35% discussed the offer with other colleagues (see Table 2). Faculty from the College of Engineering (CoE) were more likely to talk to their chair than faculty in other colleges and schools; those from small schools or colleges were more likely to talk to their dean and/or other administrators.

Interviewees were asked several questions about the advice they sought while deciding to leave UM (see Table 3). Sixty-nine percent sought advice from colleagues at U-M and 56% sought advice from colleagues at other institutions. Fewer sought advice from their chair or dean (38%) or from family and friends (26%). Ten percent did not seek advice from anyone. Women were more likely than men to seek advice from colleagues, mentors, and friends at U-M.

Of those who did seek advice from others, most indicated that the advice was helpful (78%) and that others were supportive of their move (79%).

Nearly half of the interviewees (47%) who sought input from others were advised that the move would be good for their careers (see Table 4); senior faculty were more likely than junior faculty to report this and faculty from LSA were less likely to do so compared to faculty from other schools or
colleges. Furthermore, 18% of the interviewees were told that the move would be good for their personal lives, and 16% were advised that the situation at UM was bad enough to warrant the move; women on average were more likely than men to cite this last item. However, about one-quarter of the faculty (28%) reported that their colleagues wanted them to stay at U-M; those from Engineering and LSA were more likely to report this (see Figure 2).

A few of the interviewees (12%) received advice that was generally supportive, but that also included some concerns about the decision to leave U-M; women were more likely than men to report this item. A very small number of interviewees (5%) were advised that the move would be detrimental to their careers.

Figure 2: Advice Received by Gender

![Figure 2: Advice Received by Gender](image)

Note: *Denotes a statistically significant difference.

Thirty-nine percent of the interviewees reported that they had been considering leaving U-M for fewer than two years; a similar percentage (34%) had been considering leaving for two years or more. Twenty-six percent of faculty stated that they were not looking or thinking of leaving prior to their decision. A very small number (1%) of faculty members were not sure how long they had thought about leaving U-M (see Table 5).

Precipitating factors

Faculty members were asked if there was a specific point at which they knew they wanted to leave the University. More than half of interviewees reported that their decision happened gradually (55%). Thirty-five percent of the faculty members reported that they decided to leave U-M due to a precipitating event or events (e.g., negative interaction(s) with a colleague, experience of bias or discrimination). A small fraction of interviewees reported that there was no particular point precipitating their desire to leave (9%); see Table 6.
Thirty-nine percent of participants indicated that they were happy at U-M and would have liked to stay; see Table 7. A similar percentage (33%) reported that, although not entirely happy at U-M, they could have been persuaded to stay. The remaining 28% of interviewees indicated that they were not happy at U-M and were not interested in staying (see Figure 3).

Counteroffers and Encouragements to Stay at UM

Counteroffers

One-third of the interviewees (36%) reported receiving a counteroffer from U-M. Half (50%) did not receive a counteroffer, and 14% reported that U-M expressed an interest in developing a counteroffer, but the faculty member indicated that such an offer was not necessary or welcomed (e.g., the faculty member knew U-M would not match the offer from their new institution, or they did not want to stay at U-M under any circumstance); see Table 8 and Figure 4.

Those who received counteroffers were asked why they had not been accepted. Some indicated that they did not consider a counteroffer because of the situation at U-M: a negative climate within their department and/or school (9%), they were unhappy in Ann Arbor (8%) (e.g., lifestyle, geographic location, climate) or for family reasons (5%) (e.g., family unhappy in the current situation). Finally, 1% indicated that they were leaving academia entirely.

More didn't consider the counteroffer because of the draw from the other institution: one quarter (26%) reported a greater financial offer at the competing institution (e.g., salary and/or research funds) and one third (35%) indicated that they were offered new career opportunities. A few (14%) noted that the competing institution offered better opportunities for their partner (see Table 9). Junior faculty were more likely than senior faculty to cite family reasons. Faculty of color were more likely to report the poor climate at U-M as a reason for not accepting the counteroffer (see Figure 5).
Across schools and colleges, faculty from CoE discussed new career opportunities at their current institution as a reason for their move more frequently; LSA faculty were least likely to report this.

Faculty members who received counteroffers from U-M were asked to describe who was involved in developing the offers; 64% mentioned the chair of their U-M unit, 54% mentioned their dean, and 41% mentioned another administrator (see Table 10). Six percent reported that another faculty member participated in developing the counteroffer. Faculty members of color were more likely than white faculty members to indicate that their chair or unit head was involved. Across schools, faculty members from CoE were also more likely to report involvement from their unit head.

These faculty members also reported on the substance of their counteroffers. Seventy-seven percent indicated that their counteroffers included a salary increase and 59% said that their offers included more research-related resources; see Table 11. Other interviewees were offered: a new position of some kind (e.g. leadership position or joint appointment) and/or early review for tenure (21%); a reduction in teaching (12%); some kind of offer for a partner or spouse (6%); and/or funding to recruit more graduate students (3%). Faculty members who received counteroffers were also asked if these offers could have been improved in some way that would have retained them; 61% answered affirmatively. Of these, roughly one-third would have appreciated an increase (or larger increase) in salary (38%) or assistance with dual career needs (31%); see Table 12. Some reported that the counteroffer could have been improved by another position of some kind (e.g. joint appointment, 17%); see Figure 6. Others reported the following as things that could have improved their counteroffers: an appointment to a leadership position (15%); more research-related resources (15%); a reduction in teaching (10%); tenure (6%); and/or tuition reimbursement for family members (4%). Senior faculty were more likely to report opportunities...
for leadership than junior faculty. Faculty from LSA were more likely to report that their counteroffer could have been improved by including a reduction in teaching.

Most (72%) of the faculty members who received a counteroffer reported that the offer was made in a timely manner; however, 28% said that it was not (see Table 13).

When asked how the process of developing counteroffers could be improved (see Table 14), 33% suggested that there should be a more formal and transparent counteroffer process (in terms of timeline and how decisions are made) with point people to provide information and negotiate. Eleven percent of those who had received counteroffers and who had suggestions for improving the process indicated that counteroffers should be prepared in a timelier manner. The same number reported that the counteroffers should be made more competitive (e.g. larger salary, more research-related resources, promotion etc.). Fewer noted that the counteroffers should do a better job addressing individual needs (8%) and should treat dual career situations more seriously (5%).

Thirty-one percent of those who received counteroffers had no suggestions for improvement; white faculty and faculty from small colleges were more likely than faculty of color and faculty from other schools and colleges to report this.

Among the 49% of faculty who did not receive counteroffers, more than half (53%) reported that a counteroffer might have encouraged them to stay; see Table 15. Women
were more likely than men to report that this (see Figure 7).

When asked what the counteroffer would have needed to include, the following components were noted by approximately one-quarter of interviewees: tenure/promotion (30%), more support and/or time for research (29%), leadership opportunities (27%), and a higher salary or higher financial resources (21%). Twelve percent of interviewees indicated that a counteroffer would have needed to include formal plans for improving the school and/or department climate; the same percentage would have wanted greater job security for their partner. Fewer expressed a desire for a sabbatical (6%), movement to a different school and/or department (3%), and guaranteed housing in Ann Arbor to mitigate the struggles of trying to find housing (3%).

Differences in Responses Based on Counteroffer

We were particularly interested in differences in decision-making across all faculty depending on whether or not they had received a counteroffer. We compared the responses of those who reported that they had received counteroffers with those who did not in three areas: what would have encouraged them to stay; what were the most important factors they considered in their decisions to leave; and recommendations they had for changes to U-M’s policies and procedures (discussed later in this report). Faculty who did not receive a counteroffer were more likely to indicate that movement to a different school and/or department would have encouraged them to stay. They were also more likely to cite a lack of mentoring support at U-M as one of the most important factors behind them leaving the University. Additionally, faculty who did not receive a counteroffer were more likely to suggest implementing or changing practices related to administrative accountability, transparency, and engagement as well as administrative and bureaucratic efficiency and effectiveness. They were also more likely to suggest improvements in the areas of mentoring, feedback on performance, and support for incoming faculty (see Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Suggestions for New and/or Improved UM Policies and Procedures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No counteroffer</th>
<th>Counteroffer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More administrative accountability*</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring/feedback on performance/supporting incoming faculty*</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and bureaucratic efficiency/effectiveness*</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: *Denotes a statistically significant difference.
**Encouragements to stay**

When asked what else, if anything, would have encouraged them to stay at U-M, almost half of the interviewees (44%) said there was nothing more that the University could have done (see Table 16). More than a quarter of the interviewees stated that an improved school and/or department climate and movement to a different school/department would have encouraged them to stay. Others reported that an increased salary, greater opportunities for leadership, and more research support (15%). Fewer shared that greater retention efforts, value placed on them and their work, and job security for their partner would have encouraged them to stay (7%). A small number discussed promotion, an improved review process, clear plans for career progress and an offer for sabbatical (5%). Four percent reported that they were unsure if there was anything that would have encouraged them to stay at U-M (see Figure 9). Compared to their senior colleagues, junior faculty were more likely to report greater value placed on them and their work as an encouragement to stay.

![Figure 9: What Would Have Encouraged Them to Stay at UM](image)

**Reasons for Leaving**

Faculty members were asked what factors they considered in their decisions to leave U-M. Responses focused on improving their own job satisfaction, career opportunities, and the situations for their partners and/or families. The factors cited most often (climate, research support, and opportunities for career advancement) are displayed in Figure 10.
Job climate and satisfaction

Across the 218 interviews, negative factors associated with job satisfaction in their previous position and similar positive factors in their new positions were mentioned as reasons for leaving 133 times (Note: here and elsewhere, some interviewees' responses could be counted in more than one category if they mentioned multiple issues in response to the questions). Most often cited was a poor climate in their U-M work unit (46%). For example, faculty mentioned negative interactions with colleagues and unhealthy norms around work-life balance. Similarly, some noted a poor fit with their work unit (9%) and experiences of discrimination (i.e. sexuality, gender, and race; 9%) at U-M; see Table 17. Women were more likely than men to cite gender discrimination at U-M and compared to white faculty, faculty of color were more likely to report racial discrimination.

Career opportunities

Issues related to career opportunities were noted 171 times by interviewees. Nearly half of faculty interviewed shared that U-M’s poor research support and resources were a factor behind their decision to leave (31%). Other faculty discussed lack of opportunities for promotion (20%), leadership positions (17%), and opportunities for collaboration (6%). Fewer reported a lack of mentoring support (5%), their current institution’s higher ranking (2%), and a poor division of work responsibilities (e.g. research, teaching, service) at U-M (1%).

Those who left U-M as senior faculty members were more likely to cite leadership opportunities in their new positions as a factor in their decision to leave; junior faculty were more likely to report the lack of mentoring support at U-M (see Figure 11).
Faculty members in CoE were more likely to have considered new opportunities for collaboration as well as a poor fit at U-M and poor research support and resources as factors. Faculty in the Medical School were more likely to be influenced by leadership opportunities at their new positions.

**Family/partner issues**

Across the interviews, issues related to family, including partner employment, were noted 105 times when discussing reasons for leaving. Fourteen percent reported that their new situations afford improved career opportunities for their partners. Nineteen percent reported that they themselves, their partner, and/or another family member were not happy living in Ann Arbor. Nearly the same percentage (20%) discussed other family-related issues (e.g. wanting to move to another location where they would be closer to family and friends) as a reason for leaving UM. Faculty members in LSA were more likely than faculty members in other schools and colleges to report inadequate efforts at U-M to find a satisfactory position for their partners.

**Factors specific to junior faculty**

Junior faculty (those who left U-M as an assistant professor) were specifically asked about whether or not each of the following served as possible departmental factors in their decisions to leave: “setting expectations”; “mentoring/professional development”; “evaluation of performance”; “recognizing contributions in the department”; and “fostering a collegial environment”. More than one-third of the faculty considered “mentoring/professional development” (43%), “fostering a collegial environment” (43%), and “recognizing contributions in the department” (38%) in their decision to leave. A smaller number of interviewees cited “evaluation of performance” (30%) and “setting of expectations” as factors in their decision (30%); see Figure 12a.
Factors specific to senior faculty

Senior faculty (those who left U-M as an associate or full professor) were specifically asked about whether or not each of the following served as possible departmental factors in their decisions to leave: “opportunities for leadership”; “opportunities to have an impact or voice in decisions”; “recognition of contributions in their units”; and “fostering a collegial environment”. Half of the faculty considered “insufficient opportunities for leadership at U-M” in their decisions to leave (54%) and “opportunities for a greater voice in decision making” (51%); see Table 18. More than one-third of the faculty also considered the “lack of recognition of their contributions by colleagues” (40%) and the “lack of a collegial environment” (36%); see Figure 12b.

Most important factors considered

All interviewees were asked to assess which one or two factors were most important in their decision to leave. Forty-two percent reported that opportunities for a better school and/or department climate at their new institution was most influential; see Table 19. Others noted the leadership opportunities offered by the new position (24%); see Figure 13. Almost one quarter of interviewees reported that they themselves, their partner, or another family member was dissatisfied with living in Ann Arbor or would be happier living elsewhere (20%). Sixteen percent discussed another family-related influence...
(e.g. desire to move closer to family and friends). Fewer cited other positives of their new institution: greater opportunities for promotion (11%); increased salary (8%); better fit at new school/department compared to U-M (8%); more opportunities for collaboration among colleagues (4%). The remaining factors reported by faculty included:

unhappiness with the U-M negotiation process (4%); opportunities for mentorship by other faculty at new institution (3%); higher ranking of new institution (1%); poor division of workload among research, teaching, and service responsibilities at U-M (1%); and gender discrimination at U-M (1%).

Compared to their colleagues from other schools or colleges, faculty from the Medical School were more likely to report the lack of leadership opportunities at U-M as one of the most important factors behind them leaving. Faculty from CoE were the least likely to cite the lack of opportunities for collaboration.

**Satisfaction with the University of Michigan**

**Satisfaction with experience at U-M**

Interviewees rated their satisfaction with specific aspects of their experience at U-M (e.g., salary and benefits, quality of students, performance of their unit head) on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all satisfied), 2 (somewhat satisfied), or 3 (very satisfied); they also had the opportunity to rate the item as not applicable to their situation; see Table 20.

Based on mean ratings, the most highly rated aspects of interviewees’ experiences at U-M were:

- kinds of courses they were asked to teach (2.64)
- support for tenure clock extensions (2.63)
- quality of undergraduate students (2.61)
- research space and/or facilities (2.58)
- support for taking modified duties (2.58)
- fair or equitable treatment by department members (2.56)
- teaching load (2.55).

The aspects of the UM experience that received the lowest mean ratings were:

- opportunities for their partner (1.93)
- performance of the dean (2.06),
- formal mentoring (2.07)
- support received from U-M dual career services (2.11).

Other experiences were rated as follows: Research support services (2.53), Quality of graduate students (2.53), Opportunities for collaboration (2.47), Informal mentoring (2.46), Nature/amount of service faculty were asked to provide (2.45), Funding – including start-up package (2.43), Location of U-M; economy/amenities (2.41), Salary/benefits (2.37), Clarity of expectations/feedback about performance (2.27), Support for balancing work and personal life (2.26), Departmental commitment to faculty member’s research area (2.21), Performance of chair (2.18), Securing childcare on campus or in the area (2.16).
On average, men were more satisfied than women with the funding they received (including their start-up package), opportunities for collaboration, and their ability to secure childcare on campus or in the area; see Figure 14a.

Faculty of color reported greater satisfaction than their white colleagues with their department’s clarity of expectations and feedback about their performance. They were less satisfied with the performance of the unit chair (see Figure 14b).

Compared to their senior colleagues, junior faculty were more satisfied with the funding they received (including their start-up package). They were less satisfied with opportunities for collaboration and securing childcare.

**Figure 14a: Job Satisfaction by Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding (including start-up package)*</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for collaboration*</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securing childcare on and/or off campus*</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Denotes a statistically significant difference.

**Figure 14b: Job Satisfaction by Race/Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Faculty of color</th>
<th>White faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarity of expectations/feedback about your performance*</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance of your chair*</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Denotes a statistically significant difference.
Best and worst aspects of U-M unit

Faculty were also asked to describe the best and worst features of their former U-M unit. More than half of the interviewees (59%) reported that the climate was the best aspect (see Table 21). About one-third shared that their colleagues (34%) were the best aspect. Other positive features that were mentioned included: departmental leadership (18%); research support and resources (18%); departmental staff (16%); and graduate and/or undergraduate students (16%). Faculty also identified opportunities for interdisciplinarity work (13%) and collaboration (12%) as positive features. Finally, several reported that the quality of scholarship (7%), leadership opportunities (5%), professional development (4%), and the size of the unit were the best aspects.

When asked to identify the worst features of their U-M units, interviewees most frequently cited department climate (46%) and leadership (20%). Other aspects included a lack of research support and resources (15%), administrative barriers (10%), poor faculty recruitment and retention (9%), poor division of workload (9%), poor department fit (6%), other colleagues (4%), and low salary (3%). Women were more likely than men to report department leadership as one of the worst things about their former unit (see Figure 15).

Initial concerns

When asked if they had any concerns when they initially accepted their positions at U-M, more than half of the interviewees (62%) reported that they did; see Table 22. Of these faculty, 23% reported they were concerned about the University location and 22% discussed U-M’s school and/or department climate. Some recalled concerns about opportunities for promotion (12%), research support and resources (12%), and a dual career position (11%). Fewer reported concerns about their preparedness for position (9%), their fit at U-M and/or their specific unit (7%), and salary (6%). A few recalled concerns about U-M not honoring all aspects of their offer (3%), their workload (3%), gender inequality (2%), departmental leadership (2%), leaving their prior institution (1%), mentoring support (1%), and concern about department’s overall retention rate (1%) as well as their own success. Sixty-six percent of faculty stated that their concerns were realized, while about a quarter (27%) stated they were not realized. Few (6%) shared responses wherein it was unclear whether or not their concerns were realized.
Recommend U-M and U-M unit to others

Faculty were asked whether or not they would encourage others to take a job at the University of Michigan in general, and in their former unit in particular (see Tables 23-24). The vast majority of the interviewees (95%) indicated that they would recommend that others take a job at U-M. Faculty in LSA were less likely than those from other colleges or schools to recommend someone accept a job at U-M.

More than half (59%) of those who would recommend the University described U-M as a good University in general and 40% described it as a good place to conduct research in particular. Twenty-three percent indicated they would recommend UM due to its accomplished faculty members who represent a wide range of disciplines and 16% cited U-M's prestigious reputation. Fewer interviewees (14%) mentioned U-M’s location in Ann Arbor. A few also said positive things about the work climate (9%), the teaching load and the quality of students (9%), and the University leadership (2%). Those in the professional colleges or schools were more likely than other faculty to cite U-M's prestigious reputation as a reason to recommend the University. Not surprisingly, faculty in the Medical School were more likely to cite good clinical practice (and balance between research and clinical work).

Most of the interviewees, although fewer than those who recommend the University as a whole, (80%) indicated that they would encourage others to take a position in their former U-M department or unit. About half of these faculty members (47%) described their former departments as generally good places to work and slightly more than one-quarter noted that their colleagues were largely supportive and collegial (28%) and that their units were good places to conduct research (29%). Smaller numbers of interviewees reported that they would recommend their former U-M department or unit because of its positive climate (11%), supportive environment for junior faculty (9%), leadership (9%), and teaching climate (9%).

For those who would not recommend U-M as a whole, over one-third stated it was because the University has a negative climate (36%). About one-fourth shared that the University is a poor place to do research or develop as a scholar (29%) and has inferior leadership (21%). Of those who indicated that they would not encourage others to take a position in their units, more than half expressed concerns about the lack of support for research and professional development (55%). A large number of faculty also described their former unit as having a negative climate (38%) and poor leadership (33%); see Table 25. Those who left U-M as junior faculty were less likely that those who left as senior faculty to recommend taking a job in their former UM unit (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Would you Recommend your Former U-M Department by Rank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Junior Faculty</th>
<th>Senior Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Denotes a statistically significant difference.

Opportunities to develop and thrive as a scholar

Interviewees were asked to describe how U-M helped them develop and thrive as scholars as well as how the University could improve in this area. More than half of the interviewees reported that their faculty colleagues were
inspiring and that collaborations were productive (53%); similarly, almost half agreed that the University facilitated their research through funding, equipment, and other research-related resources (48%; see Table 26). Nearly as many (43%) of the interviewees described mentoring, both formal and informal, as helpful to their development and thriving as a scholar. Smaller numbers of interviewees mentioned students and teaching opportunities (10%), protected time for junior faculty members (6%), and a reasonable workload (2%). Seven percent reported that the University did not help them develop or thrive as scholars.

Senior faculty were more likely than junior faculty to cite opportunities to develop relationships with colleagues and collaborative or interdisciplinary work.

Twenty-eight percent of the interviewees reported that the University could not improve on existing efforts to support faculty development (see Table 26). The remaining interviewees did have suggestions. Some indicated that U-M should improve faculty mentoring (21%) and provide more and better resources for research (20%). Smaller numbers commented that the University needs to focus efforts on fostering research collaborations and relationships with colleagues (15%), better protect junior faculty members’ time (6%), and establish more reasonable workloads for faculty members (6%).

Senior faculty members were more likely than junior faculty to report that the University could have done better by providing more and/or better resources, including funding, for research.

Satisfaction with Current Position

Overall assessment of the new position

Interviewees were asked whether or not the move to their new positions was good for their careers and personal lives. Most (76%) indicated that it was, in general, a good professional move (see Table 27); 7% reported that it was not; 11% indicated they had mixed feelings about their decision; and 7% stated it was too early to tell. Nearly all interviewees (80%) reported that their move was good on a personal level; 7% reported that it was not; 11% indicated they had mixed feelings about their decision; and 4% were unsure. Junior faculty were more likely to report that it was not a good professional move.

Aspects of new position that are better and worse

Interviewees also provided information about what they found to be better about their new positions, compared to their former U-M positions (see Table 28). Several faculty identified the availability of research resources (42%), the academic environment or department overall (36%), and opportunities for leadership or to have a greater impact (30%). Other things that were mentioned as being better included: salary and other financial resources (24%), geographic location or cost of living (20%), the quality of students and the teaching load (21%), and a better workplace climate (19%). See Table 28 for additional responses.

Junior faculty were more likely than senior faculty to report various aspects of teaching (e.g., resources and teaching load) as well as the funding for, quality of, and number of students as better at their current institution. Senior faculty were more likely to report that their current position
provides more opportunities for leadership (see Figure 17a). Women were more likely than men to report that the climate is better than what they experienced at U-M (see Figure 17b).

*Figure 17a: Better Aspects of Current Situation Compared to U-M by Rank*

- Teaching/students/resources for teaching: 30% (Junior Faculty), 16% (Senior Faculty)
- Opportunities for leadership: 39% (Senior Faculty)

Note: *Denotes a statistically significant difference.

*Figure 17b: Better Aspects of Current Situation Compared to U-M by Gender*

- Better climate: 14% (Male Faculty), 26% (Female Faculty)

Note: *Denotes a statistically significant difference.*
When asked what is worse about their current situation in comparison to their experience at U-M, 33% of interviewees mentioned research resources and 20% mentioned the geographic location of their current institution. Fewer mentioned the following: the academic environment of department overall (18%), quality of students and teaching load (17%), national reputation or prestige (9%), and salary and other financial resources (9%). Some interviewees reported that nothing about their current situation is worse (7%), they found it difficult to compare their current and former units (6%), or that it was too soon to make an assessment (3%).

Faculty of color were less likely than white faculty members to mention they have less autonomy at their current institutions. Junior faculty members were more likely than senior faculty to report that research resources are worse at their current institutions. Senior faculty were more likely than junior faculty to describe nothing as worse.

Suggestions for Improved Policies and Procedures

Finally, faculty were asked if there were any University or unit practices or policies that should be changed or implemented to improve the situation for faculty at U-M (see Table 29). Responses to this specific question as well as other suggestions made at other points in the interview were included in the coding of the category. Almost one-quarter of interviewees suggested improving resources and salaries for faculty members (22%) and increasing administrative accountability and transparency (21%). Eighteen percent suggested improved leadership. Faculty also suggested that the expectations and criteria for tenure and promotion be made more flexible and transparent and that improvements be made to mentoring and feedback on performance (16% for each). Other suggested areas for improvement included: addressing unit climate issues (e.g., faculty conflicts, climate concerns for minorities; 12%), using preemptive retention offers (11%), improving services for those with dual career needs (11%), and making administrative or bureaucratic systems more efficient and effective (10%). Among junior faculty, 9% suggested improvements to mentoring and support. (For a complete list of the types of suggestions made by interviewees, see Table 29.)

Faculty of color were more likely than white faculty members to suggest improvements to UM’s climate as well as better administrative accountability and transparency (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: Suggestions for Improved U-M Policies and Procedures

Better morale and climate*  More administrative accountability*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Faculty of color</th>
<th>White faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better morale and climate*</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More administrative accountability*</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Denotes a statistically significant difference.
AY2011-14 and AY2015-19 Differences

The data from this study were aggregated across the 9 years to provide a comprehensive understanding of faculty experiences. We also analyzed the data to assess change over time by comparing faculty responses in interviews conducted in AY2011-14 to those conducted in AY2015-19. There were a number of significant findings resulting from these analyses, suggesting that certain aspects of the faculty work experience are becoming more important to consider.

Faculty in the more recent cohort were more likely to report that:

- they talked to their chair or another administrator who helped them make a decision about leaving
- opened communication with U-M only after they received their offer
- they did not accept the counteroffer from U-M because of the poor climate at the university
- a counteroffer would have encouraged them to stay (stated by those who had not received an offer)
- a counteroffer would have had to include more resources and support for research if they were to consider staying at U-M (stated by those who had not received an offer)
- staff and interdisciplinarity were some of the best things about their former department
- faculty recruitment and retention were some of the worst things about their former department
- they were satisfied with the quality of graduate students and the university's location
- they were concerned about U-M's location prior to accepting their position at the university
- U-M's flexibility and reasonable teaching load helped them to develop and thrive as a scholar
- departmental policies should be changed or implemented around mentoring and feedback on performance to support incoming faculty
- their current situation has a better climate than their department at U-M
- leaving U-M was a good professional move

They were less likely to report that:

- they considered a poor fit at U-M as a factor in their decision to leave the university
- they were happy with their unit at U-M
- they spoke with an outside mentor, colleagues, and friends who helped them make a decision about leaving
- they received a positive response about leaving U-M when seeking advice
- they spoke with someone at U-M about the offer before their interview(s) at other institutions
- climate and the quality of scholarship were the best things about their former department
- climate was one of the worst things about their former department
- they were dissatisfied with the performance of their department chair and the informal mentoring they received in their department
- they would recommend someone accept a job at U-M because of its positive climate and good leadership
- they would recommend that someone NOT take a job at U-M because of its poor climate
• the location (including cost of living) and opportunities for leadership are better in their current situation
• the department or overall university’s academic environment is worse in their current situation (e.g., poor interaction with colleagues, less flexibility with research collaborations, more stressful)
• in retrospect, their leaving U-M was not a good professional move
• they were unsure whether or not leaving U-M was a good professional move

There were no differences over time on ratings of the 20 other items asked about: research space/facilities; research support services; funding, including start-up packages; departmental commitment to or appreciation of your area of research; opportunities for collaboration; teaching load; kinds of courses asked to teach; quality of undergraduate students; nature/service asked to provide; formal mentoring; clarity of expectations about performance; treatment of you by department members (fairly/equitably); performance of dean; salary and benefits; support for balancing work life and personal life; opportunities for spouse/partner; support for taking modified duties; support for tenure clock extensions; support received from U-M dual career services; experience securing childcare on campus and/or in the area.

**Overtime Differences Specific to Women**

As climate and work environment is often experienced differently by women and people of color, we also ran analyses to see what topics have become more or less relevant for these groups overtime. These results are discussed below.

We compared responses from women in the more recent cohort (2015-2019) with those from the previous cohort (2011-2015). Women in the more recent cohort were more likely to report that:

• department leadership and staff were some of the best things about their department
• faculty recruitment and retention were some of the worst things about their department
• they were concerned about U-M's location prior to accepting the U-M offer
• U-M could have done a better job developing them as scholars through explicating the meaning and purpose of the associate professor position
• their current situation is worse because of a lack of community and/or poor climate

They were less likely to report that:

• the lack of opportunities for collaboration at U-M was a factor they considered in their decision to leave
• a poor fit at U-M was one of the most important factors behind leaving the university
• they discussed the offer from their current institution with someone at U-M
• the research resources, fit, location, and cost of living are better at their current department than at U-M
• the lack of resources for teaching and the department or university's overall academic environment are worse than at U-M
Overtime Differences Specific to Faculty of Color

We compared responses from faculty of color in the more recent cohort (2015-2019) with those from the previous cohort (2011-2015). Faculty in the more recent cohort were more likely to report that:

- they had sought advice about leaving from their chair or other administrators
- department staff were one of the best things about their department
- faculty recruitment and retention were one of the worst things about their department
- the climate in their current department is better than that experienced at UM
- leaving UM was a good professional move
- they were satisfied with the university’s location
- they were dissatisfied with the informal mentoring they received at UM

They were less likely to report that:

- their counteroffer included an increase in resources for research
- the department did everything they could to retain them
- department climate was one of the worst things about their unit
- there were no negative aspects of the department.
- the location and cost of living in their current department is better than at UM
- the salary and resources at their current department are worse than at UM

Conclusion

The University of Michigan invests time, energy, and resources on its faculty. The university also strives to cultivate excellent and diverse faculty. Thus, when faculty voluntarily leave the university, it is important to understand the factors behind their decision. This knowledge can help ensure that policies and practices support the university’s goals. The findings reported here speak directly to these issues.

In assessing the circumstances under which faculty chose to leave U-M and factors they considered, we also analyzed differences in experiences and perspectives by dimensions of gender, race-ethnicity, tenure status, different colleges/schools, and over two time periods.

More than half of the interviewees were recruited by another institution; nearly one-third sought out another position. The factors most considered in faculty’s decisions to leave included a poor school or department climate at U-M as well as better research support and resources and more opportunities for promotion at the competing institution. Similarly, the factors faculty cited as the most important were a poor school or department climate, lack of leadership opportunities at U-M, and an unhappiness in Ann Arbor. Department climate was also most often cited as the worst aspect of the interviewees’ former departments.
Despite their decision to leave, faculty were generally positive about U-M. They most often identified their department climate and colleagues as the best aspect of their former department. Overall, nearly all of the interviewees said they would recommend others take a job at U-M and most stated they would recommend their former department. When asked about suggestions for improvement at U-M, the most frequent responses were improving resources and salaries, and increasing administrative accountability and transparency. Specifically related to counteroffer improvements, faculty cited assistance with dual career needs and an increase in salary (or larger increase than what was offered).

Many of the experiences motivating faculty departure in these AY2011-19 interviews are consistent across gender, race-ethnicity, and tenure status (e.g., frustrations with research support and lack of leadership opportunities). Some factors, such as unit climate, mentoring, and the quality of unit leadership appear from these data to be especially important for women, faculty of color, and junior faculty.

Women were more likely than men to be advised that their situation at U-M was bad enough to warrant a move. However, among the faculty who did not receive counteroffers, women were more likely than men to report that a counteroffer might have encouraged them to stay. Women were also more likely than men to report department leadership as one of the worst things about their former unit and that the climate at their current institution is better than the climate they experienced at U-M.

Faculty of color reported greater satisfaction than their white colleagues with their department’s clarity of expectations and feedback about their performance. However, they were less satisfied with the performance of their unit head and were more likely to recommend improvements to U-M’s administrative accountability and transparency. Faculty of color were more likely to report the poor climate at U-M as a reason for not accepting the counteroffer and were similarly more likely than their white colleagues to suggest that the University work to improve its climate.

Senior faculty were more likely than junior faculty to report that their counteroffer could be improved by including more opportunities for leadership and were more likely to cite leadership opportunities in their new position as a factor in their decision to leave. Junior faculty were more likely to report greater value placed on them and their work as an encouragement to stay and were more likely to report the lack of mentoring support at U-M as a reason for their decision to leave.

Overtime analyses also revealed some important differences. Faculty from the AY2015-19 cohort were more likely to report that they did not accept U-M’s counteroffer because of the poor climate at U-M. For those who did not receive a counteroffer, faculty in the later cohort were more likely to indicate that a counteroffer would have encouraged them to stay. Faculty from the AY2015-19 were more likely to cite the staff and the interdisciplinarity of the unit as the best things and faculty recruitment and retention as the worst things about their former U-M unit. When asked about their current situation, faculty from AY2015-19 were more likely to say their current situation is better because of its climate. With regard to particular university or departmental policies they think should be changed or implemented to improve the situation for faculty at U-M, more recent faculty were more likely to report that policies around mentoring and feedback on performance to support incoming faculty should be changed or implemented.
Key Takeaways to Improve Retention and Preemptive Retention Efforts

Generally, expanding and increasing equitable access to resources for research, funding, and opportunities for advancement are important ways that the university can improve conditions for all faculty members. Further, efforts to improve the climate and provide better mentorship and administrative transparency may be particularly instrumental in retaining faculty members of marginalized groups. For female faculty members in particular, the university should address climate issues, be vigilant about issues of gender equity with regard to the allocation of leadership positions and salary and improve work-life balance concerns. For faculty of color in particular, the university should consider ways to make department/unit administration more transparent and accountable and ways to create a more welcoming environment. These along with other preemptive retention efforts are important; over half of faculty decide gradually to leave U-M while an additional third decide to leave because of a particular event(s).

External offers – even at the informal stage – carry significant weight in faculty members’ decisions to leave U-M. Those involved in the counteroffer process should understand this and engage in transparent communication early on with faculty members and provide evidence that retention efforts are being made. Over half of the 218 faculty interviewed did not receive a counter offer and of these half indicated a counteroffer might have encouraged them to stay.

As certain topics have become more prevalent for faculty over time, specific attention should be given to improving: department/university leadership, workplace climate, and dual-career opportunities.