It is important, therefore, to understand the key factors comprising engagement to gain insight into what signals vitality loss among mid- and late-career faculty loss, and transition. Faculty attrition greatly impacts the workplace environment. Faculty leave institutions for myriad reasons, but research shows that disengaged faculty are more likely to report feeling less satisfied with their jobs, less motivated to perform, and more likely to consider leaving the institution. As faculty progress through their career, events in an individual’s or institutional environment may disrupt one’s work life, prompting disengagement, vitality loss, and transition. It is important, therefore, to understand the key factors comprising engagement to gain insight into what signals vitality loss among mid- and late-career faculty and impact decision-making about retirement.

**Factors that May Impact Vitality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Forward Survey Item</th>
<th>Age 45-65</th>
<th>Age 65+</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Diff.</th>
<th>t-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied with ex-officio calendar</td>
<td>59.72</td>
<td>56.91</td>
<td>56.08</td>
<td>10.54</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Time Spent Teaching</td>
<td>18.95</td>
<td>22.22</td>
<td>21.52</td>
<td>20.06</td>
<td>6.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Time Spent Research</td>
<td>29.89</td>
<td>31.04</td>
<td>32.84</td>
<td>33.74</td>
<td>7.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Engagement</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>6.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Culture</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>7.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development and Advancement Opportunities</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with Colleagues</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>5.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vital Signs: Engagement among Faculty Considering Retirement**

**METHOD** Data analyzed were from administrations of the Faculty Forward Engagement Survey collected from 5,207 faculty at 26 US medical schools from 2011-2014. Analysis focused on full-time senior rank faculty (i.e., associate or full professor) who were 45-65 years of age or over age 65. Responses to survey items related to perceptions of work, collegiality, development, and workplace culture were categorized by age group and plans to retire and assessed for significant differences with ANOVA and post-hoc analyses. Survey items evaluated used a 5-point Likert scale (with 1 being the lowest). Survey respondents indicated their retirement plans with responses of “Yes, No, or I don’t know” to the question, “Do you plan to retire in the next 1-2 years?”. Comparisons illustrated here show differences between “No and I don’t know” categories for those age 45-65 and “No” and “Yes” categories for those over age 65 consistent with decision making at that career stage.

**FINDINGS** Among faculty age 45-65 who are unsure of their retirement plans vs. those who are not retiring; and those over 65 who are planning to retire vs. those who are not planning to retire, many differences among key factors contributing to engagement are observed. These differences may indicate a loss of vitality for these faculty. Faculty open-ended comments support these findings. Key conclusions include:

**Faculty age 45-65 who are unsure of their retirement plans reported less satisfaction with their:**
- Sense of autonomy and accomplishment
- Role clarity
- Pace of advancement and opportunities for development
- Quality of relationships with colleagues
- Appreciation by and respect from colleagues
- Sense of fit or belonging in the workplace
- Workplace culture’s ability to cultivate collegiality, innovation, and performance excellence
- Medical school as a place to work

**Faculty over the age of 65 who plan to retire reported less satisfaction with their:**
- Sense of accomplishment
- Role clarity
- Opportunities for development
- Quality of relationships with colleagues and respect for work-life balance
- Sense of fit or belonging in the workplace
- Workplace culture’s ability to cultivate collegiality and innovation
- Medical school as a place to work

**SIGNIFICANCE** Findings are consistent with Vigiano and Strobel’s 2009 description of loss of faculty vitality and the Career Management Life Cycle. In order to support the retention and engagement of talented senior faculty, institutional leaders should consider:

- The continued development of flexible work policies, specifically part-time and contract appointments. Alternatives to full-time appointments provide mechanisms for faculty considering retirement to introduce lifestyle balance, while focusing professional effort on mission activities that rejuvenate collegiality and vitality, such as teaching
- Faculty development opportunities that encourage career development planning earlier in the faculty lifecycle to prepare faculty for leadership roles or alternative opportunities for advancement and reinvention in later career stages
- Encourage department chairs and supervisors to observe warning signs of disengagement and begin conversations earlier about redefining roles to maximize vitality when transitions are being considered