



CASE STUDY | TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

A Texas A&M School Drives Faculty Engagement with Data

The School of Education & Human Development used qualitative data to improve faculty engagement, satisfaction, and retention rates.



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
School of Education &
Human Development

THE INSTITUTION

Texas A&M University's School of Education and Human Development

INSTITUTION TYPE

Public, 4-Year

LOCATION

College Station, Texas

THE CHALLENGE

Assess the faculty experience to improve engagement and retention

HANOVER SOLUTION

In-depth interviews

As the fourth largest school at Texas A&M University, the **School of Education and Human Development (SEHD)** has a rich history of training leaders in the classroom, office, research lab, and athletic field. Recently, the school underwent several transitions, including a name change and a transfer of some programs as part of a university-wide restructuring plan. Michael A. de Miranda, PhD, led the school as interim dean for a year before being named permanent dean in 2022.

SEHD's leadership team wanted to gauge faculty members' working experiences and social-emotional needs, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and considering recent organizational leadership changes. They knew that this type of reflective feedback would be easier to acquire with the help of an external research partner.

THE CHALLENGE: IMPROVE FACULTY SUPPORT AND RETENTION

Within SEHD, the faculty's sense of identity and belonging had become strained not only from the school's transitions, but also by the isolation and stress of the pandemic. Having up-to-date benchmarks and indicators would help leadership better understand the diverse experiences of early-career faculty and determine their factors for success.

To capture this information, Dr. de Miranda and his team worked with Hanover Research to develop a needs assessment that included **in-depth interviews** with faculty to explore their lived experiences. The project included three primary objectives:

“As a dean, you really need reflective feedback from faculty on their needs, their resources, and their social connectedness. We needed to find out what we could do to improve, and Hanover’s report helped us drill down to changes we could implement that would help faculty feel more included and supported.”

Michael de Miranda, PhD, Dean

1. Explore how early-career faculty perceive and experience multiple dimensions of college life, particularly during the pandemic.
2. Understand the challenges encountered during the pandemic and otherwise.
3. Identify resources and strategies that SEHD can use to facilitate greater early-career faculty satisfaction and success.

SEHD BY THE NUMBERS:



4,500

Students



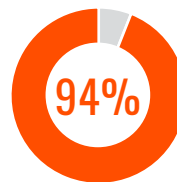
228

Staff members



243

Faculty members



The percentage of SEHD faculty who achieved tenure and promotion success in 2023

THE SOLUTION: IDENTIFYING FACULTY SUCCESS FACTORS

Hanover Research conducted 14 in-depth interviews with a diverse sample of early-career faculty members, in both the tenure-track and academic professional track. This qualitative approach provided key insights that SEHD leadership could use immediately to make evidence-based decisions regarding faculty engagement.

KEY FINDINGS

Participants generally agreed that SEHD supports its faculty, but instability within the school and the university's pandemic response presented some challenges to their success.

- Participants identifying as female and/or people of color reported more mixed perceptions and experiences.
- The pandemic made it harder for participants to balance professional responsibilities and make teaching and research progress.
- Some respondents expressed concerns about instability related to SEHD's organizational and leadership changes.
- Participants wanted SEHD to focus less on productivity and more on community building, well-being, and career support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the in-depth interviews, Hanover's team made four key recommendations to SEHD:

- Strengthen early-career faculty mentorship by facilitating relationship building and a sense of community
- Help early-career faculty reduce stress and achieve better work-life balance
- Identify ways to include and support faculty with different lived experiences
- Foster faculty engagement and collaboration while offering support resources

THE OUTCOME: IMPROVED TENURE AND PROMOTION RATE

The insights drawn from the interviews allowed Dr. de Miranda and his team to gain a richer understanding of the faculty's lived experiences and professional needs, particularly tied to their sense of belonging. This helped them narrow down the top success factors they could focus on to improve faculty engagement, retention, promotion, and satisfaction. Some of the changes implemented at SEHD included:

- Intensifying the faculty mentoring program
- Establishing more teaching supports for early-career faculty
- Holding more informal events and engagement activities to help faculty connect with colleagues and leadership

SEHD faculty now have a **94% tenure and promotion success rate**, the highest ever recorded. While Dr. de Miranda is pleased with the progress, he also acknowledges that the work is never done. He and his team continue to partner with Hanover Research on other initiatives related to student success, academic program development, and professional development.

“Our work with Hanover greatly helped during a time of transition. The research results gave us some stability and helped ‘lower the temperature’ with faculty because we had data to better understand their different lived experiences and knew how to adapt our approach to faculty engagement as a result.”

Michael de Miranda, PhD, Dean
