The AAAC found the Climate Study both encouraging and concerning for our institution. In our opinion, the results of the Climate Study afford us the chance to build on our documented strengths, and an opportunity to improve in areas important to our campus community. We found it somewhat challenging to think about the connection between the current climate as documented in the survey and our work in academic affairs, as many of the more pressing issues identified seemed to us to fall within the purview of the governing faculty as a whole. We were encouraged, however, that a clear theme emerging from the study was that one of our core strengths as an institution lies at the heart of academic affairs: the strong relationship between faculty and students. We think that academic affairs can draw on this strength in addressing several issues that will improve the institution as a whole.

Below, we outline specific issues that lie at the intersection of the climate report and the work of Academic Affairs that merit particular consideration. Each of these issues revolve around distinct relationships marked by a sense of mutual obligation: between faculty members and the wider institution, between students and faculty, and between Academic Affairs and the rest of the institution. After discussing each, we identify several practical steps our committee can take in the short term to make progress in addressing these issues.

**Faculty-Institution Relationship**

We were concerned by the relatively high number of faculty indicating some level of unhappiness or dissatisfaction in their work at this institution, to the point that many faculty indicated that they seriously considered leaving. In response, we identified several issues AAAC could address relating to the recruitment and retention of high quality faculty in order to preserve and build upon the strength of our student-faculty relationships.

- Diversity and Faculty Searches: How do we conduct searches for faculty that will help us to increase faculty diversity without placing undue burdens on current faculty from underrepresented groups on campus?
- Tenure & Promotion Issues: Are our T&P policies and processes structured in a way to encourage faculty retention and professional growth?
- Service: How do service expectations affect faculty satisfaction with their jobs? Are service burdens equitable across the faculty? In particular, how are the careers and work lives of faculty from underrepresented groups affected by service obligations?
- Faculty as Supervisors: Many of members of the faculty will find themselves at some point in a supervisory role with direct responsibility for staff. However, many of us have little or no training to perform such roles. How can we better prepare faculty to take on supervisory duties? Similar concerns extend to the role many faculty members play as evaluators of the work of tenure-track and LEO faculty.
- Faculty Silos: How do faculty connect with one another across campus? What opportunities are there to enhance mutual understanding and opportunities for greater collaboration?
**Student-Faculty Relationship**

The climate survey reinforces our sense that the relationships between faculty and students remain a key source of strength for our institution, highlighting our commitment to the mission of student-centeredness. Nevertheless, several themes with the potential to undermine that strength also surfaced. We took note of themes relating to issues of respect, connection, and understanding, each serving as reminder for us to remain sensitive to the unique character and makeup of our student body and the challenges that they often face in pursuit of their education. Paying attention to such issues is essential for our ability as a faculty to support the intellectual, social, psychological, and spiritual development of our students.

Several questions and concerns emerged here:
- Are classes, programs, and services provided in a way that recognizes the specific qualities of our student body?
- How sophisticated is our understanding of how multiple markers of difference affect the educational experiences of our students? How can we increase such understanding across the entire faculty, and use it to improve our practice?

We were struck by the number of students who voiced concerns echoing some variation of the theme that many faculty seem to not “get it” when it comes to issues of diversity, understood across multiple markers of difference. While we were somewhat relieved that that the level of student concerns on these issues seemed to fall within national norms, any concern here is troubling—particularly for a university with a diverse student body that counts on high quality faculty-student relationships for its success. While some of these issues will inevitably be improved by improving on the diversity concerns outlined in the faculty-specific issues outlined above, we can no doubt improve as a faculty as a whole in our relationship with students on issues of diversity.

As a whole, our impression of the report was that Academic Affairs has an enduring responsibility to nurture and protect our core strength of high quality faculty-student relationships. Developing common ground, community, and affirmation for our students in their educational pursuits are critical components of these relationship, and we should be mindful of these goals in our decision-making processes.

**Academic Affairs-Institution Relations**

Another theme that struck us related to the mission, purpose, and autonomy of Academic Affairs in its relationship with the rest of the institution. The report suggested to us a need for Academic Affairs to assert itself more strongly as the core of our university. A pervasive theme in the study was the lack of operational coherence around a central mission and message for Academic Affairs. Many frustrations seemed to revolve around the development of an increasingly corporate mindset across the institution, one that makes our enterprise feel like less of a joint effort and instead more like a place where we are employees following initiatives set by a few executives. For instance, the past several years have witnessed many changes to the way we deliver essential services to students with little or no input from faculty. These changes threaten our ability to cultivate and protect the critical faculty-student relationships that are the foundation of our university. Similarly, the minimal say we have over budgetary
decisions hurts our ability to assert the central role academic affairs needs to play in the decision-making processes of our universities. Reinvigorating the role of academic affairs in these processes would go a long way toward addressing growing unease and distrust about how decisions contribute to the mission and long-term vitality of our university. Re-establishing the centrality of Academic Affairs will help promote an institutional mindset more focused on issues closer to our mission, seeking new understandings, discovering new knowledge, and engaging deeply with the critical issues facing our society and species.

**Immediate Action Items**

These are broad concerns, and there are no doubt many actions that can be taken over a long period of time to address them. In the spirit of suggestions offered by Dr. Rankin to build on our strengths and identify specific actions we can take now, here we focus on two specific efforts that AAAC can undertake this year to address issues under our purview.

*Reaching Out to Other Standing Committees with Overlapping Concerns*

In our conversations about the climate report, we realized that the concerns that fall under the purview of Academic Affairs often intersect with concerns addressed by other standing committees of the governing faculty. In particular, we noticed significant intersections and potential for overlap between the concerns identified in the Faculty-Institution and Student-Faculty Relationships outlined above and the Committee on the Economic Status of the Faculty and the Student Concerns Committee, respectively. AAAC will request to visit with each of these committees to begin conversations about how we can better support their efforts and initiatives, and how their work can better inform decisions in Academic Affairs.

*Evaluation of Service on Campus*

As a more focused and ambitious effort, in Winter 2018 AAAC will conduct an evaluation of faculty service on campus. While service remains an important part of our obligations as faculty members, the role that service plays in our careers is often overlooked when compared with teaching and research. Many of the concerns echoed by faculty in the climate report seem likely to have at least some connection to faculty service (e.g., faculty reporting that they don’t have sustained, uninterrupted blocks of time). Questions guiding this evaluation may include: What are the service loads, and how are they determined across units? How is service valued? Is service appreciated? To what extent should advising as teaching or service? How should various administrative positions count as service? How is the balance of service responsibilities with those in teaching and research communicated? Is that balance reflected in actual evaluation processes? Our goal is to produce a report that will help the community better understand our actual practices regarding service on this campus, and to inform robust conversations about the role we wish to see service play in the work of the faculty.