

Minutes of the Human Resources and University Relations Committee
University of Kentucky Board of Trustees
Friday, February 18, 2022

The Human Resources and University Relations Committee of the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees met on Friday, February 18, 2022, 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 8:30 a.m. and asked Katie Hardwick to report the attendance.

B. Roll Call

The following members of the Human Resources and University Relations Committee were in attendance: Michael Christian, David Melanson, Paula Pope, Sandy Shuffett and Bryan Sunderland. Cathy A. Black and Lee X. Blonder attended the meeting via Zoom.

Other Board members present included: Joe R. Bowen, Britt Brockman, Ray Daniels, Michael Hawse, Kim McCann, Elizabeth McCoy, Derrick Ramsey, Hollie Swanson and Rachel Watts Webb.

C. Approval of Minutes

Chair Shuffett reported that the minutes of the December 14, 2021, HRUR Committee meeting had been distributed and called for a motion to approve. Trustee Melanson moved approval of the minutes and Trustee Blonder seconded the motion. Hearing no discussion, Chair Shuffett called for a vote and the motion passed without dissent.

D. UK@Work Engagement Survey

Chair Shuffett introduced Employee Engagement and Work-life Director Ericka Chambers.

Dr. Chambers provided background and context for the biennial survey, which has been administered since 2005 and surveys campus faculty and staff. "In 2015, Human Resources (HR) began working with an external firm, Willis Towers Watson, to create a more robust survey tool that would also allow us to benchmark against other higher-ed institutions." Dr. Chambers continued by describing the conversations she has had with the deans, vice presidents, and other UK leaders over the past several months sharing the results that are specific to their college or division. "Those results look different unit by unit, but a consistent theme I heard through each of those conversations is: how do we best support and take care of our people?"

Dr. Chambers continued by reporting the 62-item survey was administered in September 2021 with an overall response rate of 62% and provided context for the timing of the survey. “It was the start of the fall 2021 semester, many of our staff had returned to in-person work after a year plus of working remotely, and many health and safety measures were being reinstated to protect our campus against the Delta variant.”

Dr. Chambers explained, “Even with all of those things going on, we had more employees participate in the survey this year than on any of the past UK@Work surveys over the past 6 years, with 53% of our faculty and 65% of our staff responding.” She noted the survey refers to our campus faculty and staff and that UK HealthCare employees participate in a separate survey each year.

Dr. Chambers highlighted faculty score increases in three categories which included communication, operating effectively and performance evaluations. Staff scores increased in four categories including communication, operating effectively, performance evaluations and working relationships.

Dr. Chambers explained, “We are looking for scores that are at least 70% favorable and above, as that will indicate whether a score tends to be a strength.” She noted that six category scores were above 70% and a few of those were between 78% and 81% favorable. She provided the historical data for the years 2019, 2017 and 2015 and brought attention to any statistically significant changes. Dr. Chambers also highlighted the well-being category as it was added to the 2021 survey and has no historical data.

Dr. Chambers provided data on how the university compares to other universities that participate in similar surveys. She stated, “We see perceptions of physical work environments, how the university is regarded by employees and encouraging more open discussion of differing opinions among those where perceptions are not as favorable as they are in other universities. Switching to scores that are above the university’s norm, perceptions of leadership contact and decision-making are among the items well above.”

Dr. Chambers noted that the university’s score for the question ‘From what I hear, our benefits are as good as or better than the benefits in similar institutions,’ was significantly above the average score in other universities by 18%. “This is consistent with the recognition UK has received for several, consecutive years from the Great Colleges to Work For program, and our employees viewing their benefits much more favorably than employees at other institutions.”

Dr. Chambers shifted from the results of the university overall to faculty and staff overall scores, reporting how each group separately contributes to the UK overall scores and where progress has been made since 2019.

“Across faculty, we see a slight, non-significant decline in scores across eight categories with two categories – career development and empowerment – each showing a four-percentage point and statistically significant decline.” Dr. Chambers explained that

faculty scores increased in three categories including communication, operating effectively and performance evaluations.

“Across staff, we see an increase in four categories with perceptions about performance evaluation significantly increasing by three points. We also see a decline in nine categories with seven of those being statistically significant.”

Dr. Chambers continued by looking at the least improved faculty scores. “We see fewer faculty agreeing the university is doing a good job retaining employees, perceptions about enough staffing in their department and more concerns about stress.” In the case of increasing scores, “We see more faculty agreeing that decisions at UK are made in a timely manner and that UK does an excellent job of keeping employees informed about matters affecting them.”

Dr. Chambers explained that there were similarities between faculty and staff scores surrounding themes of retention and stress, “With fewer staff agreeing the University is doing a good job retaining employees, fewer staff feeling like they have the energy they need to get through the workday, and more staff saying they may, or they are seriously considering leaving the university.” She described the most improved areas in staff scores, “We see an increase in two items related to the respect shown towards employees. And, similar to faculty, we also see more staff agreeing that decisions at UK are made in a timely manner and that UK does an excellent job of keeping employees informed about matters affecting them.”

Dr. Chambers shifted the conversation to focus on different demographics and the trends found within those. She began with the age demographic and explained that there was not much variance in scores. “However, we see those aged 35-44 with the least favorable category scores – with significantly lower differences in the categories of Stress, Balance and Workload; Career Development and Intention to Leave the University.” The most favorable scores were found in those aged 55 and up, with significantly more favorable scores in Stress, Balance and Workload, Career Development and Well-Being.

Dr. Chambers noted that although there was not much variance in the scores, there was one item where variance could be seen. “For career development, staff aged 25-34 are least likely to agree that they have a reasonably good idea of their possible career path at UK. This changes, though, and respondents are more likely to agree with this statement as they get older.” She explained, “We also see some generational differences with perceptions or experiences of stress, with younger employees more likely to say stress levels are reducing their effectiveness.”

Dr. Chambers discussed trends in responses when looking at length of service. “We see the highest scores from those who have worked at UK for one year or less, with many of these scores remaining strong through year five.” She explained that scores declined between five and ten years but go up at twenty or more years. She noted an encouraging result that employees with less than one year of service, hired during the

pandemic without typical onboarding and while doing most things via Zoom, had positive scores.

Dr. Chambers shifted the discussion to how employees' perceptions differ across race and ethnicity. "As we look within each category and across racial and ethnic groups, we see the range between the highest and lowest scores is anywhere from four to 29 percentage points different."

"The largest range at 29 percentage points is the Communication category. It is important to keep in mind the response size for each of these groups, but we see 51% of multi-race employees responding favorably for items in this category – significantly below the overall scores -- while 80% of Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander employees responded favorably." Dr. Chambers explained the smallest range is within the University Culture and that there are non-significant differences across all racial and ethnic groups, in this category.

Dr. Chambers noted that there were very few differences when breaking down scores between female and male employees. "While there are very few significant differences between these groups, we see that female employees are significantly more favorable in both the Pay and Benefits and Retention categories." This trend held true in both the 2019 and 2021 surveys.

Dr. Chambers pivoted to look at employees as parents and caregivers. She first discussed parents who had children under the age of 18 living in their home, "These scores are tightly clustered across all categories with those who have children at home responding more favorably across most categories."

Dr. Chambers continued by looking at the results of caregivers. "Those with eldercare responsibilities are less favorable in every category – with several significantly less favorable – than those without eldercare responsibilities. Looking at that retention item, specifically, we see 59% of caregivers intend to stay at the university compared to 66% of those without eldercare responsibilities."

Dr. Chambers highlighted results pertaining to employee engagement. She explained that 36% of respondents reported that they are highly engaged and committed to UK and UK's mission, while 26% were reported to be disengaged and felt unsupported in being able to do their best work. The disengaged group of employees is where we have the most opportunity to make a difference.

Dr. Chambers explained, "What I appreciate about having these insights is seeing how faculty engagement is not singularly influenced by their experience of the larger university, rather several of these items demonstrate the importance of college and department-level decisions and interactions as well as the connection with colleagues."

Dr. Chambers stated, "For staff, specifically, though we see the importance of feeling a sense of community at UK, having a schedule that also allows them to meet

their personal and family needs, and perceptions of equity – both in opportunities available to them and how the workload is distributed across the team.”

In closing, Dr. Chambers stated, “What I have presented today is an institutional level summary of results. In an effort towards the strategic plan principle of trust, transparency and accountability, our deans, academic leaders and vice presidents are currently in the process of reviewing their results and, if they have not already, will soon begin sharing those results with their respective units. I will be spending a lot of my time working with these leaders over the next year to better understand what is driving their results and support their action planning efforts.

Chair Shuffett opened the floor for questions. Trustee Blonder asked how much of a role work flexibility and the ability to work from home play in these results, and do we have easy processes for people to get approved to work from home. Dr. Chambers explained that younger employees are more likely to disagree that they have sufficient flexibility than older employees. She also described the process for attaining a flexible and/or work-from-home schedule.

Chair Shuffett asked if there was any data to differentiate between employees who work remotely, in-person or hybrid. Dr. Chambers stated that they have begun to look at this data, but there needs to be more information before making conclusions.

Trustee Melanson asked for some of the efforts that are underway for pay and benefits, career development and retention, to be shared. Ms. Gina Dugas explained that there are workgroups focused on work and the specific opportunities at UK to better efforts around recruitment, hiring and retention.

Trustee Swanson asked how we begin to resolve issues surrounding generational differences and attitudes to work expectations, as they seem to be worsening. Dr. Chambers explained that there is a lot of opportunity to rethink and continually question how things are done and if there is opportunity for improvement.

Trustee Black asked what incentives are in place to engage employees, and what new incentives are going to be implemented. Dr. Chambers stated that the first focus is on working relationships and how the supervisor and employee work together.

Chair Shuffett suggested defining the parent and caregiver roles further to see how responses differ in people with younger or older children or elders in assisted living versus in-home care.

Dr. Monday discussed the needs as it relates to our human capital on both the staff and faculty sides. He explained that our number one focus is on retention and discussed the collaborative efforts being made that focus on pay and work location. Dr. Monday continued by explaining that the HR team will be focusing more on individual units to adapt plans that work for their individual needs.

Trustee Blonder followed up by discussing resources that are available at the university to help staff and faculty with eldercare.

Chair Shuffett thanked Dr. Chambers and Dr. Monday. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:07 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Paige Noland