

Minutes of the Human Resources and University Relations Committee
University of Kentucky Board of Trustees
Thursday, June 15, 2023

The Human Resources and University Relations (HRUR) Committee of the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees met on Thursday, June 15, 2023, in the Gatton Student Center, Harris Ballroom.

A. Call to Order

Sandy Shuffett, chair of the Human Resources and University Relations Committee, called the meeting to order at 1:45 p.m. and asked Paige Noland to report the attendance.

B. Roll Call

The following members of the Human Resources and University Relations Committee were in attendance: Cathy Black, Aaron Cramer, Brenda Gosney, Andrew Laws, David Melanson, Paula Pope and Sandy Shuffett.

C. Approval of Minutes

Chair Shuffett reported that the minutes of February 17, 2023, HRUR Committee meeting had been distributed and called for a motion to approve. Trustee Daniels moved approval of the minutes and Trustee Melanson seconded the motion. Hearing no discussion, Chair Shuffett called for a vote and the motion passed without dissent.

D. UKHC Engagement Survey Results

Chair Shuffett introduced Vice President for Human Resources and Chief Human Resources Officer Melissa Frederick.

Ms. Frederick explained the steps that were taken before the survey was administered. She stated the three things that were known prior to the results, "We knew that operations specific to staffing and safety were a concern for our employees. We knew that communication and trust would help us build better teamwork, again coming out of our survey results, and then as the rest of our society has struggled, we also struggle with employees' well-being and need for decompression."

Ms. Frederick shared that the university took an approach to create an organizational action plan to focus on these things and demonstrate to employees the attention being given to these concerns. Referral bonuses were created to improve staffing and recruitment, an investment into safety was made with increased security and the installation of panic buttons and increased and new systems of communication helped to provide frequent updates to employees about what was going on in UK HealthCare. Time was also spent creating a strategic plan for well-being.

Ms. Frederick discussed comments that were made by surveyed employees. “We see collaboration and commitment to patient care as well as caring for the people of Kentucky continued to be anchors for UK HealthCare and in our ability to help our healthcare workforce thrive.”

Ms. Frederick noted that the survey ran from April 11 to April 28 of 2023 and over 7,300 staff participated in the survey.

Ms. Frederick shared that the workforce score was slightly higher than in 2022 and the percentile rank has improved to be at the 63rd percentile for academic medicine and 50th percentile for healthcare overall, which was up from healthcare’s previous performance in the mid to high 40th percentile.

Ms. Frederick stated, “Strengths for us include time to care for our patients, the organization cares about employees’ safety which is extremely helpful knowing what we invested in terms of our organizational action plan, and growth opportunities.” UKHC has opportunities relating to communication and compliance reporting.

Ms. Frederick explained that UKHC has had significant improvement in resources, teamwork, pride and reputation. There has also been significant improvement in decompression in comparison to other academic healthcare as well as the national healthcare industry.

Ms. Frederick focused on the changes in survey results since 2012. She explained that you can clearly see the impact of the pandemic but that if you focus on the trend line UKHC is outperforming the industry and improving overall.

Ms. Frederick outlined the six items that build the survey engagement score.

- I would recommend this organization as a good place to work.
- I am proud to tell people I work for this organization.
- I would recommend this organization to family and friends who need care.
- I would stay with this organization if offered a similar position elsewhere.
- I would like to be working at this organization three years from now.
- Overall, I am a satisfied employee.

Ms. Frederick explained that the survey looked at engagement scores by position level. She stated “When you look at that we know that our Registered Nurse (RN) score has increased but it is still below the national average which is 3.87. We know that we are moving in the right direction, but we have to continue to push and work on this. Regarding this score we also were pleased to see that the clinical professionals are closer to the national average of 3.98 but we saw a slight decline over this past year.”

Ms. Frederick shared how the data would be analyzed and used moving forward and pointed out areas for improvement.

- How this organization provides high-quality care and service.
- Feeling a sense of community.

- The organization’s communication makes me identify with it or feel a vital part of it.

Ms. Frederick continued her report by pointing out performance high-impact items such as:

- This organization makes every effort to deliver safe, error-free, care.
- Treats employees with respect.
- Ethically conducts business.

She stated that the main themes come down to communication, high-quality care and valuing UK’s employees.

Ms. Frederick described how the university compares to others in the national healthcare industry. “You can see that these areas scored very high within our staff survey, and it speaks to the ease and efficiency of our electronic medical record (EMR) having time to care for patients as well as feeling like their units are adequately staffed, not losing sleep over work issues and providing career development.”

Ms. Frederick reported that the topic of diversity and equity was important and had the greatest correlation to engagement and is within the university’s strategic plan. “While we have held our own against fiscal year 22, we need to continue to focus on these scores.”

Ms. Frederick shifted focus to the provider survey outcomes, adding that resilience for care providers is important. The results were in the 22nd percentile last year and increased to the 49th percentile. “It is important to note that our Advance Provider Resilience (APP) group especially has helped to drive a good portion of this positive change.”

Ms. Frederick explained how they examined the historic trends for engagement with UK HealthCare and the national academic physician average. “There were slight dips in 2016 and 2022 but the university is now back on a positive track.” She stated that the university is rising while other organizations have been struggling.

Ms. Frederick explained, “The greatest improvements have a lot of overlap in terms of the EMR efficiency and work-life balance, but it was rewarding to see the focus on patient experience.”

Ms. Frederick introduced the workforce advisor for Press Ganey Amanda Wait to discuss recommendations on system-wide approaches as well as the university environment.

Ms. Wait explained that she created a recommendation of three system-wide approaches that would have the most impact across all areas within the healthcare system. “The first is RN and physician communication and teamwork. We see that

providing high-quality care and service as well as safe care is incredibly critical to both sets of data.”

Ms. Wait shared that while there had been an improvement in supporting decompression for staff and providers, there was still room for improvement with the score being below 4.0. She also recommended that being able to speak freely without concerns be an area of focus.

Ms. Wait described national trends specifically related to engagement and retention. “Leader retention is currently at an all-time low. When we look back at 2019, we have consistent declines coming in for senior management as well as management.” She explained that the largest declines could be seen between the calendar year 2021 and 2022.

Ms. Wait stated, “When we take a look at UK specific data related to this intent to stay, we see that it aligns very similarly with what we have as part of our national data set. RNs had the strongest percent unfavorable at 15, so based on that 30 metric we can expect to see about five percent of your RNs leave the organization within the next year.”

Ms. Wait shared that when looking at engagement and resilience as well as retention, there is a lot of overlap. In caregiver-specific results, the overlap is seen in high-quality care and service, diversity and equity, commitment to safety, respect and job fit. “We have highlighted the respect item because it is something that when we look at our top decile organizations, those that have the strongest engagement, as well as retention, those are the things that they are doing very well. Their employees are consistently giving favorable responses to those questions, and they are consistently mentioning them in the comments as one of the reasons why they stay.”

Ms. Wait continued, “The correlations between engagement and retention are even higher when we look at our physician data set. Ninety percent overlap between the top 10 key drivers when we look at what is driving physicians to want to engage with an organization and stay with it for the long haul.”

Ms. Wait shifted focus to explain strategies for what they know works to continue to bolster retention. Authentic listening, one-on-one check-ins with leaders, psychological safety and paying adequate attention to the onboarding experience are all suggestions that have proven successful. “When we are thinking about those first impressions, if you will, first few critical months, making sure that we are connecting with all of the people who are part of the care team on a regular basis, understanding any challenges that they are having, being able to address and move through those with a closed-loop feedback system will be critical to helping to reduce turnover.”

Ms. Wait explained, “Training and development is also very critical, it is a piece that we see our top decile organizations excelling and doing well at. Making sure that we are creating career paths, whether that is a ladder or a lattice, and that we are communicating it internally to be able to retain the employees that we want. And last on

the list, but certainly not least, is making sure that we are having a strong diversity and equity program and that we are being very inclusive of all our team members.”

Ms. Wait concluded the presentation.

Chair Shuffett thanked the presenters and opened the floor for questions.

Trustee Gosney asked for insight as to why the survey showed that respondents felt like they had time to care for their patients but also felt that they were understaffed. Ms. Wait explained that although staffing as a mean score was low, it had a very high improvement as well in comparison to the national benchmark and that staffing is something that is doing well at UK.

Trustee Swanson asked if there is a specific career stage at which people are more vulnerable to being at risk for retention. Ms. Wait stated that within the tenure of an employee, there are different periods when retention is more at risk and the three-to-five-year range is when it drops to the lowest engagement. From six years on it starts going back up.

Trustee Swanson asked if this trend was due to career development opportunities. Ms. Wait explained that there are a variety of reasons, but career development opportunities can be one of them. She stated that around that time people are likely in a different role or looking to be in a different role and have been around through multiple leadership changes, which can all affect this.

Trustee Melanson asked when the survey took place, what things were being put in place to recognize, train and add inclusion pieces to what we do, and how we are looking to expand those. Ms. Frederick stated that the survey took place April 11 through April 28, 2023, and explained that the university is focusing on the right fit by not only considering an employee’s experience but also spending time with them and making sure they have the resources they need. She stated that UKHC has partnered with Chief Diversity Officer at UKHC Tukea Talbert to bring diversity into the organization. Lastly, she explained the new referral bonus program so that employees can participate in bringing people into the university and be financially rewarded.

Chair Shuffett commented that she would like to see a deeper dive into physician satisfaction, even from department to department, related to academic time and how that compares to other universities like Harvard. Ms. Wait explained that they do have the ability to look into these topics but the time allotment for the presentation did not allow them to provide more details.

Chair Shuffett also commented that it seems like the people who make decisions are the happiest and that allowing employees to have more input on decisions would give the other groups of people more of a sense of purpose.

Chair Shuffett asked for clarification between a clinical professional and a non-clinical professional. Ms. Wait explained that clinical professionals are people like speech pathologists and respiratory therapists whereas non-clinical professionals are those working in administrative support roles, executive administrators, finance, human resources, etc.

Chair Shuffett suggested that the survey ask if an employee would take a new job if they were offered a job across town and there was not a non-compete clause.

Chair Shuffett thanked the presenters. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Paige Noland