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Academic Retention & Salary Equity

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP FORUM



14 November 2019

The Issues

1. Why faculty leave: understanding factors that can cause departures
2. Retention data at McGill
3. Salary issues: ensuring and maintaining salary equity and salary allocations for retention
4. Retention tools and strategies



Case Study



McGill

Case Study

Prof Z asks to meet with you, in your role as her Department Chair. At the meeting, she tells you that ABC University is actively pursuing her for tenured position as a research chair. Prof. Z is a mid-career associate professor tenured 4 years ago. She is a strong teacher and productive researcher. Her merit history has consistently been Category 1 or 2. She received two prior retention or anomaly allocations: each of \$5000, 3 and 5 years ago.

Prof Z indicates that while she is happy at McGill, she is contemplating departure because ABC is a strong university in your field. As a chairholder there she would have a reduced teaching load, an increase in salary by \$35K/an, and a healthy research stipend. You also know that Prof. Z has aging parents and ABC University is 2 hours closer by car to them than Montreal. Prof Z is married with three children.

How would you address this situation?

Why work to retain colleagues?

McGill recruits academic staff for the duration of a career. That stability is good for colleagues as a whole and important for the University.

As a general principle, we work proactively to retain our colleagues. Why?

- a strong sense of loyalty to and community is conducive to strong research and teaching
- departures can affect the climate and morale of a department/faculty who remain behind
- departures can carry reputational risks
- departures carry financial losses, especially when early career faculty leave

1. Why Faculty Leave



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1. Why faculty leave

*Human capital, mobility, and organizational loyalty are all factors that predict whether an employee will seek and receive an outside offer...the more mobile the employee and the greater their skill set, the more likely they will seek an outside offer and be considered a real "threat" to leave the organization. Decisions about whether to stay, go, or even to look at other positions are also influenced by [...] calculative forces and constituent forces. **Calculative** forces relate to the probability of attaining important values and goals in the future through continued membership in the organization [...] whereas **constituent** forces relate to employee attachment to individual coworkers or groups within the organization who they believe will stay. The more attached the employee is to individuals within the organization who they believe will stay the less likely they are to seek alternative employment.*

O'Meara, ["Half-Way Out: How Requiring Outside Offers to Raise Salaries Influences Faculty Retention and Organizational Commitment"](#), *Research in Higher Education* (56, 3), 279 at 282

1. Why faculty leave

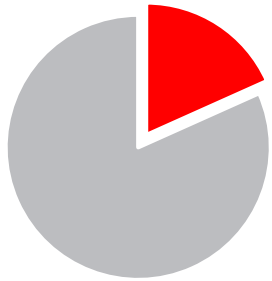
Anecdotally:

- Family relationships and obligations
- Salary and other resources
- Opportunities for leadership elsewhere (e.g., Deanships)
- Feeling of non-recognition (e.g., not being awarded a chair)
- Climate/morale
- Weak academic progress pre-tenure

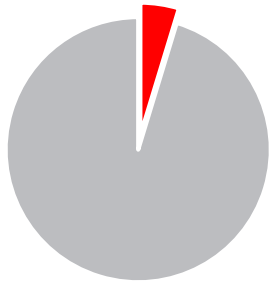
* Does not include departures related to retirement, or reappointment/tenure denials

1. Why faculty leave: Survey says...

According to the 25% of McGill's tenure-stream academics who responded to the AAUDE Faculty Survey in 2017:



- **18.3%** mentioned that in the last 5 years, while at McGill, they received a formal or informal outside job offer that they took to their Department Chair or Faculty Dean*.
 - Professors: **23.7%**;
 - Associate Professors: **17.4%**;
 - Assistant Professors: **6.7%**



- **4.7%** mentioned that they are very likely to leave McGill in the next three years, excluding those citing retirement as a potential cause**.
 - Professors: **6.6%**
 - Associate Professors: **2.7%**;
 - Assistant Professors: **4.6%**

*Answer scale: Yes/No

**Answer scale: Very unlikely/Somewhat likely/Neither likely nor unlikely/Somewhat likely/Very likely

1. Why faculty leave: Survey says...

According to the 25% of McGill's tenure-stream academics who responded to the AAUDE Faculty Survey in 2017, the following reasons were said to have been **considered to a great extent** for leaving McGill*:



* Answer scale: Not at all / To some extent / To a great extent; those who selected 'Not Applicable' were excluded

1. Why faculty leave: Exit interviews

- Academic staff who are leaving McGill (tenure-stream academics, CAS)
- Administered online except when departing staff member is from a designated group*, in which case Senior Employment Equity Advisor will aim to conduct an in-person interview.
- To be launched in the coming weeks; currently being pilot tested with a small sample of academics
- Mix of open-ended and close-ended questions
- Responses are confidential (not anonymous), meaning the respondent provides their ID number so that survey data can be linked to other employee record attributes
- Aggregate-level data will be shared as part of an annual report to senior administration
- Respondents can consent to having their feedback shared with their Faculty Dean and/or Unit Chair or Director

*This includes women in men-dominated fields, racialized persons, Indigenous persons, and persons with disabilities.

1. Why faculty leave: Exit interviews

Questions asked:

- Top 3 reasons for coming to McGill [OPEN-ENDED]
- What appreciated most/enjoyed least about working at McGill [OPEN-ENDED]
- Satisfaction with regards to:
 - Overall experience
 - Resources provided to support research and scholarship
 - Resources provided to support teaching
 - Overall compensation (salary and benefits)
 - Mentoring received
 - Work-life balance

1. Why faculty leave: Exit interviews

Questions asked [continued]:

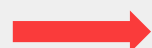
Rank top 3 reasons for leaving McGill:

Opportunity at another academic institution



To which academic institution are you going? [OPEN-ENDED]

Opportunity at a non-academic institution



*Is your new position in:
Government/Industry/Not-for-profit/Private Practice/Other*

Unsuccessful application for tenure/promotion

My department/unit was not a good fit for me



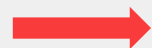
Please elaborate: [OPEN-ENDED]

Salary expectations were not met



For your position at McGill, please enter salary expectations: [OPEN-ENDED]

Difficult or unsatisfactory working environment



Please elaborate: [OPEN-ENDED]

Family/personal reasons



*Which reasons?
Cost of living/Lack of access to good public K-12 education/
Challenges with immigration/Family need to relocate/Other*

End of definite term appointment (CAS only)

Termination of an indefinite term appointment (CAS only)

Retirement

Other



What other reasons affected your decision to leave? [OPEN-ENDED]

1. Why faculty leave: Exit interviews

Questions asked [continued]:

- The climate and opportunities for [...] in my department/unit are at least as good as those for [...]:
 - Women faculty vs. men faculty
 - Racialized and/or Indigenous faculty vs. White faculty
 - Underrepresented faculty vs. other
- How much notice did you give of your leave?
- Were there any major sources of stress you experienced while working at McGill?
Yes/No; Please elaborate: [OPEN-ENDED]
- Could something have been done to keep you from leaving? Yes/No; Please elaborate: [OPEN-ENDED]

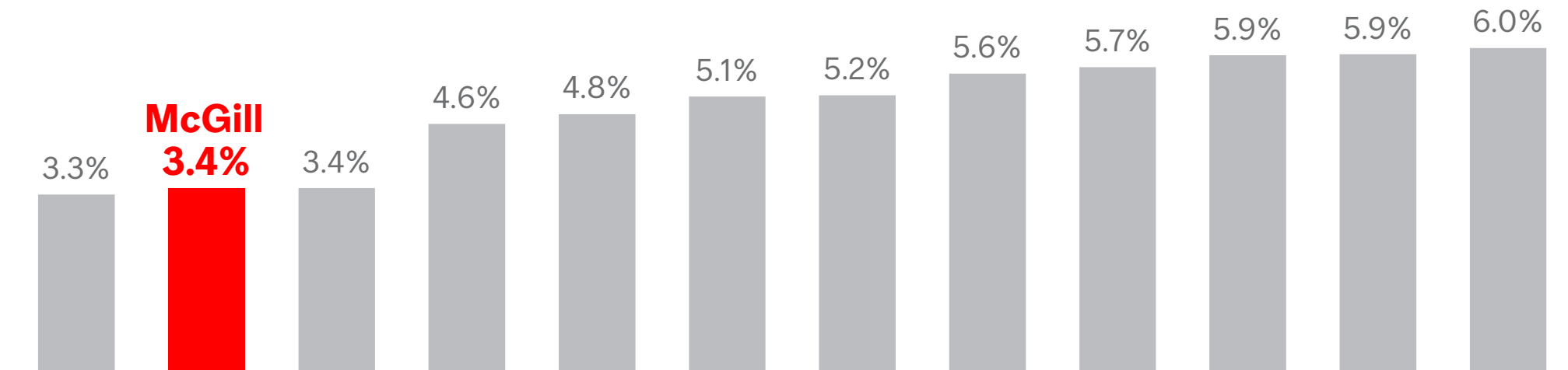
2. Retention Data



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2. Retention Data: U15

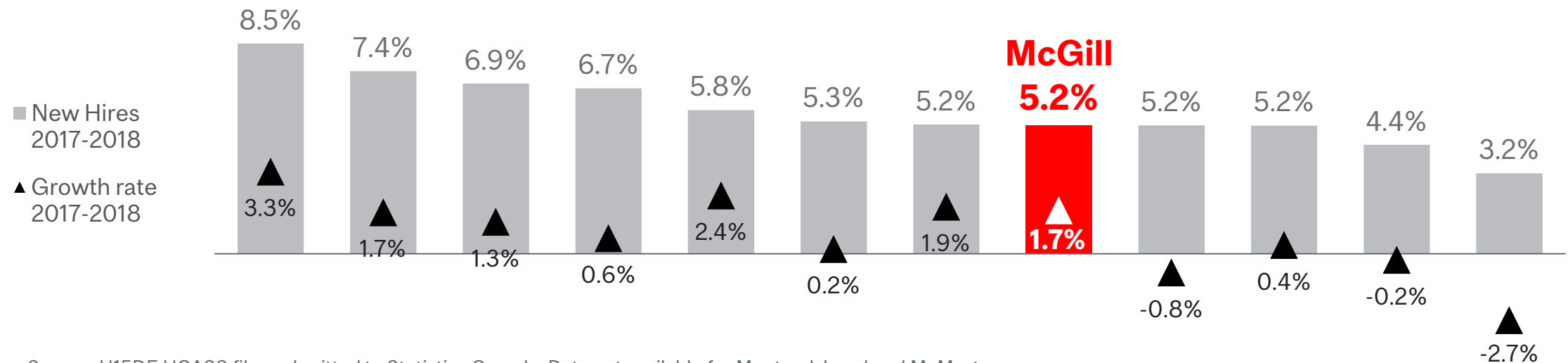
- Chart below shows **2017-2018 departure rates** of full-time tenure-stream ranked academics at McGill vs. other U15 institutions (data only available for 12 of the 15). That is, departures divided by total 2017 complement.
- Departures defined as those present in a full time tenure-stream ranked position in 2017 who were no longer present in this type of position the following year (2018).
- McGill has the **2nd lowest departure rate**.



Source: U15DE UCASS files submitted to Statistics Canada. Data not available for Montreal, Laval and McMaster.

2. Retention Data: U15

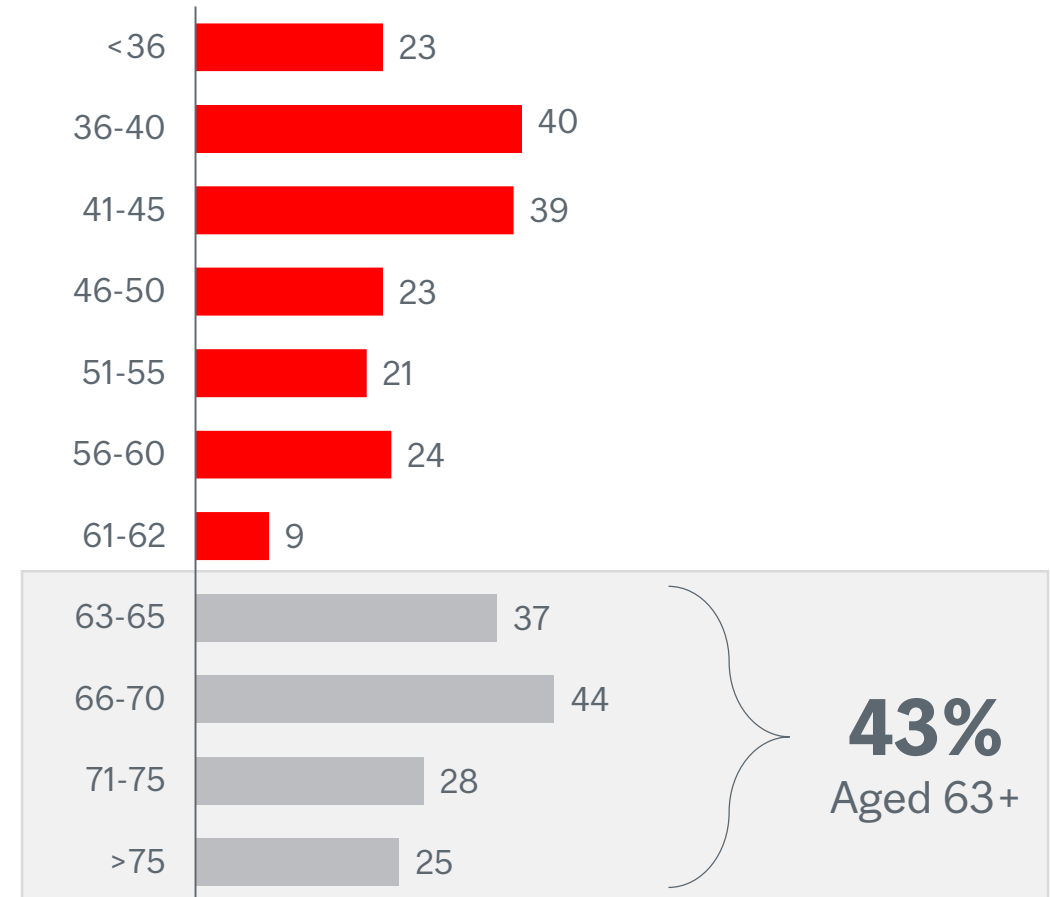
- Bars in chart below represent the **new hire rates** of full-time tenure-stream ranked academics between **2017 and 2018** at McGill vs. other U15 institutions (data only available for 12 of the 15). That is, new hires during this time divided by total 2017 complement.
- The triangles denote the **growth rate**; that is, how much did the total complement grow or decline from October 2017 to October 2018.
- McGill has the **8th highest new hire rate**, and the **4th highest growth rate**.



Source: U15DE UCASS files submitted to Statistics Canada. Data not available for Montreal, Laval and McMaster.

2. Retention Data: McGill

- Chart shows the number of **departures over the past 5 years* at McGill**, by age group.
- Departures are defined as those no longer present in a tenure-stream ranked position (excluding Librarians).
- The total complement has grown from **1,675 in Jan 2015** to **1,711 in Jan 2019**.
- In total, there have been **313** departures over this time, ranging from **55** to **73** per year.
- Over 2 in 5 departures occurred at an age that may be indicative of retirement.



*Past 5 years defined as Jan 2014 to Jan 2019.

3. Salary Issues: Equity and Anomalies



McGill

3. Salary Issues: Equity and Anomalies

Envelope for Retention and Anomaly Allocations = \$600K/an

- *Anomaly requests* → made at the time of performance assessment for merit determinations
- *Retention requests* → can be made at any time, must come from the Chair, to the Dean, to the Associate Provost (EAP).

In determining a retention request, consider these factors:

- Nature of the request – is it related just to salary or are there other elements (e.g., spousal employment, space or other resources)?
- Salary equity (Deans will use Tableau platform)
- Is the faculty members a ‘repeat player’?

3. Salary Issues: Equity and Anomalies

Questions to consider:

- 1) Should we be thinking about retention only when a faculty member makes a request?
- 2) Should a retention plan (including a raise to base salary through a retention allocation) require proof that the colleague has an offer from another institution?

Many faculty members, especially junior faculty members, will at some point seek out a competing job offer, in hopes of either leveraging a raise from their current employer or landing a more lucrative new position. The game is simple: having a higher offer from another institution is a way to say to your university, essentially, 'The discipline values me—do you? In many ways, using a competing offer from another institution to negotiate a higher salary is a game of chicken between you and your dean.

N. Kreuter, "Salary Realities" *Inside Higher Ed* (5 September 2012);

<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2012/09/05/essay-what-new-faculty-members-need-know-about-salaries>.

3. Salary Issues: Equity and Anomalies

Questions to consider (cont'd):

3) When to relinquish the retention goal?

[W]e need to remember that although the departure of a given colleague can be a real loss, people who remain on the faculty permanently embittered by the many personal and systemic consequences of practices like those prodigal counteroffers are in some important respects lost to the school and the scholarly community as well.

H. Dubrow, "The Counteroffer Game" *Inside Higher Ed* (26 August 2013);
<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2012/09/05/essay-what-new-faculty-members-need-know-about-salaries>.

4. Retention Tools & Strategies

4. Retention Tools and Strategies

- Creating conditions that match/mirror a CRC or a Dawson/James McGill award
- Proactively ensuring equity and strong relationships within departments
- Being a strong & active listener to individual and unit needs
- Providing strong support for early career faculty
- Supporting professional development of faculty – e.g., in-house advisor from TLS, facilitating the creation and growth of a faculty equity committee
- Community-building efforts – e.g., Soup & Science
- Demonstrate flexibility, where possible, to facilitate career goals or personal needs (e.g., reduced load appointments)