

EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION RESULTS RELATED TO WORK/LIFE BALANCE DRAWN FROM RECENT  
QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEYS FOR FACULTY & STAFF

REPORT BY THE MIT COUNCIL ON FAMILY AND WORK

SEPTEMBER 8, 2014

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## **Motivation**

Over the past year, the Presidential [Council on Family and Work](#) has worked to investigate work/life balance issues at MIT and discover areas amenable to improvement. This memo highlights our findings from a deep dive into the results of the 2012 Quality of Life Survey focusing on responses by MIT faculty and staff. We explored these data and found that, for MIT staff, two factors had large and robust correspondence to work/life balance and overall employee satisfaction: a manager open to flexible work schedules and access to mentoring.

Since the dissemination of our results in late fall 2013, we were fortunate to present these results to Academic Council, AO/FO, Working Group on Support Staff Issues, and Administrative Advisory Council II and received valuable feedback. We also investigated the extent to which mentoring programs are employed here at MIT.

The remainder of this memo is organized as follows. Section I reiterates our findings from the 2012 Quality of Life Survey, with additional information about heterogeneity across the school in openness to flexibility and strengths in mentorship (I.4). Section II describes some of the themes we heard as we presented the results across the Institute. Section III describes mentorship programs at MIT with a focus on the valued program at Lincoln Labs. Finally, Section IV offers some recommendations. We hope this memo will continue to provide an impetus to improve quality of life at MIT through renewed policies and attitudes toward flexibility and mentorship.

## **I. Quality of Life Survey Results**

The Council's initial exploration into the Quality of Life Survey was summarized in our reports found here: <http://hrweb.mit.edu/workfamily/index.html>. Faculty report long working hours and considerable stress, but also a high degree of satisfaction, with both measures notably higher in 2012 compared to the faculty survey in 2008. In 2012, staff also reported a high degree of satisfaction. There was no staff survey in 2008 for comparison.

### **I.1. Predictors of Work/Life Satisfaction: Flexible Work Schedules & Mentoring**

The 2012 Quality of Life Survey asked respondents about their ability to integrate the needs of work and personal/family life. Figure 1 shows that 60% of faculty, nearly 80% of Campus Staff, and over 80% of employees at Lincoln Lab report being somewhat or very satisfied in their ability to integrate these needs. That 40% of faculty struggle to integrate work and personal/family life strikes us as a potential area for improvement.

We systematically considered predictors of this ability to integrate work and personal/family life. The most striking finding was that, controlling for demographics and workload, staff members who reported having a supervisor/chair/dean who is open to flexible work arrangements are considerably more likely to report satisfaction with such integration, as well as overall satisfaction, compared to their colleagues who reported that their supervisors were not open to such schedules.

In particular, Figure 1 shows that 80% of MIT employees report having a supervisor who is “open to flexibility” and these employees have a 15 percentage-point higher ability to integrate work and family needs. To put this in perspective, adding ten hours to their (self-reported) number of hours worked per week—which should impact their ability to integrate these needs in a tangible way—lowers their reported satisfaction in such integration by only 5 percentage points for faculty, 8 percentage points for staff, and 10 percentage points for Lincoln Lab employees. The full model estimates are available in the appendix table.

The second main predictor of the integration of work and family, as well as overall satisfaction, is whether the employee felt he or she received adequate mentoring: an affirmative answer raises the satisfaction with the integration of work and family needs by 6-8 percentage points.

Interestingly, while only 13% of faculty (and 20% of Postdocs), found mentoring “Not Applicable” for themselves, larger fractions of MIT’s staff considered mentoring “Not Applicable”. Administrative and other academic staff were most likely to expect to be mentored (only 29% of these groups chose “Not Applicable”), while service staff had the highest response of “Not Applicable”, at 67%. For support staff, 44% responded “Not Applicable” as did 39% of research staff. It appears that the focus on improving the mentoring of faculty over the past 10 years has been successful, but has had limited effect on the expectations of staff.

Furthermore, for those staff members who do expect to receive mentoring, less than half state that they receive adequate mentoring. Postdocs who expect to be mentored are most likely to believe they receive adequate mentoring (49% responded “Yes” vs. 31% “No”). For each of the other categories of staff (administrative, support, service, other academic, and research) the majority of those expecting to receive mentoring felt they were not receiving adequate mentoring. As there is a clear correlation between receiving adequate mentoring and job satisfaction, this evidence suggests that a larger mentoring initiative for staff would likely result in more satisfied employees.

These results are not restricted to work/life balance issues, but extend to overall employee satisfaction. Figure 2 shows that most employees are satisfied with their employment at MIT. It also shows that openness to flexible schedules strongly increases this satisfaction by 10-13 percentage points across the employee groups. Put another way: those whose supervisors are not open to such arrangements would be expected to have much lower satisfaction levels. In comparison, adding ten hours to a typical work week barely registers in the satisfaction of employees.

## **I.2. Competing Explanations**

One concern with these correlations is that some employees may be prone to answering questions positively across the board, and the openness to flexibility question and satisfaction questions may be positively correlated as a result. Figure 3 suggests that this is not the case by considering satisfaction outside of MIT. Openness to flexibility is relatively unrelated to satisfaction outside of MIT. While a lack of a direct effect of such openness on satisfaction outside of MIT is somewhat surprising, it strongly suggests that the initial results are not driven by those who answer all questions in a positive way.

At the same time, those who feel they have received adequate mentoring do show a positive relationship with their satisfaction outside of MIT. While this could be a direct effect of mentoring improving their situation at MIT, which spills over into satisfaction outside of MIT, it is more prone to the criticism that the two measures are correlated due to the inclination to answer questions in a positive manner across the board.

When exploring the issue in more depth, one mechanism by which the openness to flexibility and the receipt of adequate mentoring can raise satisfaction is that members of the community find it related to fairness and equity at the workplace. Figure 4 shows that 70% of employees agree that their department has procedures that are fair and equitable to all. Figure 4 also shows that flexibility and mentoring are positively correlated to such a feeling, especially among employees on the main campus.

## **I.3. Potential Benefit of Flexibility: Employee Retention**

Figure 5 considers retention. The Quality of Life Survey asks whether employees are likely to leave MIT in the next three years. Among main-campus staff, and especially among Lincoln Lab employees, those with supervisors who are open to flexible work arrangements have statistically-significantly lower rates of having an intention to leave MIT. Having adequate mentoring is also associated with statistically-significantly lower rates of having such an intention across all three groups. In comparison, adding 10 hours of work to a typical week has a smaller relationship with this retention measure across all three groups.

## **I.4. Heterogeneity across the Institute**

The final set of figures displays results for work/life balance satisfaction, mentorship, and openness to flexibility across groups at MIT.

### **I.4.1 By Employee Type**

Figure 6 shows the main comparisons across different types of employees at the Institute. Faculty and postdocs report a lower ability to integrate the needs of work with personal or family life: 23% report that they are very satisfied along this dimension compared to approximately 42% for staff.

Admin, support, and especially service staff members report less openness to flexibility than the other types of employees.

Staff members also note that they have not received adequate mentoring. Interestingly, approximately one-third of admin and support staff report that this question is not applicable, and among the remainder who say it is applicable, over half say they have not received adequate mentoring. We see both improving the adequacy of staff mentoring and creating a demand for staff mentoring as potential avenues for improving staff quality of life at the Institute.

Faculty and postdocs are supposed to have formal mentors. The fact that a substantial minority of faculty and postdocs report that they have not received adequate mentoring shows that a formal program needs to be managed. We are encouraged by early efforts described below that are attempting to roll out mentorship more broadly in a well-informed way.

#### **I.4.1 Across Schools and Areas**

The appendix figures show substantial heterogeneity in the ability to integrate work and personal/family life, openness to flexibility, and satisfaction with mentoring across different Areas and Schools at the Institute.

In particular, among admin/support staff, there appears to be substantial variance in the openness to flexibility for admin/support staff across Schools (Figure A2) and across Areas and Departments (Figure A3), as well as satisfaction with mentoring (Figure A4).

These differences in the data corroborate the reports that we have heard about heterogeneity in the way that flexibility and mentorship is considered for staff. Our hope is that information about these differences described in the Figures can spur a conversation about how to encourage greater similarity in the implementation of our flexibility policy, and support the nascent efforts to encourage more mentorship, especially among staff members.

## **II. Results of Spring 2014 “Listening Tour”**

There were a few themes that arose from our discussions with staff and faculty across the Institute.

First, there was general support for the notion that flexibility and mentorship among staff were valuable and underutilized, even with concerns about specific features of each.

Second, there was a call for a better understanding in the coming Quality of Life survey over what types of flexibility and mentorship are appreciated by staff and faculty. The current survey did not allow us to consider nuances within these broad concepts. For example, flexibility could range from openness to taking an afternoon to go to a personal appointment, all the way to working from home.

Third, heterogeneity in access to these benefits across the Institute for similar positions was seen as undesirable, and something that we hope the Institute can improve going forward. Interestingly, some administrators in areas where flexibility is more difficult to provide voiced concern that they might lose valuable employees to areas that have more flexibility.

Fourth, in terms of flexibility, there are naturally specific considerations that need to be considered, such as which groups are eligible for various flexible work arrangements.

Fifth, our discussions revealed that the existing HR guidelines on flexibility are not as well known across the Institute as would be desirable.

Six, many groups encouraged us to investigate the mentorship program at Lincoln Labs, which is what we turn to next.

### **III. Current Models of Mentorship Programs at MIT**

#### **III.1 Human Resources**

In February, David Hosmer began a 6 month pilot program with 7 mentor/mentee pairs. The ongoing evaluation of the program is positive.

In addition, the Leader to Leader (L2L) program has a project that is looking to:

- Assess whether there is value in establishing a mentoring network across the Institute for staff.
- Identify and make available resources and information on mentoring for staff.
- Identify existing best practices and promote them across MIT.
- Identify key stakeholders working in mentoring programs for students, faculty and Postdocs to build cross-functional links for future efforts.

We anticipate their report in October 2014.

#### **III.2. MIT Lincoln Laboratory Mentoring Program**

MIT Lincoln Laboratory implemented a formal mentoring program in May 2011. Our contacts to learn about this initiative included Ellen Beachy and our Council member Justin Brooke.

This formal effort serves as a valuable complement to the informal mentoring approaches at the Laboratory. Over 1,000 employees have participated in various programs to date (380 mentors; 677 mentees). A brief description of each program is outlined below. The mentoring program has been very successful at MIT LL and continues to evolve based on the needs of our

employees. There is also strong support and involvement by upper management which certainly helps to drive the program forward.

#### Formal Mentoring Programs:

- 1) Guide Program – Focused on orienting new employees during the period from offer acceptance through the early months of employment. An internal “Guide” is assigned to reach out to the new hire prior to their coming onboard and responsible for introducing the new employee to the Group and Division Offices as well as provide a Lab tour and point out resources available.
- 2) Career Mentoring – A voluntary, 6-month one-on-one mentoring program available to Technical and Administrative staff in all stages of their career. The recommendation is that the employee has a minimum of 1-year service and that the pair meets 1-2 x per month with objectives set by the mentee.
- 3) Circle Mentoring – A voluntary, 6-month program focused on small discussion groups of up to 15 employees led by 2 experienced Laboratory employees. The discussion groups have professional and career development themes. Circle Mentoring is available to Technical, Administrative, and Support Staff.
- 4) Assistant Group Leader Mentoring – A voluntary, 6-month program that compliments other leadership development programs currently available to new Group Leaders. New AGL’s are assigned a mentor with a recommendation that 1-2x month meetings occur. Objectives are set by the mentee.

In addition to the formal mentoring programs, MIT LL has an on-boarding orientation that new hires attend on their first day of employment, as well as a New Employee Network (employee resource group) that any employee, new or otherwise, may join.

Through these formal programs, we hope to capture the attention of employees by offering a variety of resources, and reach those who may not otherwise reach out for informal mentoring on their own.

Lincoln Lab has sought feedback on the program. Some of the highlights:

- 100% reported that **one-on-one mentoring provides a valuable learning opportunity; 100% responded that they would recommend the program to others.** Participation in the formal mentoring program is seen as personally beneficial: networking opportunities for mentees, rewarding experience for mentors, as it is seen as supporting the Laboratory’s mission.

- Exposure to different areas of the Laboratory leads to better understanding across the groups.
- Mentors learned about the concerns of mentees, leading to more effective leadership.
- **The formality of the program led individuals to take the meetings seriously, and the conversations were usefully candid.**

### III.3. Additional sources of support

We understand that there have been calls for more staff mentorship at the School of Engineering, the MIT Council on Staff Diversity and Inclusion, and MIT Medical, where there is a peer connector program, in addition to the peer coaching that is an integral part of onboarding activities. These all could provide more lessons as our community considers expanding mentorship opportunities over the coming year.

## IV. Recommendations for Further Action

We present the following recommendations to the Institute based upon our findings of the **Quality of Life Survey** results.

1. *Repeat the staff survey every 4 years.* In analyzing the results of the 2012 surveys of faculty and staff, we were hampered by the fact that it had been over a decade since staff had last been surveyed. Fortunately, we had results from the quadrennial faculty surveys to give some insight into the intervening years. Going forward, the Council will sponsor a quadrennial staff survey, which (as in 2012), will be offered concurrent with the faculty survey and with identical wording of the questions where practical.
2. *Explore ways to increase workplace flexibility across the Institute.* There are, of course, practical limits to flexibility in work arrangements, some of which are dependent on the responsibilities of a particular position. In addition, this issue has been raised before and there are policies in place that relate to workplace flexibility. Indeed, the Council on Family and Work collaborated with MIT Human Resources and MIT Center for Work, Family & Personal Life in writing the *Guide to Job Flexibility at MIT* in June 2004. We would be happy to revisit those issues given changes in technology and experiences with these policies over the past decade. One of our goals would be to attain relative homogeneity in implementation of flexible work arrangements among staff with similar positions, perhaps through updated manager training on these issues.

It appears that the best way forward for this action is to offer our support to the new Vice President for Human Resources once they are hired.

3. *Explore ways to increase mentoring across the Institute.* While the correlation between adequate mentoring and job satisfaction was not as strong as that for flexibility, it is a robust and positive correlation. Furthermore, there is substantial room for improvement in this area, as approximately 70% of staff either feel that they do not receive adequate mentoring or that mentoring is not applicable to them. Perhaps highlighting this correlation to supervisors across the Institute will help encourage them to take advantage of existing mentorship programs at MIT, as well as motivating a review of those programs to ensure that their experience and expertise is being disseminated and that best practices are being incorporated where practical.
4. *Maintain liaison with the Employee Benefits Oversight Committee (EBOC) going forward.* Since the 2012 surveys were administered, EBOC was formed to advise the Provost and Executive Vice President and Treasurer about employee benefits that directly affect employees' ability to balance work and family needs. We have begun (and will continue) to meet with the EBOC to coordinate our efforts, particularly in the creation of questions for the next round of Quality of Life surveys.

Over the coming year, we will continue to work on these issues as well as exploring on the quality-of-life-issues that are particular to students and post-docs at MIT. We welcome suggestions on other topics the Council might consider, and appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the well being of the MIT community.



Our thanks to the Council on Family and Work for discussions that led to this memo:

Dr. James W. Bales, Co-Chair

Prof. Joseph J. Doyle, Co-Chair

Prof. Amy K. Glasmeier, Urban Studies & Planning

Ms. Georgina Dorminy, Student '14

Dr. Justin J. Brooke, Lincoln Laboratory

Ms. Marisol Diaz, Working Group on Support Staff Issues

Ms. Gayle Sherman, Working Group on Support Staff Issues

Dr. Sara Calafell Gosline, Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Biological Engineering

Ms. Alyce Johnson, Human Resources

Ms. Ann E. Warner Harvey, Office of the Vice President for Finance

Ms. Maryanne Kirkbride, MIT Medical

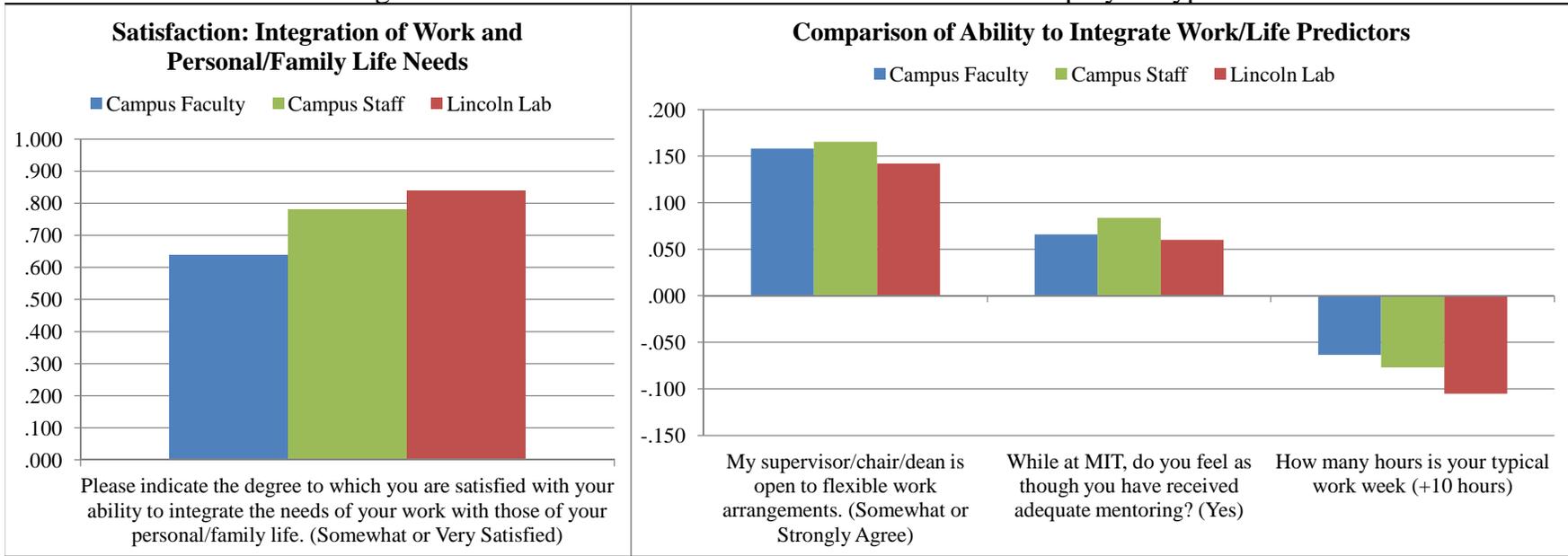
Ms. Lydia S. Snover, Office of the Provost

Mr. Ryan Westrom, Graduate Student Representative

Ms. Kaitlyn Marie King, Staff to Committee, Sloan School of Management

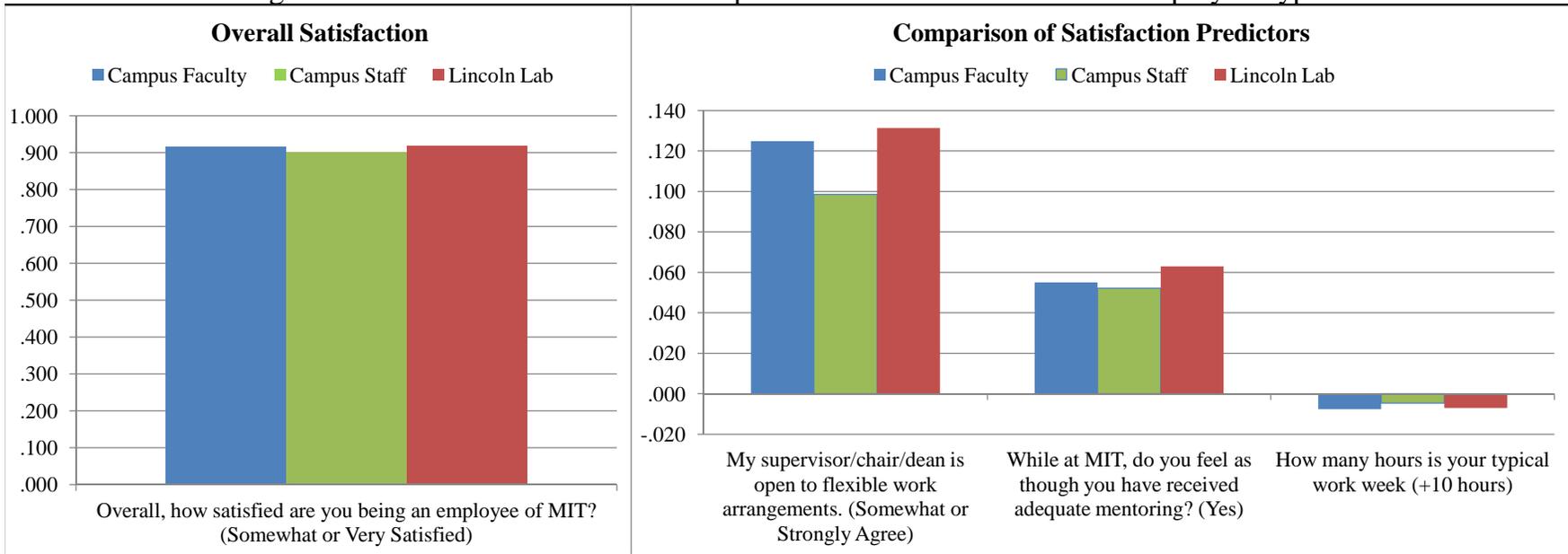
Our special thanks to Gregory Harris, Office of the Provost, for his skillful data analysis.

Figure 1: Work/Life Balance & Its Predictors: Across Employee Types



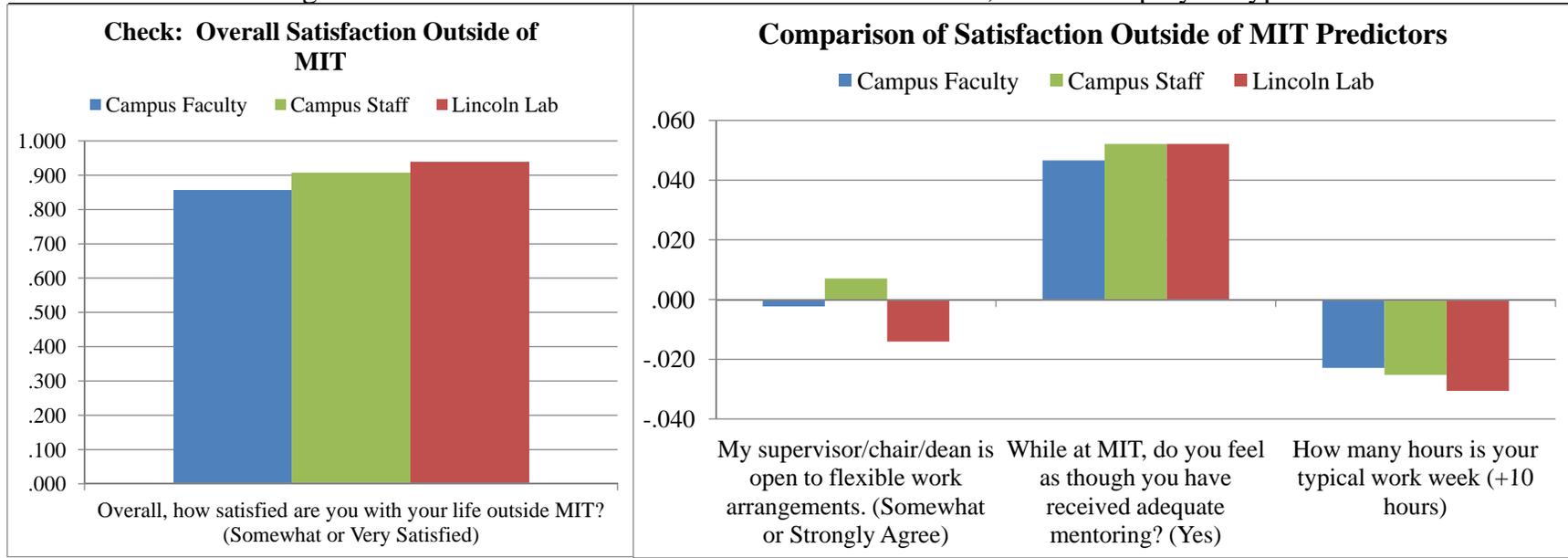
Notes: Satisfaction means are from the 2012 Quality of Life Surveys; Predictors are from a regression that controls for experience, sex, underrepresented minority status, family structure, health program utilization, and friendship measures, as shown in Appendix Table 1.

Figure 2: Overall Satisfaction and Comparison of Its Predictors Across Employee Types



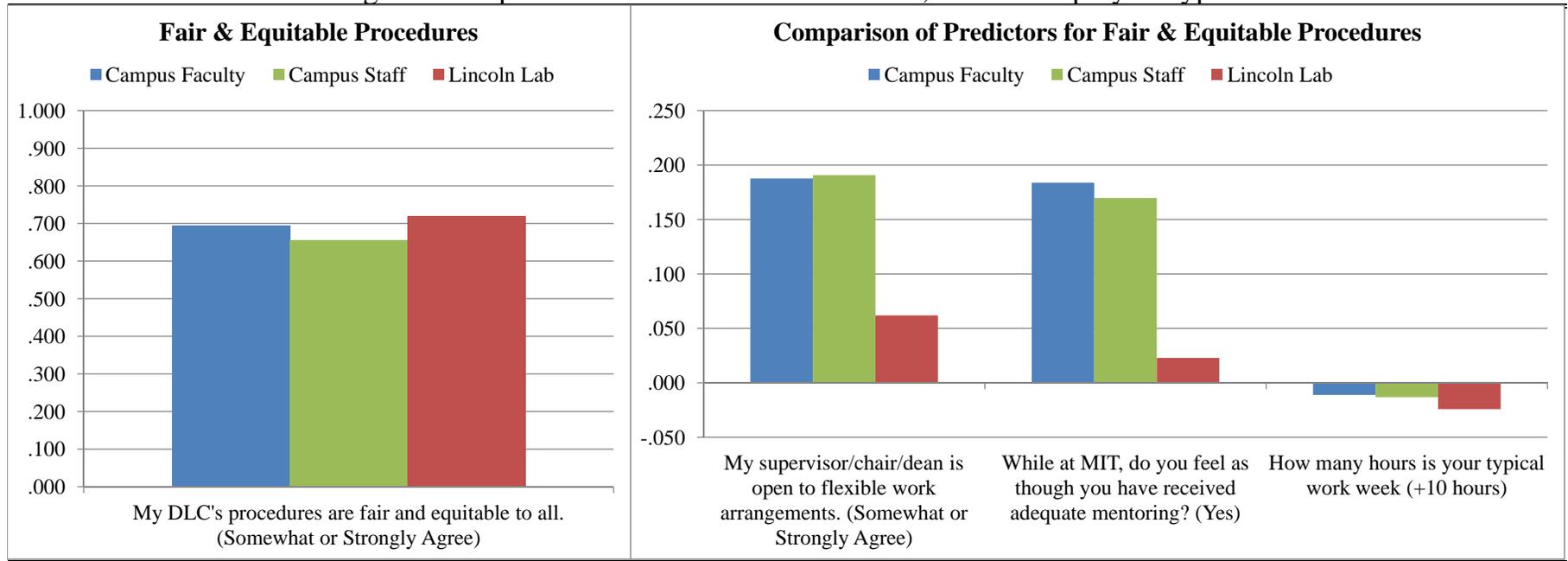
Notes: Satisfaction means are from the 2012 Quality of Life Surveys; Predictors are from a regression that controls for experience, sex, underrepresented minority status, family structure, health program utilization, and friendship measures, as shown in Appendix Table 1.

Figure 3: Check: Satisfaction with Life Outside of MIT, Across Employee Types



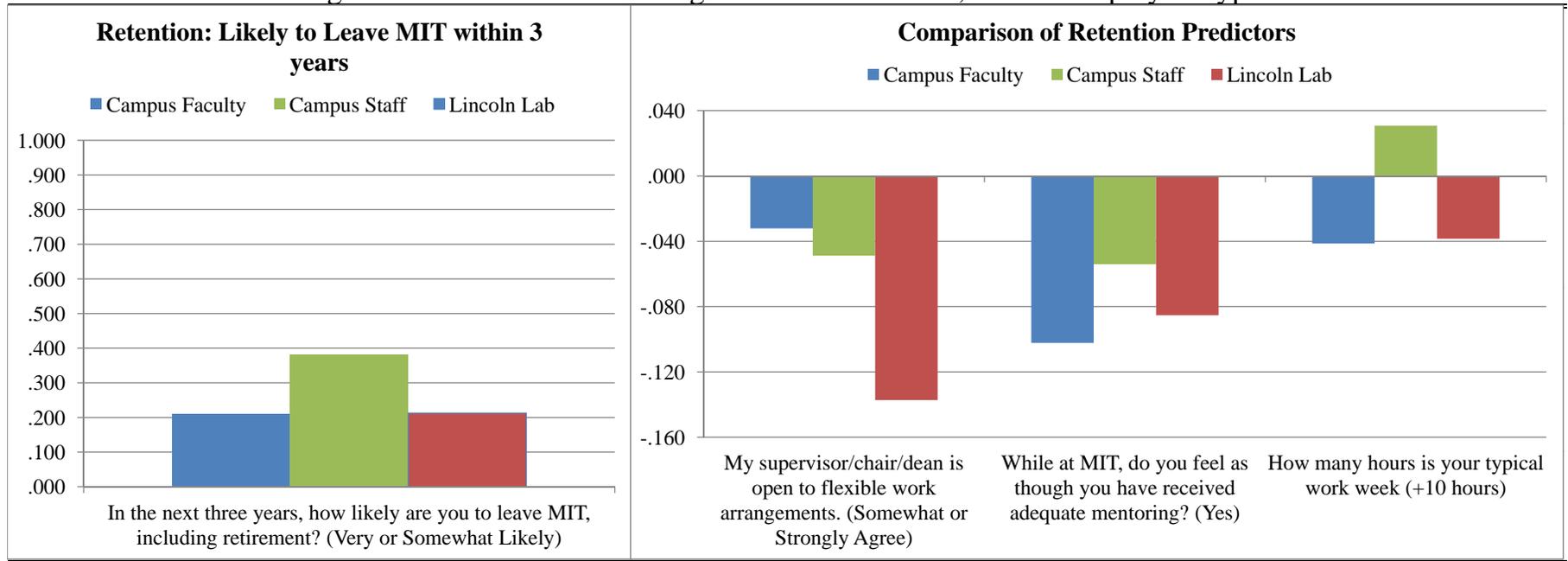
Notes: Satisfaction means are from the 2012 Quality of Life Surveys; Predictors are from a regression that controls for experience, sex, underrepresented minority status, family structure, health program utilization, and friendship measures, as shown in Appendix Table 1.

Figure 4: Impression of Fairness of Procedures, Across Employee Types



Notes: Satisfaction means are from the 2012 Quality of Life Surveys; Predictors are from a regression that controls for experience, sex, underrepresented minority status, family structure, health program utilization, and friendship measures, as shown in Appendix Table 1.

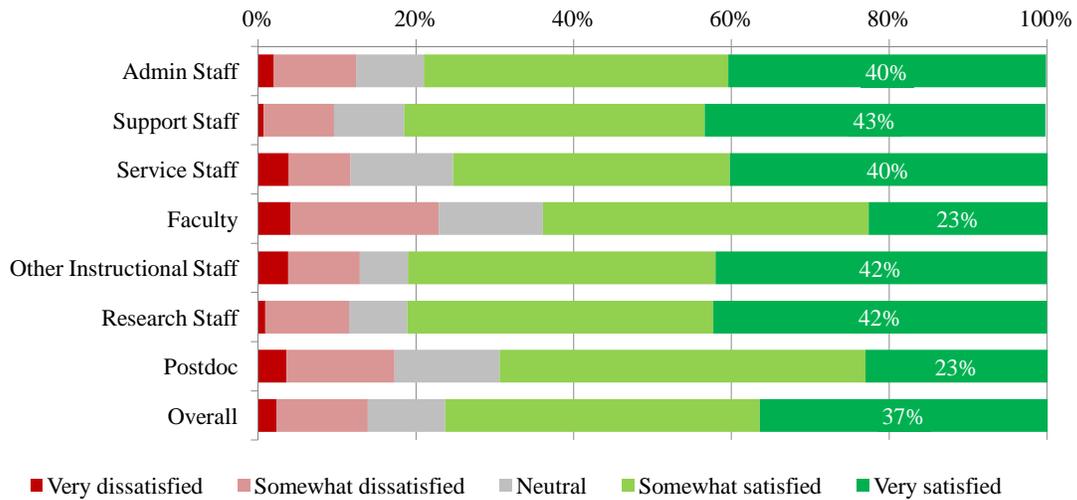
Figure 5: Likelihood of Leaving MIT within 3 Years, Across Employee Types



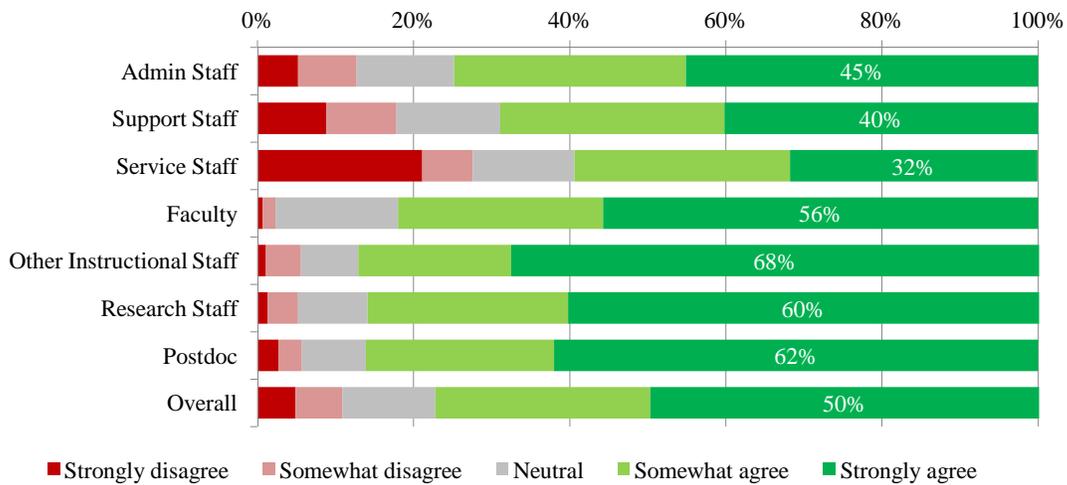
Notes: Satisfaction means are from the 2012 Quality of Life Surveys; Predictors are from a regression that controls for experience, sex, underrepresented minority status, family structure, health program utilization, and friendship measures, as shown in Appendix Table 1.

Figure 6: Heterogeneity Across Employee Types

**Ability to integrate the needs of work with those of your personal/family life**



**My supervisor/chair/dean is open to flexible work arrangements**



**Have you received adequate mentoring?**

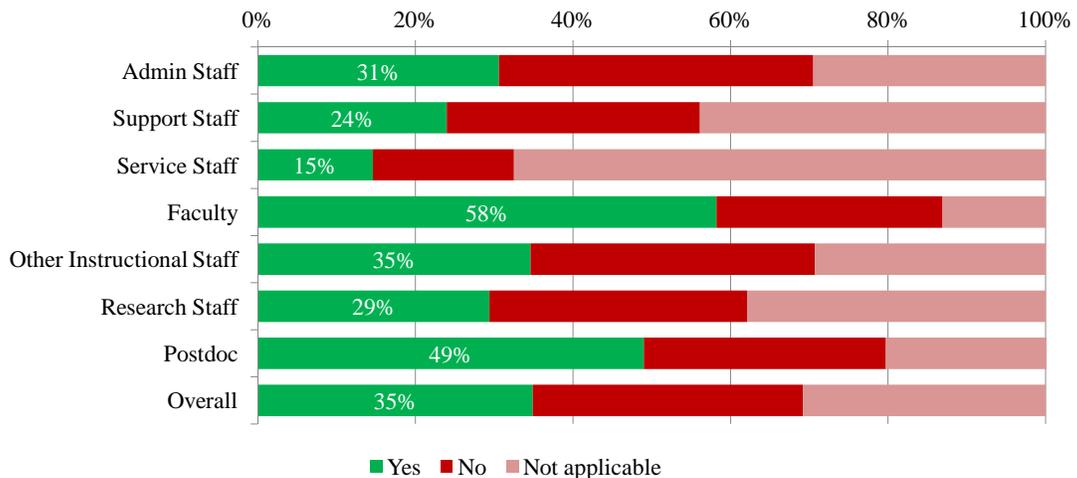
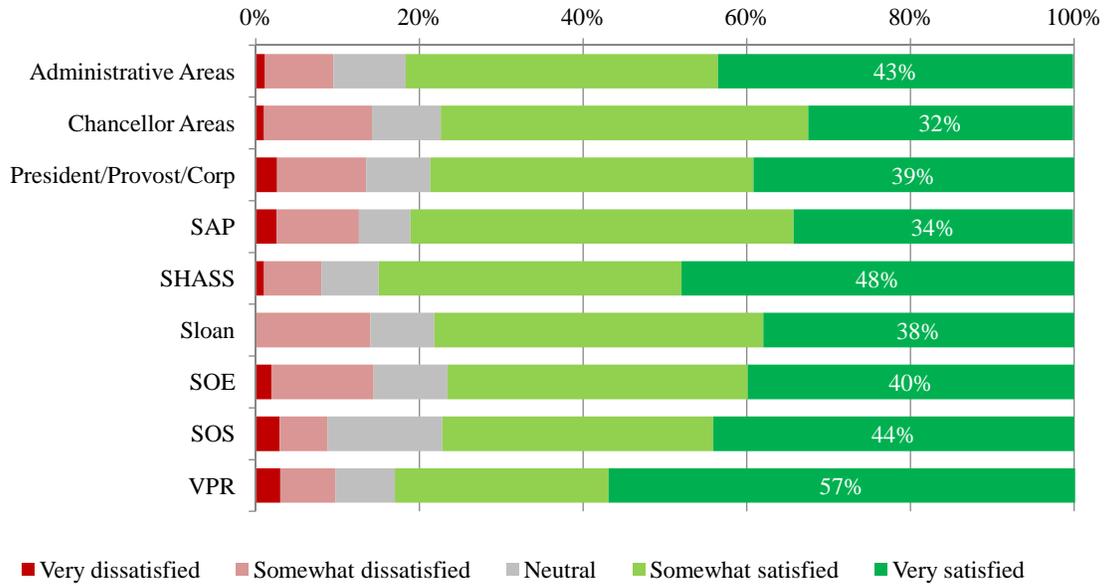


Figure A1: Heterogeneity Across Schools and Areas

**Ability to integrate the needs of work with those of your personal/family life**  
**Admin/Support Staff**



**Ability to integrate the needs of work with those of your personal/family life**  
**Faculty**

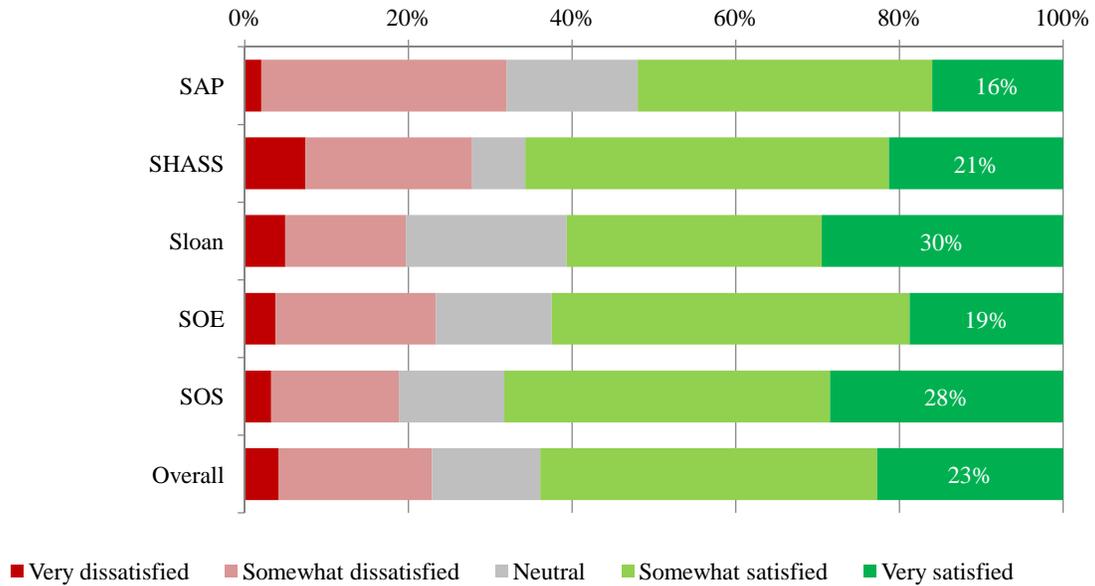


Figure A2: Heterogeneity Across Areas & Schools: Flexibility among Admin/Support Staff

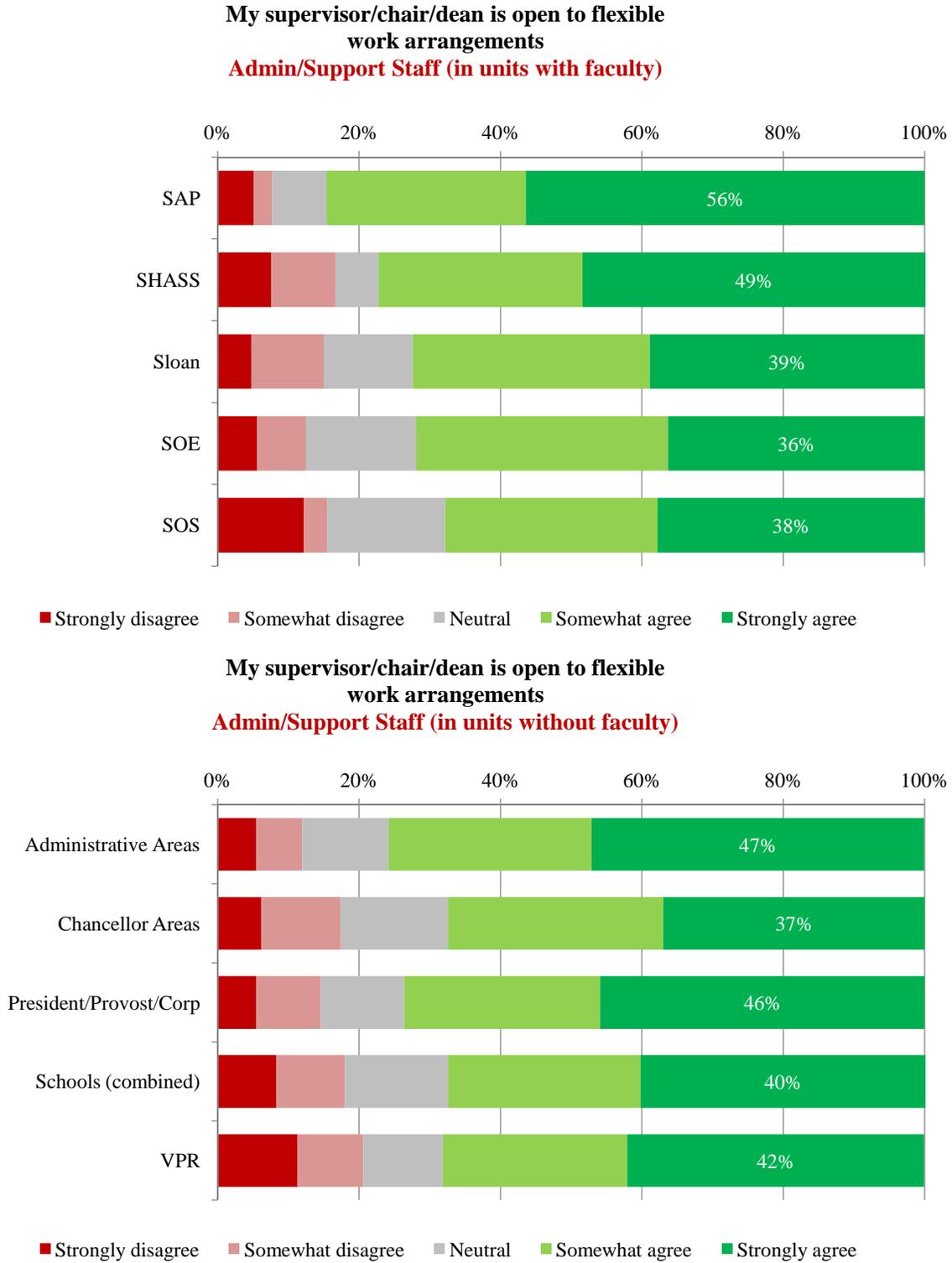
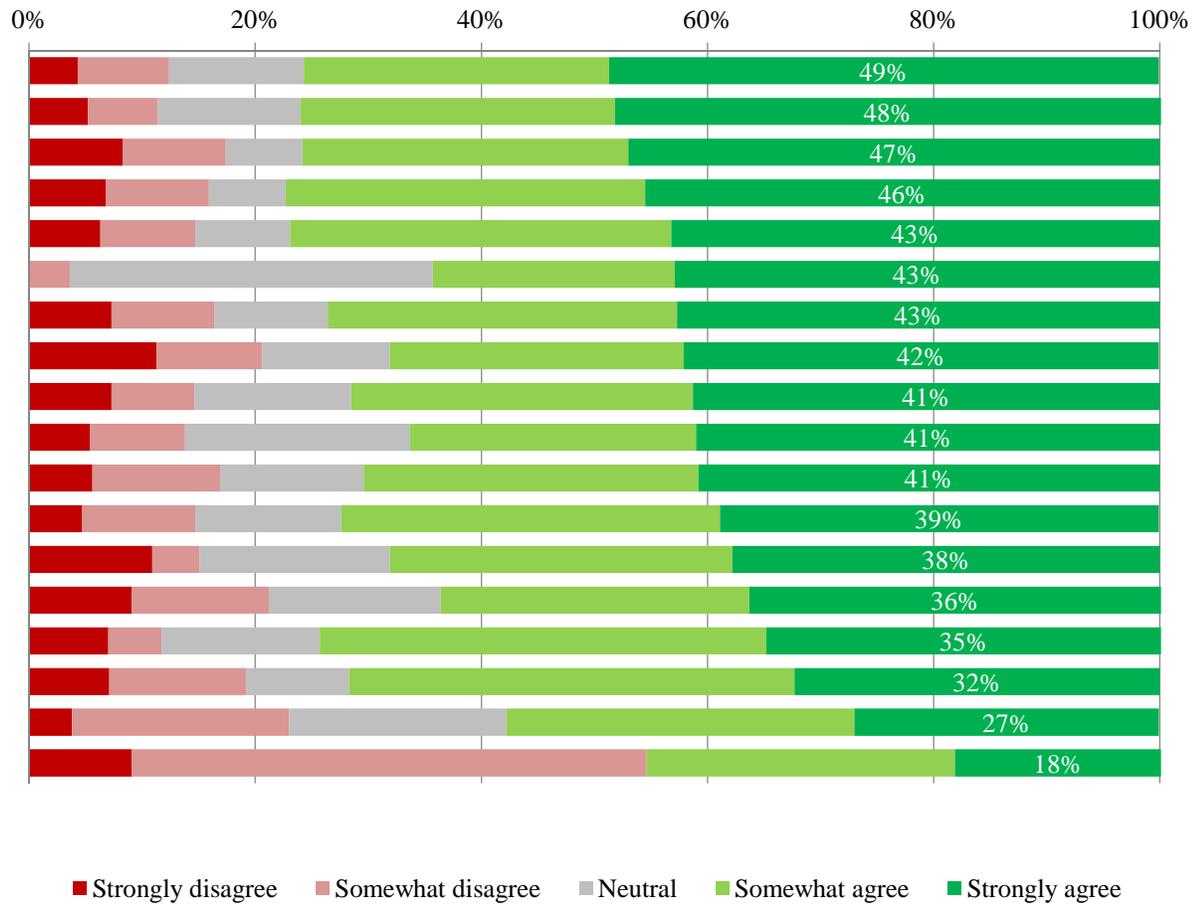


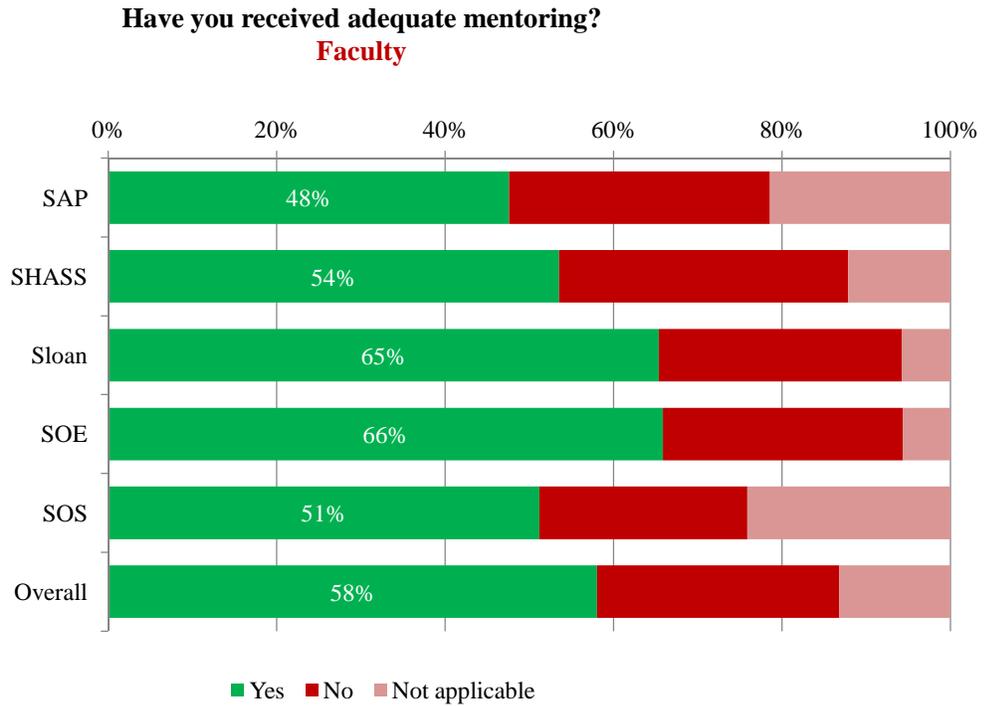
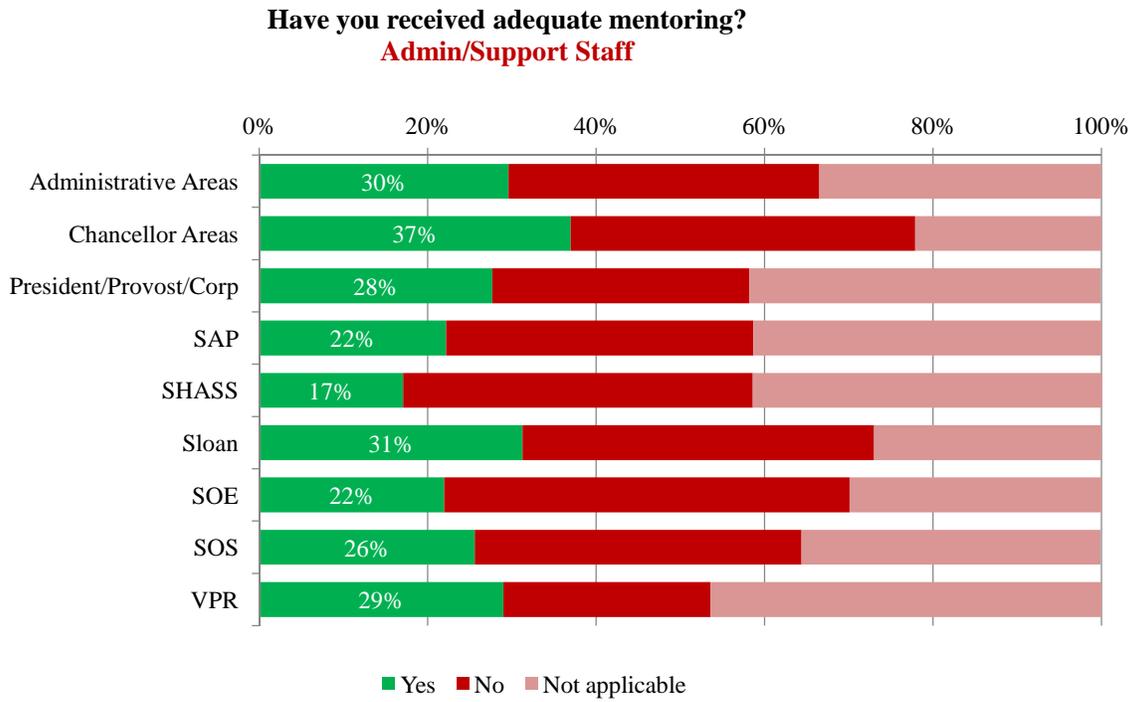
Figure A3: Heterogeneity Across Areas and Departments: Mentorship among Admin/Support Staff

**My supervisor/chair/dean is open to flexible work arrangements**  
**Admin/Support Staff**



Note: Areas or Departments with at least 10 responses.

Figure A4: Heterogeneity Across Areas & Schools: Mentorship among Admin/Support Staff



Appendix Table: Predictors of Ability to Integrate Needs of Work & Family  
(Estimates underly Figure 1)

**Dependent Variable:** Answered Somewhat or Very Satisfied to the question: Please indicate the degree to which you are satisfied with your ability to integrate the needs of your work with those of your personal/family life.

	Faculty		Campus Staff		Lincoln Lab	
	Coefficient	Std. Error	Coefficient	Std. Error	Coefficient	Std. Error
My supervisor/chair/dean is open to flexible work arrangements. (Somewhat or Strongly Agree)	0.158	0.060	0.166	0.017	0.142	0.025
While at MIT, do you feel as though you have received adequate mentoring? (Yes)	0.066	0.047	0.084	0.016	0.060	0.020
How many hours is your typical work week?	-0.006	0.002	-0.008	0.001	-0.011	0.001
I have colleagues in my DLC who are my personal friends. (Somewhat or Strongly Agree)	0.058	0.060	0.027	0.017	0.069	0.023
I have colleagues at MIT outside my DLC who are my personal friends. (Somewhat or Strongly Agree)	0.113	0.051	0.000	0.016	-0.015	0.021
MIT Medical (Have Used)	-0.036	0.056	-0.023	0.016	0.018	0.020
getfit@mit (Have Used)	-0.171	0.070	0.021	0.016	0.026	0.021
MIT Tuition Assistance Plan (Have Used)	0.117	0.064	0.016	0.017	0.005	0.021
Years at MIT (<7 years)	-0.060	0.055	-0.017	0.017	-0.001	0.021
Female	-0.024	0.055	-0.025	0.016	-0.025	0.023
Minority	-0.009	0.060	0.007	0.033	-0.064	0.251
White	.	.	0.004	0.026	-0.093	0.250
Spouse/Partner	-0.022	0.078	0.008	0.018	0.010	0.026
Children under 13 years of age	-0.046	0.052	-0.027	0.018	0.000	0.023
Children 13 years of age or older	0.017	0.060	0.066	0.018	0.026	0.022
Constant	0.813	0.166	0.965	0.054	1.195	0.258
Mean of Dependent Variable	0.639		0.782		0.840	
Observations	539		3941		1934	

*Notes:* Models estimated using data from the 2012 Quality of Life Surveys, Number of observations corresponds to the number of observations with non-missing values for the work flexibility question.