Faculty Personas
Participants

**COLLEGE**
Natural Science
Social Work
Arts & Letters
James Madison
Ag & Natural Resources

**TITLE**
Assistant Professor-Fixed Term (3)
Professor-Tenure System
Associate Professor-Tenure System (2)
Instructor-Fixed Term
Specialist-Advisor-Fixed Term
Specialist-Teacher-Fixed Term
Specialist-Curriculum Development-Continuing
Chairperson

Limitations

It should be noted that these personas are currently not representative of all faculty at MSU. As indicated by the chart to the left, a limited number of faculty were interviewed from a limited number of colleges.

The questions we asked revolved primarily around their experience teaching at MSU.

We recommend that these personas be used as a means to build empathy for faculty.
**Name:** John Truong  
**Department:** Social Work  
**Tenure:** Non-Tenure Track  
**Format:** Online

**Bio:** John teaches 2 online courses in Social Work. He would like more face-to-face communication, but doesn’t have time. He also would like more structured training for the LMS because he knows he isn’t using it efficiently. **He doesn’t know about many of the available resources and support** because he just never learned about them. He feels **frustrated** because he doesn’t know where to go for help. He knows making his course **accessible** is important to better provide opportunities for all students. John does find it useful to participate in the teaching retreat organized by his department every year.

**Quotes**

“What does a good online course look like?”

“I’m usually more attracted to discussions of issues that are very pertinent to life on campus.”

**Focus**

- **Teaching**
- **Research**
- **Exploring Cross-Curriculum**
- **Department Specific Ideas**

**Behavior**

**Faculty Communication:** Primarily communicate with other faculty online.  
**Student Communication:** Utilizes the LMS and Email.  
**Info Gathering:** Primarily searches the internet on their own to answer questions.

**Needs**

- **Face-to-face** interaction and more time to fit it in.  
- **Time** to explore ideas for teaching online and mandatory and/or structured training.  
- **Training and guidance** in how to use the LMS more efficiently/effectively.
Name: Professor Jane Simmons.
Department: Theater Tenure: Tenure Track Format: Hybrid

Bio: Jane is a tenured professor in theater and teaches hybrid courses. She is interested in trying new innovative methods for teaching and connecting with students, and she wants to explore what other universities and industry professionals are doing. She would like more opportunities for casual conversations with peers, but is very busy and doesn’t have time. She uses the LMS but is often frustrated with it because it doesn’t fully meet her needs. She doesn’t know about many of the available resources and support because the name has changed and she doesn’t know who to contact anymore. She is annoyed because she had a good contact in vuDAT, but that department and process changed. She doesn’t know much about accessibility and isn’t really concerned about it.

Focus

- Teaching
- Research
- Exploring Cross-Curriculum
- Department Specific Ideas

Quotes

"There is so much out there. We just need to do it. And be expected to do it. Curriculum is dynamic. So make it so.”

“No, I've not really utilized those resources. Because, again, they change and move, and I’m not sure where they are at any given point. There’s no one singular area that I can access materials.”

Behavior

Faculty Communication: Primarily communicate with other faculty via email.
Student Communication: Utilizes the LMS and face-to-face class sessions.
Info Gathering: Email university peers and industry professionals.

Needs

Face-to-face communication and casual conversations with peers.
Time to explore ideas in the industry.
Updated contacts and resources that are easy to find.
Support for new and innovative strategies.
**Name:** Professor Michael Davis  
**Department:** Chemistry  
**Tenure:** Tenure Track  
**Format:** Face-to-face

**Bio:** Michael is a tenured professor in chemistry and teaches face-to-face courses. He is interested in his research and department-specific teaching ideas. He likes talking to other faculty in his department to solve some of the problems he encounters when teaching, such as cheating. He would like more specific support from a teaching or technology specialist in his department. He feels that students aren’t motivated to succeed in his class, and this frustrates him with his teaching. He doesn’t know about some of the resources available to him because he is only interested in very specific teaching support and sometimes news about resources doesn’t make it past his filters.

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<tr>
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<th>Behavior</th>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td><strong>Faculty Communication:</strong> Primarily communicate with other faculty in their department in meetings and casual conversations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td><strong>Student Communication:</strong> Face-to-face in class and office hours and via email.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exploring Cross-Curriculum</td>
<td><strong>Info Gathering:</strong> Ask colleagues in their department and their local tech/teaching specialist.</td>
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<td><strong>Needs</strong></td>
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**Quotes**

“I don’t think students know how to learn until their Junior year.”

“Of course the point is, they didn’t really learn it. They memorized it. So we start with freshmen try and get them out of memorizing mode and some of them get to be good at it, others never get it. You run into them when they’re seniors and they’re still trying to memorize all the sentences so that they can spit them back out on a test. They’re usually not as successful as the students who learned how to learn things.”

**Needs**

**Support Engaging Students** - Ways to motivate and engage students.

**Department Focused** - Utilize relationships between faculty members in the same department, rather than those from outside.

**Mechanisms for creating a supportive learning environment** - discipline focused.
**Name:** Dean Hubert Kowalski  
**Department:** Mechanical Engineering  
**Tenure:** Tenure track  
**Format:** Face-to-face

**Bio:** Hubert is a leader in his department, and well as a program coordinator. His personal interests are in research, but he is also interested in teaching as a part of his role. He is focused on student success, and this helps drive their conversations with faculty in their program. One concern he has is that students don’t see connections between courses. He could use more support in his role as a leader, particularly with group dynamics and coordinating conversations with faculty. Sometimes something as simple as selecting a new textbook for a program can be a difficult challenge to coordinate between faculty.

### Focus

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### Behavior

**Faculty Communication:** Communicates with faculty from a variety of departments in face to face and online environments.  
**Student Communication:** Face-to-face in class and office hours and via email.  
**Info Gathering:** Ask other faculty members in the program in order to build a consensus.

### Quotes

“If you try to tell faculty how to teach, they are not gonna be happy about it. If you talk about outcomes and how we’re gonna assess those outcomes, they’re more willing to engage in those kinds of conversations, so from my perspective it was much more productive to talk about this is where we want to get.”

### Needs

**Program Management** - Ways to set objectives and connections across courses, for students and faculty.  
**Group Dynamics** - How to get buy-in from a diverse group of people.  
**Support from Leadership** - Needs to be visible and sustained.
**Name:** Bahar Ahmadi

**Department:** Linguistics  
**Tenure:** Non-tenure Track  
**Format:** Face to Face and Online

**Bio:** Bahar teaches an intro course in her program and also acts as teaching and technology support for other faculty in her department. She is passionate about teaching and interested in trying new things. She would like to see teaching incentivized more in her college, and more support from leadership for engaging with more advanced practices. She notices a consistent frustration among faculty that students don’t see connections between courses and would like the opportunity to address that.

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### Focus

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### Behavior

**Faculty Communication:** Communicates with faculty from a variety of departments face to face.

**Student Communication:** Face-to-face in class and office hours and via email and zoom.

**Info Gathering:** Will research outside of their unit and outside of university.

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### Quotes

“We were talking about ways to enhance expert thinking in our students.”

“What are the models that the sciences are using? What are the other lecture-based people, what are they doing?”

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### Needs

**Opportunities for Conversations** with faculty in their department and across the university, both face-to-face and/or online.

**Support** for teaching initiatives.

**Central Resources** that can be shared and applied to different settings.