Learning Framework
Competencies in Action

Developing competence takes time and doesn’t have to be complicated. In the following pages, each CUPA-HR Learning Framework competency has been briefly described using examples of a task or a behavior. With each competency explanation, several additional resources are suggested to assist you with further exploration.
Framework Area: Core

Budget and Finance

Example: HR-to-Staff Ratios

Does your institution have an appropriate number of HR staff? One way to assess this is to benchmark the number of HR staff at your institution with the number at similar institutions. CUPA-HR’s HR benchmarking statistics include an HR staff/all staff ratio. What is your institution’s HR staff/all staff ratio? How does it compare with those of other institutions?

Explore HR Benchmarking Stats for these ratios and more.

The ratio may be large or small for a variety of reasons:

- A large HR-staff-to-employee ratio for a small institution could mean it takes fewer HR employees to deliver core HR services, such as recruiting, payroll, benefits, training and employee relations.
- A smaller ratio at a large institution could provide more flexibility to assist an HR group experiencing a high volume of work during a peak time. Large institutions may also have more specialty HR roles to streamline services and allow for greater efficiency.
- The ratio may be dictated by the allotted headcount budget for the HR department.
- Some HR functions may be outsourced, resulting in less HR staff on campus, thereby altering the HR-to-staff ratio.

Example: Budget Planning

Every HR department strives to maintain competitive compensation through effective budgeting for future salary changes. HR professionals are uniquely positioned to impact these decisions through sound, data-driven decision-making. Using the most up-to-date, high-quality data available is a great first step. A better strategy is to incorporate historical trend data in projections rather than relying on others’ target projections. The best strategies use quality data, trend projections and precision analysis to move from data-informed to data-driven decision-making about overall pay increases as well as targeted equity adjustments.

What are you doing to incorporate quality data into your salary projections? Are you using CUPA-HR DataOnDemand? Have you checked out CUPA-HR’s free research publication, Better Ways to Plan Your Budget Using CUPA-HR Data?
Don’t forget to check out the Knowledge Center’s Compensation Programs/Plans Toolkit. Past CUPA-HR research reports can be found there, too.

**HR Data, Systems and Analytics**

Competency in HR Data and Analytics consists of:

- Understanding, framing and prioritizing the strategic questions/problems that exist for the institution/department.
- Identifying which data sources are needed to address these questions.
- The ability to select, sort and analyze data for the purpose of addressing strategic questions.
- The ability to summarize and visualize data to communicate information and solutions to stakeholders.
- Identifying which vendors/platforms facilitate any of the above.
- Procuring the right resources and talent for all the above and deciding which should be insourced and which should be outsourced.

**Benefits**

In the U.S., institutions must provide their employees with certain benefits:

- Social Security
- Medicare
- Workers’ compensation
- Unemployment compensation
- COBRA
- Family and medical leave

Additionally, most institutions offer benefits for paid time off, insurance (health, life, disability) and retirement plans. Along with these benefits, and in order to stay competitive and offer new and existing employees a greater sense of job satisfaction, discretionary or optional benefits can be offered. Examples include education assistance, employee assistance programs, flexible spending accounts, work/life benefits, childcare and telecommuting.

**Example Summaries:**

- Benefits in Brief — under Benefits at a Glance (Central Michigan University)
- Benefits in Brief (The University of Texas at San Antonio)

CUPA-HR collects data on healthcare benefits, paid time off, tuition reimbursement and retirement. Find out more about this collection and the data.

**Compensation**

Compensation can include three factors: base pay (salary or hourly pay); incentives (pay-for-performance); and differentials (unique pay related to time, location or conditions worked). Differentials are often based on industry-specific conventions and allow institutions to make good pay decisions while staying competitive with other institutions. When institutions want to stay competitive with base pay, they often look to creating a methodology that places them either as the market’s lead, market’s lag or pay in between (market rate).
Benchmarking salaries against your institution’s peers is essential for talent recruitment and retention. When choosing a source for your benchmarking needs, attend to the relative importance of the following factors:

- Your source should use **current data**. Trying to estimate salary increases from years-old data means that you are missing important economic changes or market trends that may disparately affect different staff positions or faculty disciplines.

- Your source should allow for easy **peer comparisons**. It should be one in which your peer or aspirant institutions participate, and it should allow for specific comparisons by state or region, Carnegie classification and affiliation at a minimum. Maximally, it should allow for any peer comparisons you desire.

- The source you use should have a **solid reputation** for research in higher ed. The source should have noted longevity in the field and demonstrated data reliability.

- Your source should maintain **data anonymity** at both the institutional and employee level. Sources that report institution names along with salaries may be biased toward reporting higher salaries. In other words, if an institution pays lower salaries or has offered comparatively lower raises in the past year, it may be less likely to report data knowing that its reputation may be affected. A data source that maintains data confidentiality is likely to have more representative data.

- Your source should provide more than basic salary comparisons. If your institution wants to remain competitive and risk averse in its diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, it’s important to use a source that collects and reports on salary information using key **demographic variables** like race/ethnicity, sex, age and years in position.

CUPA-HR research, a superior benchmarking standard, is released for benchmarking every year in February, within a few weeks of the close of data collection. Because CUPA-HR surveys prioritize data confidentiality, they have a high participation rate of higher ed institutions that are representative of Carnegie classification, affiliation (public, private independent, private religious), region and size. CUPA-HR also institutes many validity and error checks on its data, so you know that CUPA-HR salary data is the most representative, reliable and valid available.

The additional data CUPA-HR collects on demographic and other key variables makes these surveys the most comprehensive data resource available for higher ed benchmarking. And DataOnDemand gives you an easy way to benchmark all this data against peers that you choose. Learn more.

Other factors to consider while dealing with compensation on campus:

- Focus on pay equity and determining how to construct a compensation strategy that allows the organization to attract top talent while maintaining compliance with state and federal laws.

- The influences that drive compensation decisions: retention; attracting key talent; performance-based culture; and advancement opportunities. Analyze succession planning efforts, pending retirements, pay structure.

- **Bottom line**: How are you keeping your compensation structure fair and the practices in sync with the local, regional or national market?
Recruitment

Recruitment is an essential process for any institution. It’s more than a process to fill a position. It’s about assessing what needs to get done and who will best fulfill that role. It’s about knowing your institution and determining the best fit for it now and in the future. How is finding top talent identified in the institution’s and team’s strategic priorities? As institutional needs change, so should the approach and process to filling a position. It’s about knowing how far the institution is willing and able to go to obtain the right talent. It’s about knowing what others are doing to obtain talent and surveying what is happening to make the best recruiting decisions possible. What types of recruitment methods are used, and how do you ensure the outreach is wide enough and inclusive enough?

OTHER RESOURCES
- LinkedIn’s Ultimate Recruiting Toolkit
- Inside Higher Ed’s Recruiting Tips
- CUPA-HR’s Building a Successful, More Inclusive Search

Employee/Labor Relations

In the broadest of terms, employee relations is a function of HR that oversees the relationship an employee has with the employer. Employee relations refers to the ongoing efforts to ensure productivity — in accomplishing work and sustaining relationships — and a mutually respectful environment. Processes and functions may include the employee handbook, employee feedback, performance practices (management, evaluation, improvement), investigations, discipline, dispute resolution, termination, training, union regulations and the like.

OTHER RESOURCES
- Sample Letters to Employees (University of California, Davis)
- Sample site: University of California, Merced
- CUPA-HR Employee Relations Toolkit (CUPA-HR credentials required to access this resource)

Employee Development

The CUPA-HR Learning Framework is a great place to start when thinking about employee career-development goals. The framework is designed as a guide to HR skills and competencies in higher education. It can help set a clear vision for professional goals by identifying existing competency strengths, gaps in skill development and skills needed to climb that next career step. Employee development should consider development resources as well as key individuals to help achieve development aspirations. In addition, it will be important to create a plan for achieving goals, establishing ways to nurture development and identifying others with whom to regularly discuss progress and barriers.

OTHER RESOURCES
- The CUPA-HR Learning Framework site identifies the key higher ed HR competencies and features resources for using the framework.
- CUPA-HR has training resources in several Knowledge Center toolkits that can assist with professional development goals. Look for Staff Training, Management Training, Onboarding/Orientation and others.
Professional Development Courses (University of Michigan Human Resources)
Career Development Guidelines (Cornell University)

Risk Management, Compliance and Public Policy
It is crucial to know the current public policy issues impacting higher ed HR, as well as anticipated future issues that could have an impact. A key aspect of the HR role on campus is understanding these issues and how to assist with any required compliance for your institution. Your campus leadership or government affairs staff are likely not paying close attention to many labor public policy issues. They are often more focused on funding and Department of Education activities. So, HR can play a very important role in education and compliance in labor policy by being aware of the issues that impact your institution, what that impact will look like, and when it is important to sound the alarm and assist in compliance and advocacy efforts, if applicable.

OTHER RESOURCES
- CUPA-HR advocacy site with legislative and regulatory news along with advocacy letters, briefs and testimony
- Regulatory Agenda lists the rulemakings in the works and the schedule for completion (you can search by agency)
- Higher Education Compliance Alliance — centralized repository of information and resources for compliance with federal laws and regulations
- Sample Compliance Website (University of California, Berkeley)

Organizational Development and Planning
Organizational development is a planned effort for increasing organizational effectiveness. This is done by a working group, which is managed by select leadership and supported by all staff. The efforts made through planned changes in process and systems will aid in improving teams and the overall institution.

Organizational development and planning involve assessing, researching, designing and evaluating team and institution efforts related to strategic planning, organizational assessments, change management, competency development, team development and performance improvement (team and institution).

OTHER RESOURCES
- The CUPA-HR Learning Framework
- Organizational Development Services (Vanderbilt University)
- Consulting and Organization Development (Duke University)

Project Management
The practice of project management is to apply knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to a project in order to meet project requirements. Managing a project can be viewed as a cyclical process that includes initiating, planning, executing, monitoring, controlling and closing. Each part of the process includes several areas such as integration, scope, time, cost, quality, procurement, human resources, communications, risk management and stakeholder
management. All in all, managing a project brings together a unique focus that is shaped by goals, resources and a schedule. (Definition per the Project Management Institute.)

But what is a project? The Project Management Institute defines a project as, “(A) temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service or result.” A project is temporary in that it has a defined beginning and end, and therefore a defined scope and resources. A project is unique in that it is not a routine operation, but rather a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal.

Increasingly in higher ed HR, the work that we do is project-based. Below are examples from several different functional areas:

- **Implementing a new applicant tracking system:** This is a classic example, and when you ask around campus about who manages projects, one of the first answers you will hear is IT. And that makes sense, right? But even for HR, think about when you’re implementing a new HRIS or ATS; these vendors have project management built into the process. We should not only support that approach with our partners across campus, but also learn from and adapt it to the processes and expertise our system providers have to offer.

- **Open enrollment:** Think about what you do to prepare employees for open enrollment. You’re working to a hard deadline (the date enrollment opens and benefits information has to be updated and communicated, systems or forms set up and tested) in order to get employees to work to a hard deadline (the enrollment period when they have action items that lead to an outcome, such as signing up for benefits).

- **Formulating and implementing policy:** This typically involves a group or committee of people weighing in, defining the problem the policy is meant to address, gaining perspectives, drafting, soliciting feedback, proposing and implementing it.

- **Recruitment:** Consider each requisition as a project. If the department can’t answer questions about when they need the person to start in order to work backwards on a timeline and milestones and deliverables, they’re not ready to post the position or start worrying about who will be on the search committee.

- **Training and development:** Nearly every learning professional is a project manager or at least part of a project team just by the nature of designing, developing, delivering and assessing training and resources.

**OTHER RESOURCES**
- Project Management Office (University of New Hampshire)
Framework Area: Engagement

Relationship Management

How many of us can say we work and contribute effectively in our own bubble with no interaction, collaboration or other personal dealings? We are HR professionals — what we do inherently involves relationships with others. How do we foster impactful contributions and grow through these relationships? And what are our actions saying about our relationships? The work to nurture relationships takes time and a lot of effort. However, the rewards are greater collaboration, creativity, mutual support and respect, and the ability to accomplish great things together, to name a few.

What are some of the ways you’re building stronger relationships with everyone on the team and with other campus colleagues?

OTHER RESOURCES

- Developing Leadership Competencies in Higher Ed (CUPA-HR Essentials Video)
- What Makes a Successful Leader in a Changing Higher Ed Landscape?
- Knowledge Center toolkits related to Leadership and Strategy

Cultural Competence/DEI

Higher education HR professionals, and others responsible for managing the higher education workforce, directly affect institutional excellence by fostering individual commitment to and engagement in building a diverse, equitable and inclusive community. It’s about working together to build institutional capacity and individual capability, to shape culture and to cultivate supportive and inclusive learning environments that advance organizational effectiveness and success. (CUPA-HR’s Position Statement, Inclusion Cultivates Excellence.)

In 2018, CUPA-HR launched the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Maturity Index focused on moving from talking about the issues to effecting change on campuses. For higher education, attention to DEI efforts is often focused on the student population. This maturity index is focused on making progress in DEI efforts for higher ed employees, namely faculty and staff.

- **Diverse**, representing individuals who vary in terms of race/national/ethnic origin, sex, sexual preference, gender identity, age, physical and mental ability, religious preference, veteran status, genetics, and citizenship
- **Equitable**, in hiring, compensating, promoting, providing services for, and otherwise treating similarly people who are represented in the various categories above
- **Inclusive**, providing a sustained welcoming and protected environment for all people, regardless of their representation in the protected classes

OTHER RESOURCES

- CUPA-HR’s Mission, Strategic Priorities, Values and Code of Ethics
- CUPA-HR Diversity Resources
- CUPA-HR Research Publications
- Diversity and Inclusion Activities (West Virginia University)
Building Trust

Trust is the basis for a successful culture, effective communications and building stable working relationships. Trust is confidence born out of two dimensions: character (integrity, motive and intent) and confidence (capabilities, skills, results and track record). (Covey, *The Speed of Trust.*)

Are our own actions worthy of trust? If you don’t build trust, you don’t build relationships. Building trust begins with demonstrating that the relationship matters. One of the best examples of building trust, especially for a leader, is to demonstrate trust by helping others to achieve their aspirations, goals and personal best, especially when they are experiencing a lull or having difficulty getting to the next level. Like nurturing (or not) a financial portfolio, building relationships rooted in trust takes a great investment in time, commitment, inclusion, appreciation, patience and compassion. When respect is given from where others are coming from, growth occurs, as does greater respect for one another.

OTHER RESOURCES
- A 4-Step Model for Leadership Success (The Higher Ed Workplace Blog)
- Building Trust the Authentic Way (Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Human Resources)

Coaching

Coaching fosters and encourages performance excellence at every level of the institution. It is the ability to use strategies to identify and modify ineffective behaviors and attitudes as well as encourage effective ones. When someone coaches, they provide candid advice and feedback to help others strengthen specific knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) that are needed to accomplish professional goals, develop skills or solve a problem. Benefits to coaching can include adapting to change; addressing behavioral challenges; support for improving skills; and encouragement to establish and attain development goals. Coaching increases awareness, accountability and accomplishment throughout the development phases.

OTHER RESOURCES
- Executive and Leadership Coaching (Penn State Human Resources)
- Coaching for Performance (University of New Hampshire)

Team Building

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work

The ABCs of teamwork consists of attitudes, behaviors and cognitive states, which collectively influence whether a team will perform successfully or not. Sometimes the terms “taskwork” and “teamwork” get used synonymously, and that can get teams into trouble. Taskwork is described as what teams need to do in order to complete work. Teamwork is the interrelated thoughts, feelings and behaviors of team members.

Just as important as evaluating task performance (what they do) in teams is evaluating how well they are functioning together (who they are while working together as a team). Team cohesion and shared mental models (or team cognition) bond the team and aids in getting the work done. Teamwork can come down to a practical equation: clear roles + clear goals + clear plan of action = team success.
How to Build a Team
Team development can benefit team performance. For example, team training as a form of team performance is a formalized learning experience that aims to improve specific team skills or competencies. Team building is another form of team performance designed around improving interpersonal relationships, clarifying roles and improving problem solving. To get individuals and teammates from having only routine expertise to having adaptive expertise requires moving them from simply following the checklists and rules to knowing when, where and how to use select knowledge and data, intuitively seeing a pattern in the data, and recognizing and communicating a solution.

To enhance team training — identify current competency levels of all individuals on the team. Recognize where individuals have proficiency gaps, and recognize where the collective team is missing certain competencies or gaps within team proficiency. See the Team Planning Guide on the Learning Framework site, under Helpful Resources. This planning guide will assist with moving from assessment to action.

To enhance teambuilding — identify what makes each teammate tick, what communication preferences they have and how they prefer to work. Find the common thread(s) that can bond a team together. What are the team strengths, opportunities and blind spots? Being able to lead by example and communicate openly will aid in building trust with everyone. Establish and build relationships with each teammate; foster teamwork and taskwork; and set team ground rules.

OTHER RESOURCES
- Psychology Today Work Style Test (about 15 minutes to complete)
- Icebreakers and Team Building (College of William and Mary)
- “The One Team Building Activity That Every Team Should Conduct” (Forbes, March 27, 2019)
- “These Are the 4 Different Work Styles and How to Work With Each” (Fast Company, May 24, 2018)
- “How to Recognize and Manage Different Work Styles” (Fast Company, May 17, 2015)

Self-Awareness and Accountability
“Seeing things from a different point of view can help to understand why other people act the way they do. We too often judge people [or things] without having all of the facts.” – Sean Covey

What is your internal narrative trying to tell you about yourself? When we stop to listen, really listen, to what it is telling us about our beliefs and values, we are more apt to being better at creating, listening, building better relationships, taking responsibility for our words, actions and behaviors, and seeking honest feedback from well-meaning critics. Once we master this skill, we are better at accomplishing tasks; we are more confident; and we are better at building greater relationships and helping others.

Take-Time Exercise
Take time to ask others to honestly describe what kind of person you are. Have them share the good and not-so-good (with sincerity and gentleness!). What kind of feedback did you receive? Did you jot the comments down, or review them in an electronic format? What did you learn
about yourself? Now, rather than thinking about why you are the person they described, use that feedback to describe and jot down what kind of person you are.

Have you taken the time to 1) ask others, and 2) think about what kind of person you are?

After receiving feedback, rather than thinking about why you are the person you are, think instead about what kind of person you are. If you think in terms of “why,” you spend time on justifying, even defending, what you learned about yourself. If time is spent on “what,” you spend time on being more open to (new) information about yourself and learning from it.

Take steps to being not only self-aware from what you’ve learned, but also accountable by:

- Identifying the trouble spots or asking, “what is the problem?”
  - Ask others to share what they see for another vantage point
- Asking, “what am I doing (or not doing) to contribute what is going on?”
- Asking “what will or can I do (or not do) differently to help resolve what is going on?”
- Asking “how will/can I be accountable for the result?”

Remember, there is always more time and more to learn!

**Constructive Inquiry**

In May 2019, during her last lecture, former Harvard Law School Dean Martha Minnow focused on the art of asking questions. She not only emphasized asking questions as a skill that will be key to future work and something to be cherished, but also told the students that ultimately our questions define us. They define us as to “what we care about, what matters and what we become.”

Questions drive us in getting what we need or want. If you know exactly what you want, it’s about asking questions in a succinct and productive way for positive results — for you, someone else, the institution, the community, etc. Questions evoke clarity and aid in providing solutions. Innovative leaders know to ask lots of questions: “That sounds interesting, tell me more about it.” “What drove you to make that decision?” “Which direction will you take next?” Or they may ask questions if they do or don’t know the answer: “What would happen if it was done in a different way?” “What options do you have?” “How will you know you are successful?” “What are you learning from this?” The bottom line? Ask questions and be curious enough to learn more about what is going on around you.

For some, it’s the fear of asking the “wrong” question. But don’t be afraid to ask questions. Have you ever noticed the reaction of someone being asked a question that begins, “This may sound like a stupid question …” More often than not, the listener is pleased with the question, so ask away!

**The Question Burst** (taken from “Asking the Questions That Unlock Innovation,” MIT News, April 6, 2018) — *sample time allotment (can be adjusted per activity needs)*:

1. [5 min] Define a challenge or opportunity facing the team or the institution. Does everyone agree with the definition? If so …
2. [3 min] Ask everyone to write down how they feel about it. No idea generation at this time. Only sharing how it makes them feel.
3. [7-10 min] Then, instead of trying to quickly generate new ideas about the challenge/opportunity, take turns asking questions about it.
   - Rule 1 – no one can give answers
   - Rule 2 – no one can give explanations of why they are asking the question

4. [2-5 min] Ask everyone to do a quick emotional check to see if they feel any different and decide which direction(s) may need to be taken next.
   - Record the definition, the questions and next steps. Follow up with result, or if more discussion is warranted.

Collaboration

“No man [person] is an island.” — English poet John Donne

Collaboration uses interpersonal and professional skills, but broadly speaking, it is the ability to interact across organizational, cultural and professional boundaries. People who collaborate can bridge differences between people. They often relate to others who have differences of opinions, personality types or interests. Many assume that a person needs to be an extrovert to accomplish this. On the contrary, extroverts may be good in a group, but good collaboration relies upon the depth of a relationship, not necessarily how well they respond to and in a crowd.

Good collaboration relies on the ability to see beyond personal perspectives; the ability to learn new skills, ideas and ways of thinking and working; and the ability to forge strong interpersonal relationships.

Collaboration is built on a solid foundation of trust. Those most effective at building trust know how to understand a variety of perspectives, manage priorities from everyone in the group, and then decisively meet expectations as a reliable member of a team. Collaboration isn’t about collaborating for the sake of collaborating; rather the goal is to achieve greater results than could be achieved individually.

Do you have what it takes to collaborate? Are you often described as open to new ideas? Do you like taking risks, and involving others to do the same? Are you a good listener? Can you bring groups of people together and productively work? Do you encourage and practice mutual respect? Can you balance personal achievement with group goals? If this sounds like you, then yes, you’re a good collaborator! If some of these descriptions didn’t resonate with you, what steps can you take to improve?

OTHER RESOURCES
- Teamwork and Collaboration (Towson University)
- Sample Vision, Mission and Purpose Statement (Collaborative Resource Management)

Ethics

Simply put, ethics defines the rules of behavior based on ideas regarding what is morally good and bad; right and wrong. A more expanded definition is that ethics refers to the specific moral values, principles, standards, rules and agreements people adopt for conducting their lives, both personal and professional.
What role does ethics play on campus? Colleges and universities are not immune from the ethical challenges found throughout society. Are they a microcosm of our society in which the value systems of leadership form the standards for conduct, purpose and accountability? Integrity in behavior and commitment become manifestations of an institution’s ethics. Further, certain professions, such as HR, medicine, law and finance have long-standing standards for governing conduct.

The responsibility to hold programs and staff to the highest standard is of great importance to the institution, and the well-being of students is of paramount concern to our work in the academic community.

Many universities have sections on their websites devoted to academic integrity that define what the term means to their specific institutions.

OTHER RESOURCES
- CUPA-HR Code of Ethics
- CUPA-HR Ethics Toolkit (CUPA-HR credentials required to access this resource)
- New York University Code of Ethical Conduct
- University of Texas System Ethics Standards

Communications
Communication — or a lack thereof — can make the difference between success and failure. Effective communication can inspire others to action, make a process go smoothly, plant the seeds for new ways of thinking, and build connections with others.

Lessons from powerful communicators:
- Create a short but powerful message rather than a lengthy one.
- Use repetition. If done tastefully and in the right places, it reinforces the point and helps with remembering the message.
- Develop empathy and place the focus on other people.
- Hone your listening skills.

Good communication skills are a tool that can open a vast range of possibilities and forge solid working relationships.

OTHER RESOURCES
- Human Resources Guide to Managing Human Resources, Chapter 13: Communication (University of California, Berkeley)
- Communication Competency (Texas A&M University Division of HR & Organizational Effectiveness)
- CEO Who Hired for Microsoft, Amazon: Top 3 In-Demand Skills by 2030 — And the Interview Questions Employers Ask to See if You Have Them (CNBC; March 22, 2019)

Credibility
Deeply rooted in credibility lies the ability to be trustworthy and accomplish work. Being trustworthy means, for example, acting in a consistent manner; helping others and the
institution to succeed; openly communicating with and listening to others; and offering support and valuing others. Being credible also means taking action and initiative; communicating effectively; continuously learning from experiences, development and others; and possessing forward-thinking ability.

**What’s Your Work Credibility?**

Some ways to ensure you’re properly building credibility:

- Know when it’s time to speak up and know when it’s time to listen. You may have great ideas, but have you given proper time and attention to others’ ideas, too? And if you don’t have an answer, admit it and help find one.
- Know when it’s time to include others on projects. It’s not always necessary to go it alone.
- Know what you say (the words) and how you say it (intonation, eye contact, body language, etc.) matter.
- Admit when you’re wrong.
- Admit when you need help.
- Say what you mean; mean what you say.

**OTHER RESOURCES**

- 6 Tips for Building and Maintaining Credibility as a Leader (Forbes, July 8, 2016)
- Executive Insights on Leader Integrity: The Credibility Challenge (Cornell University School of Hotel Administration, February 29, 2016)
- Leadership Credibility Survey

**Mentoring**

“Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.” — John C. Crosby

Mentoring programs are an excellent way to enhance an organization’s professional development program. They can supplement new employee orientation, improve employee satisfaction and retention, supplement formal training programs, make your institution more appealing to recruits and build your own leaders. The bonus? Mentoring is free. Whether it be taking a “newbie” under one’s wing, pairing a manager with an executive, or linking a new working mother with a “seasoned” working mother — outcomes can be expected to enhance both the mentor and the mentee.

**Why Is HR Well Suited to Foster Mentoring Programs?**

- HR professionals are most likely to be aware of the abilities and skills of employees across the organization, their performance strengths and weaknesses, and their career aspirations based upon the jobs for which they apply and the training they pursue.
- HR is well positioned to stress the fact that mentor relationships benefit both the mentor and mentee. A mentor will gain insight into what less experienced workers are facing and use that information to become a better supervisor or manager. Mentees will gain insights and knowledge to which they might not otherwise be exposed.
HR professionals possess the expertise to develop training programs to prepare mentors and mentees for their respective roles. Managers will learn that they can make a difference in another person’s career and that their experience and knowledge are valuable and appreciated.

OTHER RESOURCES
- **Staff Mentoring Video** — approx. 4 minutes (Brown University)
- **Staff and Faculty Mentoring Site** (University of Denver)
- **CUPA-HR Mentoring Toolkit** (CUPA-HR credentials required to access this resource)
- **Creating Your Individual Development Plan — FREE** (CUPA-HR E-Learning Course)
- **Making the Most of Being a Mentor** and **Making the Most of Your Mentorship** (CUPA-HR Essentials Videos)
Framework Area: Building Capabilities

Identify, Recruit and Onboard Talent

Example: Pay Equity and Representation
CUPA-HR has been collecting data on salaries for many years. During FY16-17, with a switch to incumbent-level reporting, we began collecting data on sex, race/ethnicity, age and years in position for all our signature surveys: Administrators, Professionals, Staff and Faculty. This decision was strategic. Diversity, equity and inclusion efforts on campuses are ever increasing as student bodies have increased in diversity. Research shows that diverse companies and institutions are more successful than those that are not diverse. For example, gender-diverse companies are 15 percent more likely to outperform their peers, and ethnically diverse companies are 35 percent more likely to outperform their peers. Recognition of inequity isn’t enough — diversity doesn’t take care of itself. Women remain underrepresented in top positions in industry. When looking at the pay gap for full-time U.S. workers in 2016, women earned 79 cents for every $1 that men earned, which is a pay gap of 21 percent. This gap signified a decrease from 59 percent in 1974, but it had remained steady for more than a decade. (“The Gender Pay Gap and the Representation of Women in Higher Education Administrative Positions: The Century So Far,” CUPA-HR.)

OTHER RESOURCES
- CUPA-HR Research Publications
- CUPA-HR Knowledge Center toolkits under Classification and Compensation, Benefits and Recruitment and Selection
- 11 Institutions That Are Getting It Right in Diversity and Equity in Leadership Positions (CUPA-HR Blog Post)

Example: Employee Turnover
Managing employee turnover is a fundamental component of analyzing short- and long-term institution success. What do you look for, and what can you do about it? Turnover is often unpredictable and comes in many forms, making it difficult to anticipate. The best way to be prepared is to be informed by tracking the reasons why employees leave. In doing so, it may help to shed light on the top reasons for voluntary turnover. Some top reasons why employees leave a U.S. organization? Boss, promotion opportunity, career change, personal (or family), salary and job satisfaction. Other reasons can include organizational fit or benefits.

Calculating Turnover
Our method of calculating turnover is described on our HR Benchmarking page. When collecting data (as we describe in our Survey Participation and Information Templates), we ask participants to provide headcounts (in multiple categories) for staff and faculty. We then ask for separations (total, voluntary not due to retirement, number of retirements) between November 1 of the previous academic year and November 1 of the current academic year. Then we take the number of separations in each category divided by the headcount as of November 1 in the current year. The result can be expressed as a percentage, a proportion or a ratio. Our HR Benchmarking Report in DataOnDemand allows you to compare these turnover proportions to your custom comparison groups.
Example of tracking turnover and retention (using CUPA-HR data): South Dakota State University

OTHER RESOURCES
 HR Benchmarking Stats, Annual Employee Turnover (CUPA-HR Research)

Performance Management

What do your institution’s performance management practices look like today? What will they look like next year or three years from now? How would you like them to look and what would you like them to do?

Performance management refers to the processes that ensure the organization connects mission with the work of the employees. The process involves evaluating employee performance and devising an action plan to help them continually improve performance. Reviewing performance with employees helps to clarify job expectations and responsibilities, offering feedback and brainstorming performance improvement ideas, improving communications between the supervisor and employee, and ensuring the work is aligned with the overall team’s and organization’s mission, vision and values.

Is Performance Management the Same as a Performance Appraisal?
Performance management is a proactive process that places emphasis on helping employees continue in their development and to become increasingly better in their performance. In addition, it places emphasis on present and future performance. A performance appraisal is a reactive process that reviews how well the employee performed in the immediate past and is reviewed during the most recent appraisal period. Some would argue that a performance appraisal is an element of performance management practices.

Common performance management tools include:

- Employee information by name, position, department, etc.
- A rating scale used consistently throughout the organization (ex. 5-point scale)
- Job-related assessment of performance based on specific job-related criteria and specific examples
- Self-evaluation to participate in next steps
- Goals to implement in the next phase, quarter or year
- Development that can include training or mentoring

Common tips:

- Feedback should be done immediately, privately and constructively
- Feedback should not be suspended until a performance meeting
- Focus on behaviors, not judgments
- Define expectations
- Make sure proper documentation is recorded and filed
- Follow up with employees
- Encourage employees

Studies have shown that employees prefer a practice that includes a customized experience based on their preferences, and that employers want a less labor-intensive and end-of-year process. Some employers still employ a traditional approach to their performance
management practices, which involves a supervisor meeting with employees once or twice a year — usually the meetings take place at the end of the year. More recently, the practice has shifted to one that involves more coaching and communication throughout the year.

What’s Next?
With employees working with various individuals across the organization, performance management practices can solicit feedback from various individuals rather than solely from an employee’s supervisor. Could this approach provide more meaningful feedback?

OTHER RESOURCES
- Effective Performance Management — approx. 2 minutes (Penn Human Resources video)
- Performance Management Documents, Tools and Resources (San Jacinto College)

Succession Planning
Instead of focusing on more comprehensive succession planning (a term that has become so overused that our campus colleagues tune us out when they hear the phrase), let’s create a call to action regarding the long-term sustainability, relevance and ultimate impact of our colleges and universities. The workforce we create, engage and sustain ultimately determines our institution’s future.

Did You Know?
CUPA-HR has data that can help with succession planning — namely, data on years in position and age. For example, with CUPA-HR’s DataOnDemand tool, you can now run an age report on professionals. From this, you can see the positions that have a large proportion of people close to retirement. That can give you an idea of which positions might have future gaps and are in need of skill development.

Taken from the 2019 CUPA-HR Administrators in Higher Education Report, the median age for every category of campus leaders is greater than 50. These median ages in and of themselves are not necessarily challenges, but when we view them as part of our succession planning and the long-term sustainability of our institutions, a potential challenge quickly emerges. If we highlight just one of the typical leadership pathways for higher education, an interesting and potentially challenging dilemma emerges:

Most of the current U.S. campus presidents, with a median age of 61, served in a provost role before serving as president. The median age of provosts is 59. Most of our provosts served as deans before serving as provost. The median age of deans is 58. The typical pathway to dean is through an assistant or associate dean role. The median age of our assistant and associate deans is 56.
As you think about the pipeline for the positions that your organization serves, what challenges does the age of incumbents in that pipeline create?

Also of importance is the length of time incumbents are spending in these roles. The median tenure of leaders in administrative roles is eight years, with very little variance by group. If this is similar for your institution, does this mean that there are not enough opportunities for advancement? Does it mean that the individuals in these roles have no interest in higher levels of responsibility?

While it is important to review these groups of leadership positions, it is critical to review specific roles within these leadership groups. The frequent turnover of our provosts (median tenure of our provosts is just three years) is one example that has a tremendous impact on our institutions. If this position or other leadership positions are revolving doors at your institution, why is this?
Individuals in professional roles should be the future higher-level administrators. Median age for higher ed professionals is 42, and median length of service in current position is four years. Many of the professional positions are leadership-pipeline positions for administrative leadership positions.

Regarding diversity, from the group of 50,880 administrators for whom data was collected in the 2019 survey, women hold the majority (51 percent) of higher education administrative positions. In addition, more than 84 percent of administrators are White; less than 8 percent are Black/African American; less than 4 percent are Hispanic/Latino; and less than 3 percent are Asian. For reference, in private industry, 87 percent of senior-level executives are White. As our student population and the U.S. population continue to become more diverse, there is a clear call to action here for higher ed.

**Cultural Architect and Steward**

Someone who is a cultural architect and steward aids in the facilitation of change because it’s necessary; shapes and values institutional culture; and helps others discover meaning in their work so that they can perform at their very best. A cultural architect and steward also understands how important it is to ensure that the culture aligns with strategy to achieve institutional objectives.

By recognizing and helping to shape the culture, the following can be accomplished:

- Socialize new employees and increase overall employee engagement
- Improve satisfaction with staff, faculty, students and the community
- Adapt successfully
- Encourage open dialogue when change is apparent or when conflict arises
- Showcase productive problem-solving methods

**OTHER RESOURCES**

- [HR as Cultural Steward — Ambassador of Culture and Capabilities](LinkedIn; February 19, 2017)

**Change Management**

“Change is the only constant in life.” — Heraclitus

Change happens one step at a time. The hardest step? The first one.

To strengthen your institution’s change management muscles, here are some questions to consider:

- How receptive is your campus culture to exploring and adopting new ideas? Are you giving people space to tackle problems and pursue alternative strategies?
- Are you identifying and communicating the purpose for change and helping stakeholders understand how they fit into the big picture and end goal?
- How are you building your change team? Who’s on it? If you can’t designate formal change management roles, who will facilitate the change process?
- At the leadership level, do you have a champion for your change effort? Do they have the influence and leverage necessary to see the process through?
How are you engaging stakeholders so they can feel a sense of ownership in the change process?

How are you celebrating your change agents? Are you acknowledging how significant even the small changes they usher in are, and the accumulated effect?

(Questions taken from “What Does Change Management Really Look Like in Higher Ed?” Fresh From the UIA, April 16, 2019.)

OTHER RESOURCES
- 6 Tips for Managing Organizational Change (CUPA-HR Blog Post, June 4, 2019)
- The Role of the CHRO Today in Organizational Change (Sibson Consulting Video)
- Change Management in Higher Education Podcast (Change Management Review™ “From the Field Series”)
- Change Management — Tips for Managers and Supervisors (University of California, Santa Barbara)
- Change Agents: Know Thy Audience (Workboard)

HR Operations

No two HR operations are alike. Because of that, someone’s ability to understand what it takes to be an HR professional on campus or how HR operates on a college campus will vary. And how HR’s role is perceived varies from one campus to another. Traditionally, HR has been viewed as largely transactional. In this respect, the HR operations perform routine tasks such as hiring and orienting new employees, managing benefits or payroll and conducting various employee trainings. Contemporary HR operations has expanded and includes being a trusted and strategic advisor. Focuses such as managing recruitment strategies for both staff and faculty and leading efforts for performance management, succession planning and leadership development are now common. It’s no longer just processing compensation programs; it’s analyzing and researching to develop compensation strategies, too.

To operate in human resources requires relating to and supporting the institutional mission and its goals.
Framework Area: Strategic Leadership

Strategic Positioner

Example: CHRO Reporting Relationship
General HR functions are identified at institutions as performing tasks such as recruitment, payroll, training, employee relations, managing benefits programs and providing orientation sessions for new employees. Recently, HR executives at many universities have morphed into more of a trusted advisor role and are proving to be more active participants in promoting overall institutional change. Executive HR leaders of late are focused on building a workforce aligned with the institution’s strategic vision, which includes more involvement at the strategic level of recruitment (staff and faculty members), compensation and talent management. Looking beyond the formal institution reporting structures is more important than ever to ensure that HR’s top priorities include an understanding of the entire institution’s operations and creating relationships to achieve strategic results.

Check out CUPA-HR’s HR Benchmarking Stats for reporting relationships.

Critical Thinking

A critical thinker knows the importance of asking questions and gathering information in order to get to reasonable solutions without bias. Critical thinking goes together with effective communications, problem-solving abilities, and a commitment to being open-minded. It’s the ability to employ self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored and self-corrected thinking.

- Logical and Critical Thinking
- Asking the Right Questions
- Effective Communications
- Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills

OTHER RESOURCES

- Leadership and Strategy toolkits in the CUPA-HR Knowledge Center
- The Foundation for Critical Thinking

Influence

A major difference between managers and leaders is that managers manage tasks, and leaders lead people. In addition, leaders can empower and inspire others to act. Influence is the ability to spark change and action with vigorous passion; navigate unwaveringly through risk and change; embrace institution’s idiosyncrasies to move teams and projects forward; and build and sustain trust during successful as well as challenging times.

OTHER RESOURCES

- Leadership and Strategy toolkits in the CUPA-HR Knowledge Center
- “The Birth of Higher Ed HR: What’s Changed in 70 Years … and What Hasn’t“ (CUPA-HR Blog Post)
Leading the Higher Ed Business Model

Many higher education institutions are valuing the chief HR officer (CHRO) role and the influence this role has on key institutional issues. In the private sector, lead HR officers (sometimes referred to as Chief People Officer, Vice President, CHRO, etc.) are included in the executive boardroom and are seen as critical decision makers and problem solvers for the entire enterprise. For higher education, the executive HR leader offers advice on strategies related to, for example, talent development, succession planning, hiring and retention trends, maintaining compliant operations, and encouraging a diverse and inclusive culture.

Ways HR Is Contributing and Can Contribute to the Overall Success of an Institution:

- Building data-driven processes — for retaining top talent, trend analyses and implementing equitable practices, for example
- Reinventing succession planning strategies for staff and faculty
- Leading by example as executive first, HR second
- Four Ways Higher Education Human Resources Is Changing (PageUp)

Continuous Improvement

In an ongoing effort to bring about a systematic approach to linear, incremental improvements with an existing team or process, it’s important to understand how the work is performed and when and what types of questions (open-ended) are being used to remove barriers. Continuous improvement processes involve setting goals; finding ways to improve; and communicating, adapting and evaluating change.

Oftentimes, the plan-do-check-act or PDCA cycle (also known as Deming Cycle or Shewhart Cycle) is used as a quality assurance method:

- **Plan**: Identify an opportunity and plan for change
- **Do**: Implement the change on a small scale
- **Check**: Use data to analyze the results of the change and determine whether it made a difference
- **Act**: Review what other steps are needed to further improve the process

![PDCA Cycle Diagram]

OTHER RESOURCES

- Sample Department Continuous Improvement Plans (Red Rocks Community College)
- University Continuous Improvement Plan (Drake University)
- Hosting a Continuous Improvement Day (University of Tulsa)
Planning

“A goal without a plan is just a wish.” — Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

A plan is designed to get you started and, most importantly, get you to the finish line. If you have the right people involved during the planning process, getting to solutions is much easier and sometimes quicker.

With planning, everyone knows what is expected, what is going to happen and when things will occur. It also gives everyone a sense of ownership in the work and outcomes produced. Setting firm deadlines not only provides a sense of accountability but also ensures the work is delivered on time.

Is a plan fool-proof? No. Common reasons a plan can fail are not including the right people, the unwillingness to change and adapt through the planning process and setting unrealistic goals. Remember, when you see the plan going amuck, you can reset the plan to include the right people, assess and reassess realistic goals, and change and adapt.

Without planning, work gets delayed, costs increase and morale decreases. Without a plan, it’s uncertain as to the expectations, what will happen, and when things will occur.

Follow the 5P Rule: Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance

Remember, failing to plan is planning to fail.

OTHER RESOURCES

➢ Microsoft’s guide to the education competency, Planning. Includes proficiency-level guidance, essential questions to ask yourself, and sample interview questions