

**University Senate 2007 Web-based Faculty Assessment of
Top Administrators and Selected Unit Heads:
Study Procedures and Results***

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Administrative Assessment Committee
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* Summary documentation accompanying results presented to assessed administrators and their supervisors. Ratings and study results are confidential as per the charge to the University Senate Administrative Assessment Committee. Contact Joseph J. Molnar 4=5615 molnaji@auburn.edu. We thank Drew Clark, Director of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment for technical support that enabled the conduct of the study and the Office of the Provost for underwriting the services of a graduate student in Computer Science. Nonetheless, the Committee remains responsible for the direction and conduct of the effort and the communication of its results.

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Background and Purpose

The University Senate Administrative Assessment is an effort to improve the quality of leadership and direction of the institution by providing direct ratings and candid comments to administrators from faculty on a regular basis. The annual effort employs a web-based survey approach to elicit comment and ratings from faculty about strengths and areas in need of improvement. Conducted on a two year cycle, the 2006 survey focused on Department chairs and heads, as well as College level administration.

The University Senate last conducted an assessment 2002; the 2006 survey was the first web-based version. The 2007 survey focused on the top level of administration, including the President, Provost, Vice-President and selected units and offices. This document summarizes the procedures used in the 2007 effort and provides some foundation for understanding and interpreting the results presented to the focal administrators and their supervisors.

Procedures

Past administrative assessments have used self-administered questionnaires of some length and detail to obtain feedback from faculty about administrative performance at Auburn University. After a hiatus when no surveys were conducted, the Senate leadership determined that a new approach was in order and the 2006-7 Administrative Assessment undertook a web-based survey to obtain information on a limited set of questions about a broad set of administrators. The first year of the two year cycle focused on the College and Department; the current, second year focused on University-wide leaders and unit directors.

A web-based survey is a confidential and secure approach to conducting a survey where sensitive information is communicated, where participation is to be limited to Faculty, and where the results must be accurately and privately conveyed to administrators. The Office of the Provost supported the services of a doctoral student from Computer Science who provided technical support for the Committee. We received technical assistance from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment in sending email to faculty inviting participation in the survey.

The questions themselves were derived from a review of similar efforts at other institutions and deliberations by the Committee over the context and needs of Auburn University at the current moment of its institutional development. The draft instrument was reviewed by the Senate leadership and others, including a 2006 briefing session with Deans that led to some helpful suggestions.

The web-based survey allowed participants a convenient mechanism to provide simple and direct ratings of administrators. It also enable faculty to address administrators for whom they felt sufficiently knowledgeable to rate and comment; they could easily elect to skip others that they did not feel confident in assessing.

The 2007 effort presented the President, Provost, and six Vice-Presidents to all faculty. Participants were presented a tableau of 20 administrative offices that they could elect to assess by ticking a radio button in the web-based survey. After making their selections and submitting the page, they only saw the screens for the selected offices. Thus, while nearly all respondents

rated the President and Provost, some offices were rated by as few as 20 faculty. In retrospect some university offices were so remote from faculty activity that few elected to provide comments or rate; other offices were perhaps overlooked or omitted inadvertently and should be included in future assessments. In some cases, the incumbent administrator had been on the job less than a year and was excluded from assessment for this reason alone.

About 24 percent of the eligible faculty participated in the 2007 assessment (Table 1). We made five contacts by email to each faculty member. In early February, a brief message alerted faculty to the coming effort and the procedures for participating. In four subsequent weeks, faculty received emails with their personalized URL keys that they could either click directly or copy and paste into their web browser to begin the survey.

In the previous year, we heard concerns about browser compatibility and a small number of faculty had problems of one kind or another logging into the survey or navigating the screens. In 2007, faculty seemed comfortable with the process and we had but two requests to reset URL keys due to missteps in participation or computer problems. Faculty seemed comfortable with the web-based survey mechanism.

The level of participation is lower than might be otherwise desirable. The results represent the views of interested and motivated faculty. The disaffected, disengaged, or otherwise occupied faculty members who did not participate in the survey are not represented in the findings.

Results

The University President and Provost received notebooks with the comments and rating for all administrators rated by faculty in the survey. The Vice-President received their ratings and those for the selected Offices and Units in the study.

Figure 1 shows the number of faculty rating each administrator. Nearly all rated the President; some more obscure units were rated by only a small number of knowledgeable faculty. Table 1 details participation by department and college

Figure 2 shows the distribution of fairness ratings. It is worth noting that 15 percent of the ratings were “not fair”. Table 2 details fairness ratings for the top administrators. Table 3 shows the results for other unit heads and directors, sorted by the percent rated “very fair.”

Similarly, Figure 3 shows the distribution of effectiveness ratings. A somewhat similar proportion of ratings were “not effective.” Table 4 shows the effectiveness ratings given to top administrators by faculty. Table 5 shows the effectiveness ratings given to top administrators by faculty, sorted by the percent rated “very effective.”

Figure 4 graphs the progression of mean ratings across offices, simply illustrating how fairness and effectiveness ratings are closely correlated. The discrepancies between fairness and effectiveness ratings noted for some of the offices might be understood in the context of the verbatim comments made for those offices. These data are available only to the incumbents and their superiors.

The verbatim comments addressing the strengths and areas in need of improvement associated with each office are provided in subsequent tables. These tables run for some pages for the President, Provost, and other administrators visible to a broad range of faculty. The fairness and effectiveness ratings associated with each comment also are presented in the tables. Again these data only will be available to incumbents and their superiors.

Conclusion

The 2007 administrative assessment reported ratings and comments made by faculty about top administrators and selected directors and unit heads. The complete results are conveyed to the President and Provost; other administrators receive their own and their subordinates' data.

A number of shortcomings in this year effort should be noted and addressed in future efforts. These include the sample, response rate, and offices rated.

We received the list of faculty from the administration and did not examine its composition in detail before mounting the data collection effort. We have discovered in retrospect that the library faculty did not receive the survey email. The term "faculty" has multiple definitions, depending on the context and usually dictated by an external standard. Federal reporting rules, for example, do not allow inclusion of library faculty in faculty headcounts for reports to the U.S. Department of Education. We failed to verify whether the list that was provided to us met the University Senate definition of faculty. Our error should serve as a caution to future endeavors.

We received the list of faculty from the Office and did not examine its composition in detail before mounting the data collection effort. We have discovered in retrospect that the library faculty did not receive the survey email. We failed to verify the list that was provided to us. Our effort should serve as a caution to future endeavors.

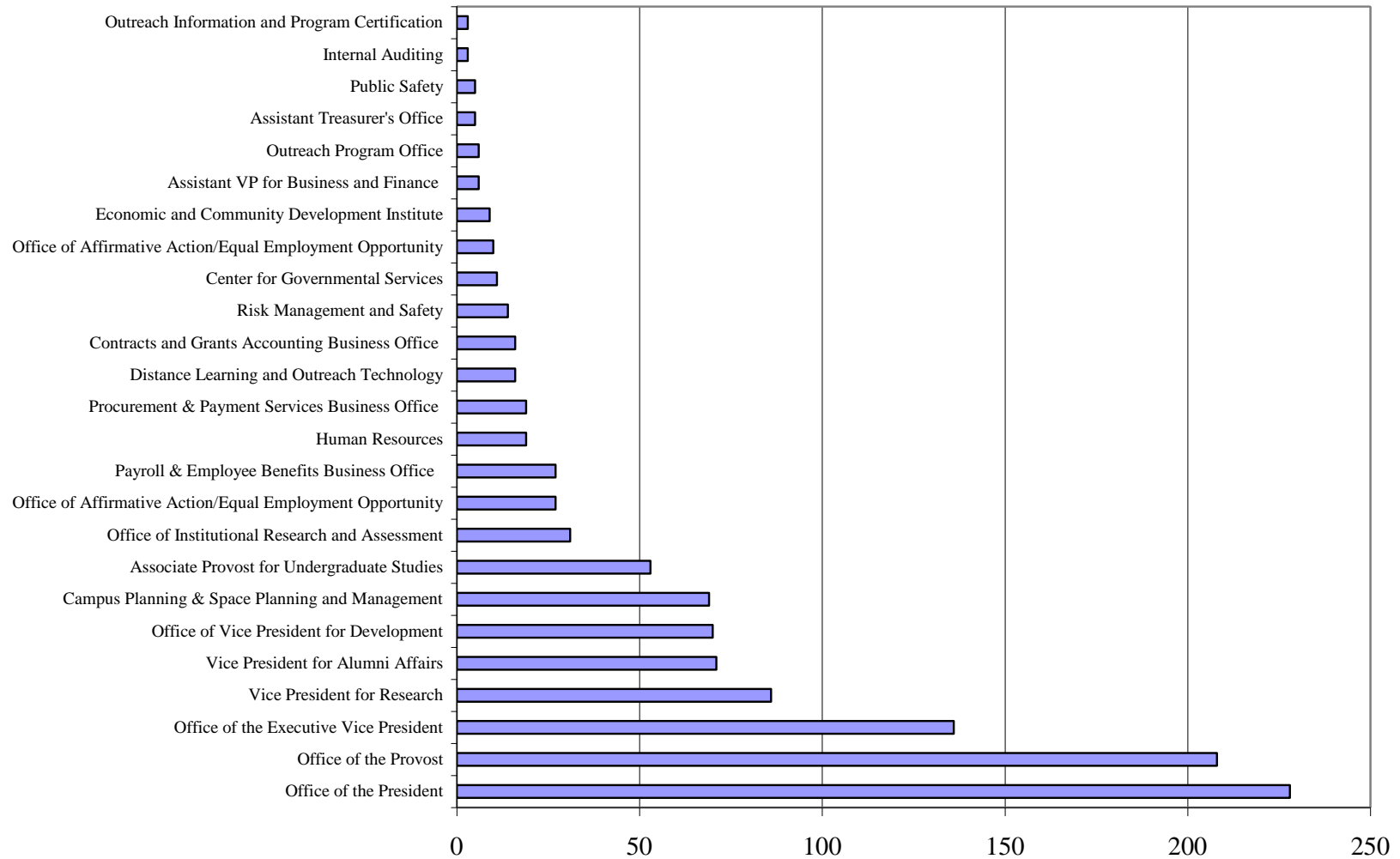
There are myriad offices and units that provide services to faculty and departments. We selected 20 that seemed relevant to larger numbers of faculty than others. One criteria we used was front page listing on the AU web site. We overlooked some offices and perhaps include at least one that faculty did not have knowledge or experience. Future efforts should devote more attention to selecting these units. The strategy we used that presented a long list of offices and units and respondents selected the units they wanted to rate was a good one. Subsequent listings should be more complete, although no faculty contacted us about any office they wanted to rate, but was not listed.

The survey was conducted at a time of anxious focus on the search for a new president. Faculty leadership were focused on this process and the administrative assessment may have been perceived as less useful because so many of the key office holders would likely be changing. Future efforts should seek more pre-survey publicity in the AU report and other venues. Reminders to participate in university media should precede direct email contacts with faculty. We might have developed a more creative strategy for crafting emails to elicit interest and motivation for participation. Nonetheless, we conclude that a web based strategy remains the most ideal way to obtain and process the ratings and comments received from faculty respondents.

Table 1. Participation counts and percentages by department and school of the University, faculty survey 2007

College/School	Keys	Used	Participation Rate
<i>Overall</i>	<i>1389</i>	<i>314</i>	<i>24%</i>
College of Education	97	17	18%
College of Sciences & Mathematics	162	30	19%
Cooperative Extension	5	1	20%
College of Human Sciences	49	11	22%
College of Business	93	22	24%
College of Veterinary Medicine	95	24	25%
College of Liberal Arts	334	86	26%
Samuel Ginn College of Engineering	182	49	27%
School of Nursing	11	3	27%
College of Agriculture	162	45	28%
Harrison School of Pharmacy	21	6	29%
College of Architecture, Design, & Construction	61	19	31%
Forestry & Wildlife Sciences	29	11	38%
Graduate School	5	3	60%

Figure 1. Number of respondents rating each office



**Figure 2. Please rate the overall fairness of this administrator (N=971 ratings),
AU faculty 2007**

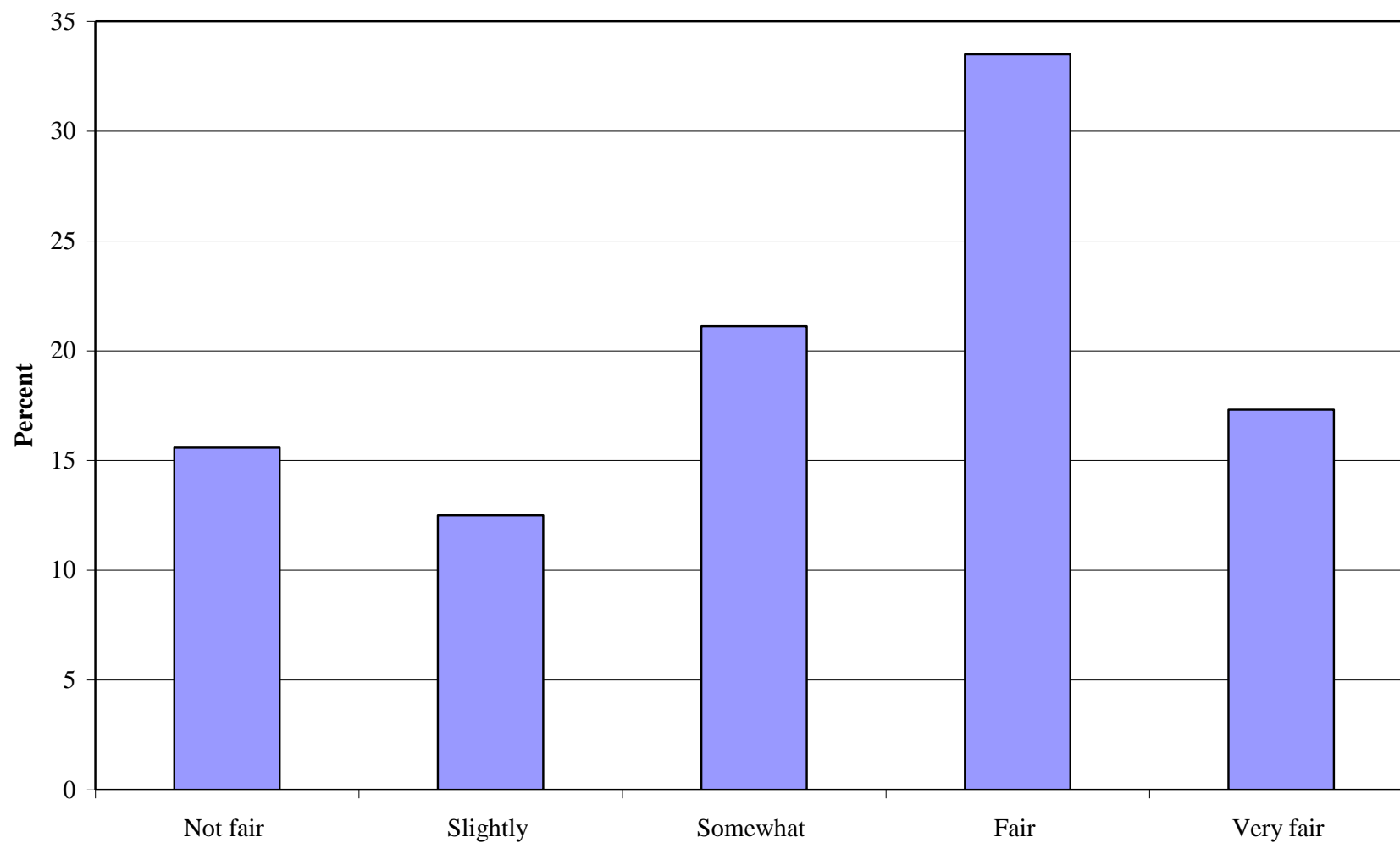


Figure 3. Please rate the overall effectiveness of this administrator (N=1,011 ratings), AU faculty 2007

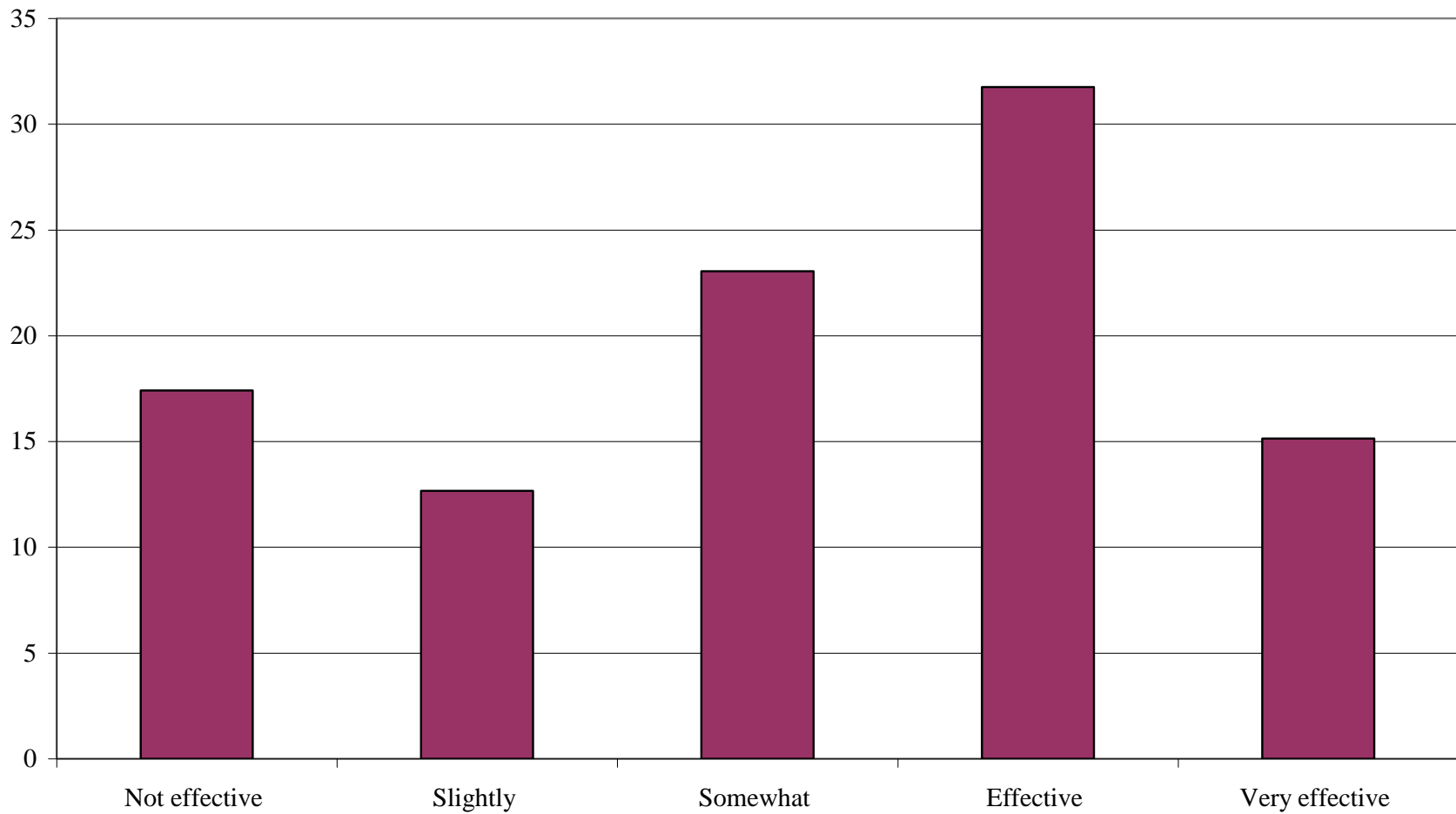


Table 2. Fairness ratings for top 6 positions, AU faculty survey 2007

Name	Title	Please rate the overall fairness of this administrator.					Number
		Not fair	Slightly	Somewhat	Fair	Very fair	
Edward R. Richardson	President						214
John G. Heilman	Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs						199
Donald L. Large	Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer						115
D. R. McGinnis	Office of Vice President for Development						39
	Office of Vice President for Research (animal subjects, human subjects, proposal processing)						54
Debbie L. Shaw	Vice President for Alumni Affairs & Executive Director of the Auburn Alumni Association						53

Table 3. Fairness ratings by position, AU faculty survey 2007

Name	Title	Please rate the overall fairness of this administrator.					Number
		Not fair	Slightly	Somewhat	Fair	Very fair	
John Mouton	Senior Advisor to the President						62
Linda S. Glaze	Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies						47
Drew Clark	Director of Institutional Research and Assessment						26
Kelley G. Taylor	Director, Office of Affirmative Action/EEO						24
Ronald L. Herring	Director of Payroll & Employee Benefits Business Office						23
Rick Alekna	Director of Distance Learning & Outreach Technology						16
Lynne Hammond	Assistant Vice President for Human Resources						16
Shawn Corrigan Asmuth	Executive Director of Procurement & Payment Services Business Office (Purchasing)						14
Christine L. Eick	Executive Director of Risk Management and Safety						13
Sheila R. Duffield	Director of Contracts and Grants Accounting Business Office						11
Don-Terry Veal	Director of Center for Governmental Services						10
Joe Sumners	Director of Economic and Community Development Institute (AU-ACES)						8
Michelle Martin	Compliance Administrator, Office of Affirmative Action/EEO						7
Samuel M. Burney, Jr.	Director of Outreach Program Office						6
Marcie C. Smith	Assistant Vice President for Business & Finance						6
Charles W. Bruce	Assistant Treasurer						5
Ralph S. Foster, Jr.	Director and CEU Officer Outreach Information & Program Certification						3
Kevin Robinson	Executive Director of Internal Auditing						3
Major Melvin Owens	Public Safety Liaison						2

Table 4. Effectiveness ratings for top six positions, AU faculty survey 2007

Name	Title	Please rate the overall effectiveness of this administrator					Number
		Not effective	Slightly	Somewhat	Effective	Very effective	
Edward R. Richardson	President						216
John G. Heilman	Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs						198
Donald L. Large	Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer						125
D. R. McGinnis	Office of Vice President for Development						47
	Office of Vice President for Research (animal subjects, human subjects, proposal processing)						52
Debbie L. Shaw	Vice President for Alumni Affairs & Executive Director of the Auburn Alumni Association						55

Table 5. Effectiveness ratings by position, AU faculty survey 2007

Name	Title	Please rate the overall effectiveness of this administrator					Number
		Not effective	Slightly	Somewhat	Effective	Very effective	
Ralph S. Foster, Jr.	Director and CEU Officer Outreach Information & Program Certification						3
Kevin Robinson	Executive Director of Internal Auditing						3
Major Melvin Owens	Public Safety Liaison						3
Charles W. Bruce	Assistant Treasurer						4
Samuel M. Burney, Jr.	Director of Outreach Program Office						6
Marcie C. Smith	Assistant Vice President for Business & Finance						6
Michelle Martin	Compliance Administrator, Office of Affirmative Action/EEO						7
Joe Sumners	Director of Economic and Community Development Institute (AU-ACES)						9
Don-Terry Veal	Director of Center for Governmental Services						11
Sheila R. Duffield	Director of Contracts and Grants Accounting Business Office						13
Christine L. Eick	Executive Director of Risk Management and Safety						14
Rick Alekna	Director of Distance Learning & Outreach Technology						16
Lynne Hammond	Assistant Vice President for Human Resources						17

Shawn Corrigan Asmuth	Executive Director of Procurement & Payment Services Business Office (Purchasing)	18
Kelley G. Taylor	Director, Office of Affirmative Action/EEO	23
Ronald L. Herring	Director of Payroll & Employee Benefits Business Office	25
Drew Clark	Director of Institutional Research and Assessment	27
Linda S. Glaze	Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies	48
John Mouton	Senior Advisor to the President	65

VERBATIM COMMENTS AND RATINGS

University President – <i>each office received a parallel report of ratings and comments</i>				
Position	Strength	Area in Need of Improvement	Fairness	Effectiveness
University President	Deals well with the State government--especially with budgets	Could be more willing to talk to the press.	Very fair	Very effective
University President	Decision making ability. Gets action.		Fair	Very effective
University President	Gets things done.		Very fair	Very effective
University President	Decisive			
University President	Dr. Richardson is supportive, sincere, straight-forward, honest, conscientious, possesses great character and integrity, and projects stability in his leadership.		Very fair	Very effective
University President	Excellent President		Very fair	Very effective
University President	Good understanding of local politics.	Greater awareness of research	Very fair	Very effective
University President	Great support of academic mission of the university. Outcome oriented.	Some more pre-text on anticipated goals.	Very fair	Very effective
University President	He is goal-oriented. He sees projects through to completion. He appears to be honest. He clearly tells you what he thinks, so one never has to wonder.		Very fair	Very effective
University President	He is out front and doing an excellent job.		Fair	Very effective
University President	Single-mindedness and assertiveness.	Can't comment since I do not have close contact with him in the working place.	Very fair	Very effective
University President	Strong leader Good external relationships	More communication with the "soldiers"	Fair	Very effective
University President	Strong leadership, protective of legacy, proactive while still an interim.	Communications with faculty.	Somewhat fair	Very effective