2007 University Life Survey Report  
Summary of Respondent Comments

Overview

The 2007 University Life Survey, an online survey probing the opinions of all faculty, staff and students at Iowa State University regarding strategic goals of the university gathered feedback during the fielding period from February 19- March 9, 2007. The survey, administered via AccessPlus, allowed participants to respond to the University Life goals of the University’s Strategic Plan 2005-2010 -- “ensure that the university is a great place to learn and work.” For the complete strategic plan see http://www.iastate.edu/~strategicplan/. Respondents were invited to respond to each of the individual sub goals listed under University Life:

- Recruit and retain faculty, staff, and students who are dedicated to individual and organizational excellence and achievement.
- Expand the diversity of people, ideas, and cultures, and nurture an environment in which diversity can thrive.
- Achieve a sustainable balance between responsibilities and resources that will allow the university to efficiently and effectively realize its vision.
- Foster an environment in which all members of the university community can contribute their fullest while pursuing satisfying personal lives.
- Provide a rich array of extracurricular opportunities to learn, lead, and enjoy life.
- Promote a university that conserves resources and enhances environmental quality.
- Maintain the attractiveness of campus and improve the quality of its facilities.
- Advance the excellence of the university through enhanced connections between ISU and its family of alumni and friends.
- Ensure that intercollegiate athletics programs are models of academic success, integrity, and competitiveness.

The survey was distributed to 29,179 faculty, staff, and students. A total of 5,317 written comments were received for all of the nine sub goals. Comments were received anonymously via open-ended response boxes. This report will summarize and highlight some of those comments received. There was no demographic data associated with the comments. In certain cases, respondents offered personal information related to their identity. Identifying information has been removed from the comments for the purpose of this report.

Comments were generally chosen based on the frequency that similar responses were given. In some cases, comments are listed because they include a suggestion or what was deemed a novel idea. Most of the comments have been paraphrased for the sake of brevity but care was given to express the writer’s original intent. The total number of written comments received per question is listed in bold beneath the heading for each sub goal of the strategic plan.
Sub Goal: Iowa State University Recruits and Retains Faculty, Staff, and Students Who are Dedicated to Excellence

1,000 Total Responses on this Sub Goal

Respondents noted that this query about recruitment and retention should have been two separate questions. Many respondents felt that ISU does a good job of recruiting but that ISU was not able to retain excellent individuals at the same level. The following list highlights other representative responses given in this section.

- Faculty are dedicated to research but not teaching
- Salary and reward structure is not conducive to retaining excellent faculty
- Many faculty are difficult to understand and English skills should be tested before being allowed to teach
- Lack of diversity among faculty/staff is alarming
- There is little done to recruit women and US citizens
- ISU is a stepping stone for promising faculty
- Pay for faculty and P& S Staff is deplorable
- Faculty evaluations by students are not taken seriously
- There is no support for the humanities
- Retention policy requiring faculty to get outside offers is appalling
- Too many classes are taught by lecturers and TAs
- Lack of organization in the departments, new hires are left to find things for him/herself
- A lot of good teachers have left the university, community colleges are doing better at teaching
- Using www.iastatejobs.com has placed barriers upon prospective applicants and the pool has dwindled
- ISU is unsupportive to women and minority faculty
- Great benefits, this is why a lot of people stay despite the pay
- Tenured faculty have a sense of entitlement and feel they are “above-the-law”
- There is no discipline for bad professors
- Professors need to have better office hours
- Iowa State seems too interested in diversity and has forgotten its Midwestern, Iowa roots
- Faculty portray a liberal bias in the classroom
- There is no effective post-tenure review
- Outstanding faculty need a system of rewards and awards, they feel underappreciated on their home campuses
- Junior faculty are intimidated by the tenure process at ISU and uncertain of their futures
- The tuition assistance for staff is a great incentive to continue one’s education
- The Classification and Compensation system does not reward excellence
- Salary compression is a problem
- P&S Staff are the only ones who can realistically be fired
- There needs to be greater effort to identify and retain excellent P&S employees
- The merit system promotes poor performance
- It is hard to recruit physicians due to non-competitive salaries
• There is no reward for longevity, red-lining is unfair
• Staff are not treated fairly if they don’t have a spouse on the faculty
• ISU should have a discount for the children of employees to attend school
• There is no support for travel for professional development
• Together our department’s staff work through problems and celebrate successes
• There is a strong bias against internal promotion
• We need more diverse applicant pools so that “diverse” people aren’t hired only for public roles related to their status
• Excellent National Merit Scholarship program
• We need to remember our land-grant mission and make education widely available
• Admissions standards are minimal
• Students just want to “get through” so they can get a job as soon as possible
• Academic dishonesty is a problem
• Students are allowed too many designated repeats
• Emphasizing students as a revenue stream risks the lowering of standards to recruit and retain
• The university should support the needy students of Iowa more
• Recruiting needs to start earlier, in the 5th or 6th grade
• Decreased funding for graduate assistantships is impacting the ability to recruit excellent graduate students
• ISU needs more seminar classes for juniors and seniors and more concurrent Bachelor’s/Master’s programs
• Overall GREAT school, I couldn’t ask for more!
• Iowa State is not helpful to their transfer students
• Requiring graduate students to take five credits in the summer for an assistantship is ridiculous
• Too much emphasis on grades--not learning
• Many students are here to party rather than to learn
• ISU is an awesome place for an education
• Class sizes are too big and weeding out students is not helping them get an education
• There is a greater emphasis on securing diversity than seeking out quality
• We need a new system for adding/dropping courses
• Supplemental Instruction sessions were better than the lecture for learning information
Sub Goal: Iowa State University Increases the Diversity of People, Ideas, and Cultures and Nurtures an Environment in which Diversity can Thrive

544 Total Responses on this Sub Goal

Respondents to this item expressed strong opinions both for and against increased diversity at Iowa State University. The following list highlights some of the representative responses given in this section.

- If Iowa State wanted to increase diversity, out-of-state tuition wouldn’t be twice as much
- The university needs to do more to influence the town in regard to services (eg. public schools) and cultural opportunities available
- Minority and international students state that they feel isolated on this campus
- There needs to be a reason for increasing different types of diversity, willy-nilly efforts would seem to be lip-service.
- Hiring practices that don’t count experience or talent cannot truly be said to embrace diversity
- Diversity can be taken too far, leading to balkanization and a lack of unity and common purpose
- ISU needs more people talking about it and more administrators setting examples and making change
- We’re doing the best we can but let’s not oversell diversity that isn’t here
- Discrimination is still prevalent on many levels and ISU’s policies are not enforced
- Ethnic and gender diversity, yes; age and socio-economic class, no
- This is certainly true when compared to Iowa as a whole
- Too much emphasis on diversity, diversity gets in the way of excellence
- Food choices on campus are limited for those who aren’t omnivores
- ISU needs to be more responsive to growing Latino populations in the state
- ISCORE, FACES and the ethnic food festival at Veishea help to promote diversity
- Central Administration lets the American Intercultural programs remain understaffed and ramshackle
- Opportunities exist, more people need to take advantage of the opportunities
- This is a difficult goal in a state so overwhelmingly of white Christian heritage
- Culture is not reflected in science, technology, or research. It is found in art, literature, language, dance, and music; possibly the least supported areas at Iowa State
- Send students on Study abroad experiences and make the Study Abroad Center more visible
- Curricula in the hard sciences do not include any or enough courses to broaden students’ minds
- There is a lack of representation of the contributions of people of color in the curriculum
- Allowing minority groups “special rights” will only hurt them in the long run
- We need to encourage intellectual diversity on campus as well
- It should be OK to speak out against something that one considers harmful to humanity, inconsistent with reality, and morally wrong
Sub Goal: Iowa State University Achieves a Sustainable Balance Between Responsibilities and Resources

668 Total Responses on this Sub Goal

Several respondents stated that they are not aware what the vision of the university is on this issue which affected their ability to respond. The following list highlights some other representative responses given in this section.

- Parks Library should be open 24 hours and needs more journals available online
- Faculty are expected to rely on external funding for basic needs
- More support staff is needed so that faculty aren’t wasting time making copies, etc.
- Smaller programs should be eliminated
- P&S technical staff should be utilized for teaching as well as research
- Non tenure-eligible faculty receive resources that tenured and tenure-eligible faculty must secure on their own
- Too much money is spent on new buildings that should be used to restore older buildings that are heavily used
- Third rate programs occupy state-of-the-art facilities, while large productive programs are struggling to find funding
- Some older buildings are extremely outdated, causing faculty to have to search for resources
- Resources are aligned more in keeping with what will improve the image of the university
- With the new budget model, having colleges be the denominator for budgeting can lead to abuses by deans
- Probably doing as well as possible given legislative support
- There needs to be a study center students can go to anytime and get help
- More resources need to be allocated to undergraduate education
- Too much time spent on meetings and writing reports
- Equipment is out-of-date in many areas
- Colleges should use their funds in more complementary ways eg. interdisciplinary faculty
- The LEAN concept should be implemented
- Graduate student assistantships should be 12 month appointments
- 100% of the campus needs to have wireless internet access
- Resources seem to go to athletic programs, new buildings, and peripheral central programs
- ISU is a bureaucracy with excess levels of management and oversight that serve no real purpose
- Salary money is not equitably distributed amongst faculty and staff…2% of $150,000 is not equal to 2% of $35,000
- ISU charges higher tuition and fees without any new scholarships or discounts for middle class students
- Students need work spaces with completely open hours to do their work
- Services should be better advertised
Sub Goal: Iowa State University Fosters an Environment in which I Can Manage Both a Productive Professional Life and a Satisfying Personal Life

531 Total Responses on this Sub Goal

Respondent comments in this section were varied. Some were very positive about the opportunities available, while others expressed concern. The following are representative of responses given in this section:

- Job demands and expectations greatly exceed a 40-hour work week
- ISU does a better job than other places I have worked
- The excessive P&T expectations here make a balance difficult to attain
- The university needs a better wellness program
- I’m concerned about the growing move towards weekend recruiting activities
- The environment in Beardshear Hall is elitist
- Ames is a good community in which to live
- Dorm social life is exceptional in maintaining a balanced life
- Discrimination is very prevalent, which affects my personal as well as professional life
- The new part-time tenure track policy is moving us in the right direction
- We need a formal policy on the arrival of children
- There is a lack of information available for those who cannot live on or near campus, non-traditional or transfer students
- There are tons of professional development organizations and seminars but also multiple social events sponsored by the university
- Increased service loads due to shrinking number of tenure-stream faculty have begun to intrude upon personal time
- Teaching loads are heavy with no research time built in as part of the load
- I have been able to manage a very productive personal and professional life due to my direct supervisors and not university policy
- Clearly, the emphasis is on research and bringing in money to the university rather than ensuring that your family is OK
- The university, like most workplaces, encourages and rewards workaholics
- Flex hours or comp time should be allowed if I’m working weekends or nights
- I’m taking 17 credits and working 14 hours, it doesn’t leave much time for anything
- Iowa State is over-programmed
- ISU’s benefit package is outstanding, I hope that sick leave and vacation are never combined
- This university is poorly integrated into the surrounding community
- The university’s emphasis on diversity denies and stifles any claim to truth
- How can satisfaction be obtained when the message from central administration is ‘You don’t matter, nor does your department’?
- I am stressed about work-related issues to the point of occasionally not sleeping well but still I enjoy my job
- I am considering early retirement at age 55 because I cannot keep up the pace I’m working at this time
Sub Goal: Iowa State University Offers Opportunities for Personal Development and for the Enjoyment of Life

360 Total Responses on this Sub Goal

Many of the respondents in this section felt that Iowa State and the Ames community offered various opportunities. However, many also felt that they were not able to take advantage of these opportunities due to their work and school loads. The following are representative of the responses given in this section.

- Administrators need to be aware that some department chairs don’t believe in shared governance, they rule with an iron rod, not an environment conducive to enjoying life
- Great bus system. Biking and walking trails expanded annually
- Many can’t take advantage of opportunities due to cost or timing (evenings)
- Faculty and staff should have free access to the Rec center and free parking
- Need more in-house training
- The Wellness offers could be much better
- The network for letting graduate students know of available opportunities is lacking
- The sabbatical support at ISU is abysmal
- The pace of work is such that I don’t have any down time to think things through
- The quality and variety of CY Stephens performances has decreased while costs have risen
- It would be nice to have a handout of contacts and steps needed to run a group as the president of a student organization
- It is difficult to take classes that are held during the workday
- There is not even a faculty club in the Union
- Fewer opportunities for blue collar staff
- I enjoy shows at the M-shop or movies at SUB films
- Extracurricular opportunities do not connect to the Ames community
- There is a tendency to forget about Extension employees and those off-campus
- There should be a better discount for employees to various events and offerings
- I have long applauded ISU’s commitment to bringing in diverse activities for the ISU community to experience
- Charges for IT Services classes prevent me from participating
- The opportunity to study abroad is a great thing
- There is a large lack of non-alcoholic long-term student activities
- Counseling services are limited at best
- I would be more satisfied if I was shown I was valued through salary and pay increases
- The Greek system and clubs/organizations on campus do this well
- The rules for tuition reimbursement for merit and P&S staff should be the same
- Laws about drugs and alcohol being enforced would enhance my experience in the dorms
- There’s no unifying place for students so student life is disjointed and compartmentalized
- The provost has made exceptional efforts to promote professional development
- Intramurals are great but there needs to be opportunities in other areas
- ISU itself doesn’t offer opportunities but Ames does
Sub Goal: Iowa State University Conserves Natural Resources and Enhances Environmental Quality

624 Total Responses on this Sub Goal

Most of those responding in this section expressed a need for improvement in regard to recycling and conserving resources. Some representative comments and suggestions are listed below.

- ISU needs more comprehensive recycling programs and an on-campus recycling center
- We should look into wind and solar energy options
- All lights should be on timers/motion detectors
- Heating and cooling should be more efficient, fix leaky windows
- The campus circulator bus was a great idea
- ISU should position itself as a leader in conservation
- ISU should use hybrid vehicles, parking systems should use bikes
- Parking systems vehicles should be turned off when staff get out
- The coal-fired power plant is not a clean source of energy
- There should be a recycling location in every building for paper, plastic, glass, cans etc.
- More university holiday days in the winter season would save resources
- Building cleanliness is atrocious
- Air quality, ventilation and natural light are sorely lacking in many campus buildings
- There should be a way to donate and recycle old equipment and furniture
- State water quality should be a high level priority for ISU and the state
- Biorenewable fuels cause more environmental harm than good
- I haven’t seen any results from the committee working on reducing energy consumption
- Computer-based courses make a large difference in the amount of paper used
- There should be individual thermostats in each room
- I paid $100 dollars extra to freeze in my classes
- Central administration has no concept of how to sustain an acceptable quality in the human environment. We are invited to compete against one another
- Shuttle buses across campus are inefficient
- Single pane windows and window air conditioners allow a lot of heat to escape
- Auto-flush toilets waste water by flushing more than one time per use at times
- Educating people against littering would save resources needed to keep campus clean
- Paper graduation applications and add/drop slips are a waste of paper
- Are there energy conservation guidelines? If so, they need to be publicized
- The little streams around campus and Lake LaVerne need to be cleaned
- ISU’s use of high mileage vehicles and E-85 gasoline is great
- FP&M should not use F-250 trucks unless needed and shouldn’t let them idle
- Professors constantly switching to new text books wastes a lot of paper
- A lot of food and hot water is wasted in the dining halls
- Our previous energy conservation program has become ignored
- Some buildings have asbestos, black mold and other environmental hazards
- There should be mechanisms in place to collect and recycle storm water
Sub Goal: Iowa State University Maintains an Attractive Campus and Works to Improve the Quality of its Facilities

701 Total Responses on this Sub Goal

Most respondents felt that this is an attractive campus with some areas that need improvement. However, respondents were more negative about the quality of the facilities. The following are a sample of respondent comments.

- Deferred maintenance is still a huge issue
- I am so proud that Morrill Hall will be opening
- More needs to be done to make buildings truly accessible
- ISU has a beautiful campus but it has declined over the last few years
- The budget to make facilities improvements is a lot better than it used to be
- I love the professional services of FP&M
- Consider having building staff adopt a planting bed near where they work
- It takes a long time to just get an estimate on what renovations would cost sometimes
- The trees need some work around campus including picking up fallen branches
- Kudos to the groundskeeping crews even though they’re understaffed
- Classrooms are lagging behind in their technological capabilities
- The vet school is poorly landscaped and needs more custodians
- Too many campus vehicles drive over grass and vegetation
- Gilman needs a lot of attention regarding maintenance, cleanliness, etc.
- Some buildings are obviously a higher priority than others
- A general campus revitalization effort would be nice
- Could do a better job clearing snow/ice off the sidewalks
- When trees are removed others should be planted
- More natural lighting is needed for many areas
- Could spend a little less improving the quality of athletic facilities
- Try not to do heavy, noisy work during class hours
- Our beautiful campus is being filled with more buildings than can be maintained
- Some staff having two offices is a waste of resources in many cases
- Upkeep buildings and then costly renovations will not be needed
- Would love to see the mold/mildew removed from the pillars in front of Beardshear
- Think about more skywalks
- We should work to preserve our older growth trees which have character
- More money should go to updating the Parks library
- Love our new light board at the stadium
- Parking lots need to be better hidden with trees
- ISU should stop decreasing parking while simultaneously increasing the need for parking
- The chain link fences and snow fences everywhere are ugly
- ISU Extension offices need to be cutting edge and user friendly
- Small $25 gallons of paint could make a huge difference
Sub Goal: Iowa State University Advances Excellence by Fostering Connections with Alumni and Friends

268 Total Responses on this Sub Goal

Respondents felt that contact with alumni largely centered around fund-raising. This was seen as a negative. Some representative comments from respondents follow.

- Connections are not as strong as the liberal arts college that I came from
- No single-tickets for the Iowa-ISU game does not foster a relationship with alums
- The directors of the Alumni Association and the ISU Foundation are doing a great job
- We need to find more ways to get alumni and friends to participate in programs
- ISU has lost out on opportunities due to the involvement of ISU Foundation
- Would like opportunities for alumni to connect based on geographic/cultural commonalities
- ISU panders too much to donors and alumni
- My department maintains close ties but I’m not sure about the rest of the university
- The only connections ISU values are related to athletics
- Faculty are often not involved by administrators in this area
- I enjoy reading the *Visions* publication
- More effort could be made to those who don’t donate as much, have an appreciation day
- Could be a better neighbor to the Ames community-participate more in school district needs, community planning, etc.
- The university makes no effort to find friend and alumni support for the humanities
- I meet alumni by wearing ISU apparel not through any university initiatives
- Last homecoming the alumni band was at the opposite end from the ISU band and many left after half-time due to lack of coordination
- I wish the “connection” went beyond asking for money
- There should be better communication to ensure alumni information is accurate
- No effort is made to recruit students of alumni
- There should be a searchable alumni database based on various characteristics
- Women’s basketball team and their alumni are a good example of this
- *Visions* magazine--despite excellent articles--comes across as a slick marketing tool to sell ISU-marked products
- I would like more family-oriented alumni trips that are less expensive
- Are there other ways to maintain relations other than joining the Alumni Association?
- Too much attention is paid to alumni who often represent a conservative vision of what the school could or should be
- Renaming Elwood Drive and costing businesses thousands of dollars in printing and revisions is not being friendly
- Opportunities that ISU does offer are not advertised effectively
- Keep Veishea
- I receive information from the Alumni Association but very little from my college or department
Sub Goal: Iowa State University's Intercollegiate Athletics Programs Strive for Academic Success, Integrity, and Competitiveness

621 Total Responses on this Sub Goal

Many of those who submitted comments felt that too much attention was given to the athletic program. There was also concern about the amount of money involved in sustaining certain sports. A sample of these and other comments are given below.

- It seems to vary a lot by sport
- Women’s basketball and gymnastics promote real scholar athletes
- Big ticket athletic venues should be semi-professional instead of pretend semi-professional
- We are great now but the future scares me a little
- Collegiate athletics doesn’t reward athletes nearly enough for what they bring to the university
- The sooner ISU downsizes its athletics programs and focuses on academics, the better
- These three areas are extremely difficult to balance
- As long as members of athletics programs are allowed any leeway regarding academic performance or criminal behavior it is difficult to promote integrity or academic success
- I think our current coaches are fine examples
- Only recently has the commitment been made to be competitive in football
- From newspaper articles, it doesn’t appear that integrity or academics are high priority
- It appears that student athletes are being better citizens
- Wasting my tuition on entertainment for other people doesn’t make me happy
- ISU does a very good job of providing learning resources for athletes
- Most of the athletes that I have met do not try to excel academically and many are arrogant and rude to people outside of their sport clique
- I’ve had a few athletes (not “first-string”) as advisees; all have been great to work with
- Would be nice if the rest of the students could benefit from the facilities we all pay for
- I would like to see a competitive men’s swim team
- Athletes should major in the sport of their choice
- It is sad that the bulk of our alumni are more concerned with our athletic prowess than our academic success
- Much more balanced than other similarly sized schools
- We fire a coach that has increased the number of athletes that graduate?
- Too many athletes are admitted/retained who are not qualified to be students in a university
- The new athletic director has taken ISU in a positive and energetic direction
- The free tutors for athletics are a little unfair to other hard working students
- I am sickened by the privileges athletes think they deserve and the programs demand
- Too much emphasis on athletics at the university
- ISU will never be taken seriously unless they are willing to make the investment to compete, our budget is the lowest in the Big12
- Thanks Dr. Geoffroy for cleaning up the Athletic Department