



# Community Research Project: Initial Findings

## Theme II: How can we Improve the Faculty Experience?

### November 27, 2020

### Goal of Breakout Session

Please come up with at least **one action you think Science Atlantic could take** to help answer the questions below. At this stage in our strategic plan, one concrete and actionable suggestion is more useful than five general ideas.

### Instructions

1. **Read through the attached research results before you discuss the questions below.**
2. Narrow down to a few ideas (fewer is better!).
3. Think about how one (or more) of those ideas could be turned into actions. Prompts to get you started will be listed on the screen.
4. You will have 30-40 minutes for discussion and to develop recommendations for your action(s).

### Keep in Mind

- We want to focus on the findings from the interview participants - none of whom are currently involved with Science Atlantic - to develop ways to get more people involved. Think like someone who doesn't know anything about Science Atlantic.
- Since Science Atlantic is a primarily volunteer organization, recommended actions should be tasks that faculty would be willing to make happen. Staff can provide cohesiveness/structure/communications but not implementation.

### Questions

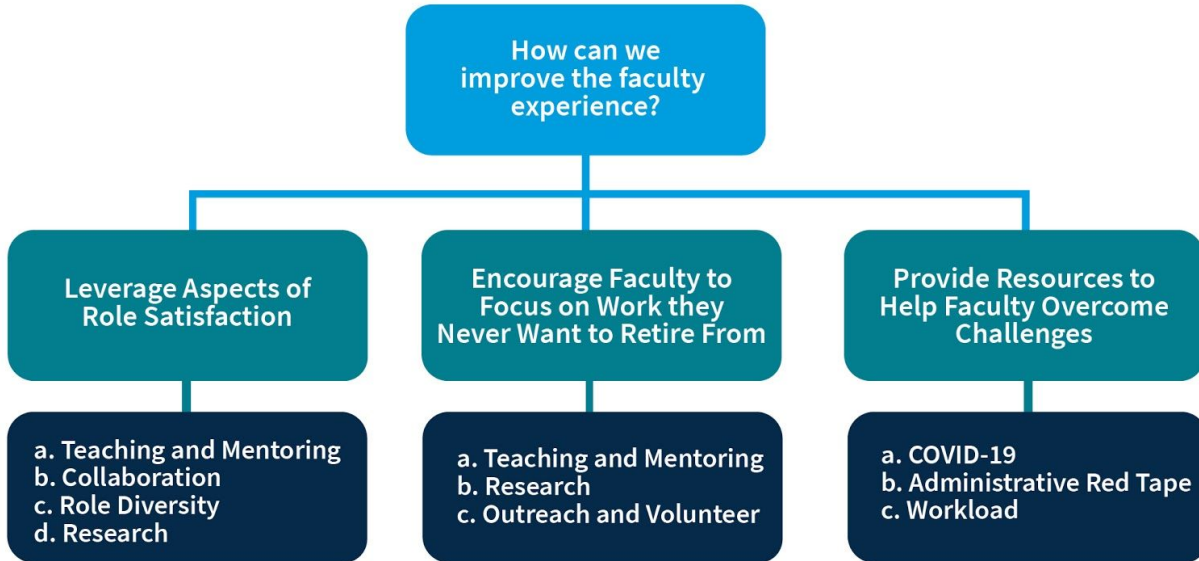
1. **How can Science Atlantic get (more) involved in areas that enhance role satisfaction?**
2. **How can Science Atlantic help create work that people never want to retire from?**
3. **What training/resources can Science Atlantic provide to help faculty manage their challenges?**



# Community Research Results

## Theme II: How can we Improve the Faculty Experience?




### Summary of Findings:



## 1. Leverage Aspects of Role Satisfaction

### a. Teaching and Mentoring

Across all faculty categories, teaching and mentoring was the most commonly cited contributor to role satisfaction. Many mentioned gaining satisfaction from the following facets of teaching and mentoring.

| <p><b>Satisfying students' desire for knowledge</b></p>    | <p><b>Helping students overcome challenges</b></p>   | <p><b>Seeing students apply their knowledge in the real world</b></p>   |
|---|---|--|
| <p>"Usually when students are asking questions because they're interested rather than because they need to know it for an exam. <b>So those kinds of things where I'm helping to satisfy a real desire for knowledge from the students.</b>" - Participant 16</p> | <p>"Oh, well that's when I can help a student. <b>When I see a student who's really struggling and I know that I can help them</b> and that's very satisfying" - Participant 20</p> | <p>"This week I have a student finishing up as a research assistant for me and <b>she's heading off to graduate school, and that's the kind of thing that I take a lot of pride in;</b> how they can get an education and go off and succeed." - Participant 8</p> |



## b. Collaboration

Another contributor to role satisfaction was being able to collaborate and connect with colleagues and other professionals in their field. Participants commonly cited the following reasons for collaborating.

### To learn and to stay current

*"To co-author the papers with these people across the world is a huge learning experience. You know **you can even learn to complete subfields of a discipline that you were not even trained in.**" - Participant 2*

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*"**Getting a pulse on the industry, I think is the biggest thing for me..**and trying to not get out of touch with the business of engineering and what's going on in the field locally with respect to the different disciplines and various projects that are going on." - Participant 27*

### To gain varied perspectives and expertise

*"It's a great way of bouncing ideas off of each other to work out ideas and methods and interpretations of results and so on and getting different perspectives... **I think it's the alternative perspectives that are the most beneficial.**" - Participant 36*

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*"**It's really important because you're always coming across new situations that you may not know how to handle.** Being able to talk to another faculty member and say: Hey, have you ever had this happen?" - Participant 31*

## c. Role Diversity

Participants also noted that they enjoyed the diversity of their role.

*"**I enjoy the variety.** I enjoy doing all these different things so that I have that ability to sort of change things up." - Participant 18*

*"**I would definitely have to say one of them is the ever-changing workplace.** It's not one job in particular that I have to do, it's any little jobs and lots of oversight for many aspects of the department, which makes the job very dynamic and very ever-changing." - Participant 21*





### d. Research

Amongst the full-time tenure/tenure track faculty participants, conducting research was the second most commonly cited contributor to their level of satisfaction.

*“And then other satisfaction is **when we manage to do publications and to do quality research in a small university is also satisfying** because we cannot compare ourselves with like Montreal or Toronto university professors.” - Participant 3*

*“**That’s pretty satisfying, being able to conduct some research and find interesting results** and being able to disseminate that through journal articles or at conferences.” - Participant 7*

## 2. Encourage Faculty to Focus on Work they Never Want to Retire From

Aspects of participants' jobs they'd like to continue in retirement align with those that provide them with role satisfaction. **Teaching and mentoring** and **conducting research** were both mentioned as aspects that participants would like to continue into retirement. Although **conducting outreach and community work** was not commonly noted as an aspect that contributes to participants' role satisfaction, it was a recurrent answer when asked what they'd like to continue to do in retirement.

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Teaching and mentoring</b>      | <i>“<b>I will always be a mentor... I won't always be teaching in class. But I still help students that graduated 25 years ago and I'm proud, so honored to do it. That's what life's about.</b>” - Participant 20</i>   |
| <b>Research</b>                    | <i>“<b>I would definitely continue doing research. There's no question about that. I've talked to a number of faculty who have retired and they've continued to write books and attend conferences and keep active with their research. So, I would definitely want to do that.</b>” - Participant 19</i>  |
| <b>Outreach and community work</b> | <i>“<b>I would want to contribute my knowledge and my skills that I learned through nonprofits. That's what I admire, when people use their experience to enrich their community.</b>” - Participant 30</i><br><br><i>“<b>It would definitely be to do more community service. Some of the university service can feel like busy work, and you're really not sure it has much of an impact. But I can say quite often when you're working with a community group, you can definitely see the practical impact that it has. So I would probably volunteer with more organizations in the community if I were to retire tomorrow.</b>” - Participant 8</i> |



20% of participants made statements which alluded to the idea that they were happy to **continue all aspects of their jobs and never retire.**

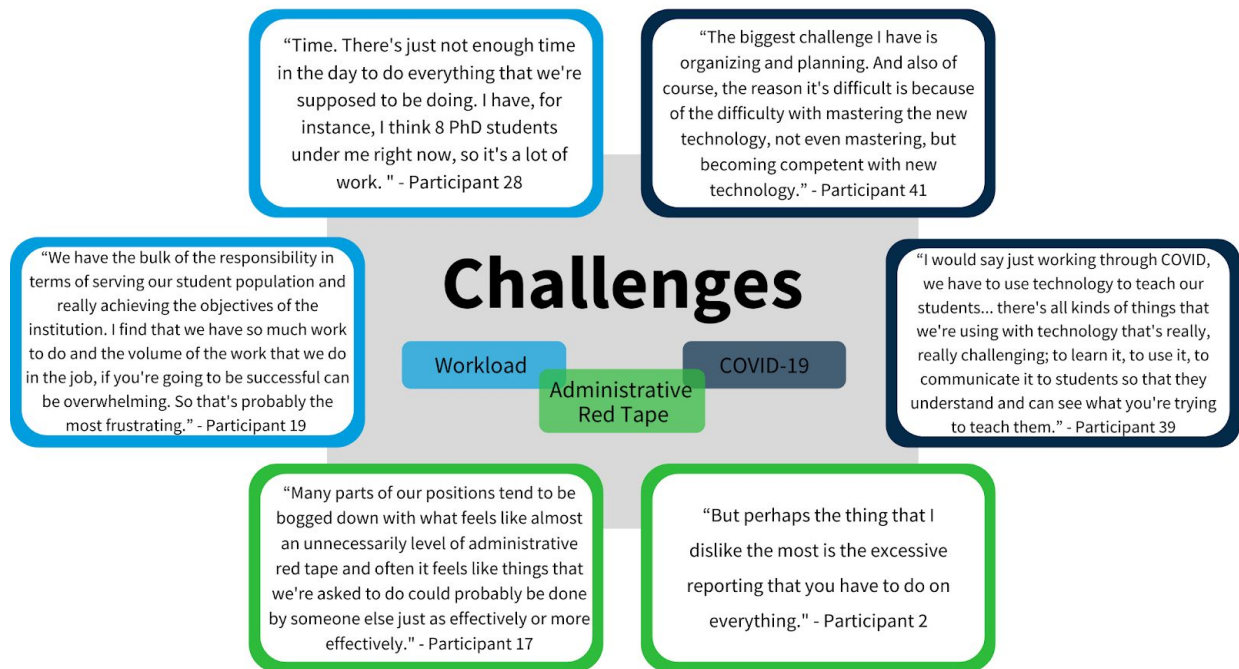
*"You caught me off guard here because I've never thought about retirement. **Not something I plan to do, I mean I plan to work until the last day in my life.**"*

- Participant 2

*"**I model myself after those who don't retire!** I will when I have to (i.e. health reasons, inability to do my work)."* - Participant 12

*"I don't think about retirement. So **I would say I'm going to continue to work until I can't, I guess.**"* - Participant 10

### 3. Provide Resources to Help Faculty Overcome Challenges



When discussing ideas for overcoming their challenges, participants offered solutions such as:

- **Faculty training to:**
  - Help faculty improve their time management skills
  - Improve technological and online teaching skills
- **Faculty networking to:**
  - Enable the sharing and acquisition of resources between faculty members
  - Share experience and tips and tricks for dealing with administrative processes
- **Additional resources to:**
  - Manage larger class sizes
  - Hire administrative support to reduce admin workload