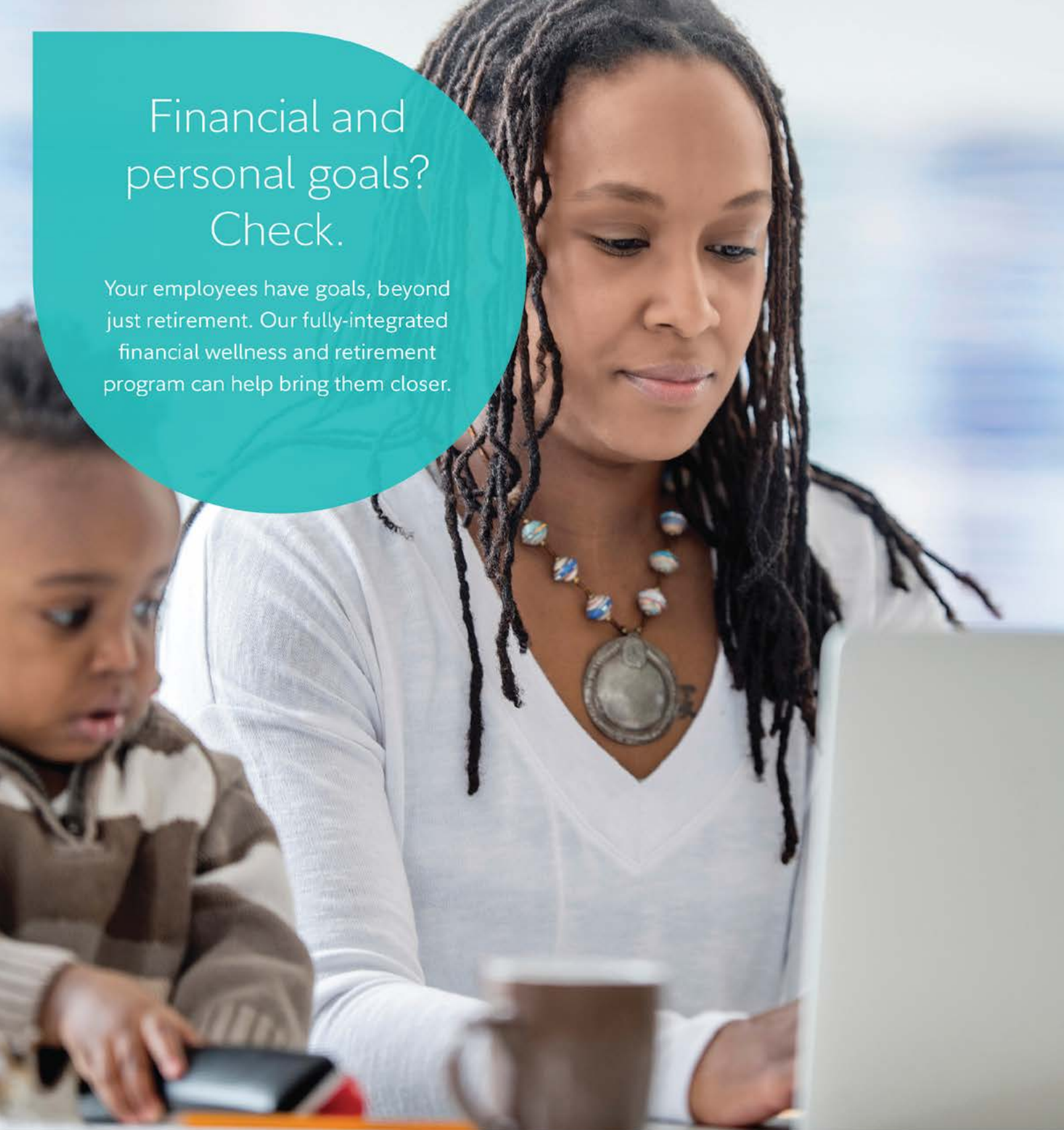


Mindfulness Matters

Strategies for Centering, Reflecting
and Meditating in the Workplace

Page 20



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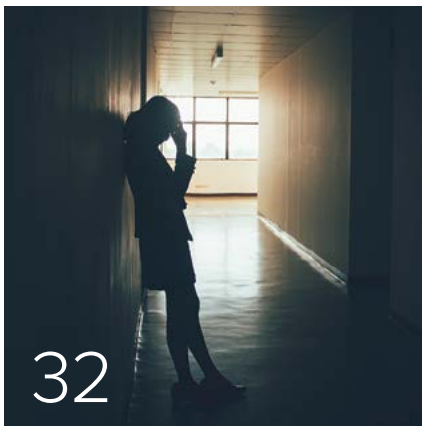
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THE WELL-BEING ISSUE



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ANDY BRANTLEY, CUPA-HR PRESIDENT AND CEO

Higher Ed Challenges Are Our Challenges!

To fully understand and embrace the changing role of higher ed HR, we must first acknowledge and connect our work to the most pressing challenges of our institutions.

At CUPA-HR's national board of directors meeting in July, we asked the board to identify the most pressing challenges their colleges and universities face. We asked the same question to our four region boards in September. Here are the summarized responses of the nine most pressing challenges institutions face and action steps you, as HR professionals, can take toward overcoming them:

The 2025 enrollment cliff is already impacting many campuses across the country, and the number of traditional-aged students will continue to decline.

As unemployment remains relatively low in most parts of the country, fewer people are choosing to go to college or return to complete a certificate or diploma program.

Action: I encourage you to read the feature article on this topic, "The Looming Higher Ed Enrollment Cliff" from the fall 2019 issue of CUPA-HR's *Higher Ed HR Magazine*.

Affordability and access are at the forefront of campus leaders' minds.

Tuition discounts and student debt create challenges for the institution and for our students.

Action: Do you know what your tuition discount rate is? How is this impacting admissions, financial aid and your accounting colleagues?

Higher ed institutions do an insufficient job of creating and sustaining a leadership pipeline.

According to the *2019 CUPA-HR Administrators in Higher Education Annual Report*, the median age of presidents is 61; the median age of provosts is 59; the median age of deans is 58; and the median age of associate deans is 56.

Action: When these positions become vacant, will you need to consider external applicants? Why aren't there internal applicants? What positions have the highest turnover on your campus? Why do these positions have the highest turnover? Which positions are hardest to fill?

Student mental health challenges are impacting our student affairs staff.

Action: When was the last time you asked your student

affairs colleagues how they were doing? I encourage you to read the feature article "Destigmatizing Mental Health on Campus: What Can HR Do?" on page 32 in this issue of the magazine.

Campus climate should be a

priority for everyone. We see challenging issues unfold almost daily for our students, faculty and staff.

Action: Where are the toxic and unproductive subcultures on your campus? How can you use this knowledge to create the change that needs to occur? Read "Leading With Kindness: Characteristics of Caring Work Cultures" on page 14 in this issue of the magazine to get started.

Public perception of higher ed is often unfavorable, but we know its value and importance.

Action: How do we, as higher ed HR leaders, find our voice to support the work of our institutions?

Political pressures at the national, state and local level have never been greater.

Action: How do you stay up to date regarding changing laws and regulations so that you can advocate on behalf of your institution?

Lack of adequate financial resources continues to be a tremendous challenge.

Action: How can you use workforce data and knowledge of the important work occurring across campus to ensure employees are adequately compensated and rewarded?

Title IX reporting and review procedures are under the microscope.

Who knows what new Title IX regulations could be published before this issue of the magazine reaches you!

Action: Stay tuned for updates and webinars from CUPA-HR as soon as new regulations are published.

The bottom line is that our HR roles must change and evolve to meet and anticipate the needs of the campus community. There is no such thing as "just a benefits specialist" or "just a compensation specialist." Every role must be connected to the greater challenges of the entire organization, or we risk becoming obsolete or irrelevant as the world continues to rapidly change around us.





CUPA-HR Signs on to NIRSA's Health and Well-being in Higher Education Initiative

CUPA-HR recently signed on to *Health and Well-being in Higher Education: A Commitment to Student Success*, an initiative launched by NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Recreation.

NIRSA is a leader in higher education and the advocate for the advancement of recreation, sport and wellness by providing educational and development opportunities, generating and sharing knowledge, and promoting networking and growth for its members.

CUPA-HR joins 11 other higher education associations in endorsing NIRSA's commitment to innovating,

supporting and fostering a holistic, integrated and strategic approach to well-being from the association level to the institutional level. Because student well-being cannot advance without also advancing employee well-being, HR is critical to this effort.

"We are pleased to be a part of this work," says Andy Brantley, CUPA-HR's president and CEO. "Human resources leaders are committed to the health and well-being of the entire campus community."

Read more about the initiative at www.nirsa.net/nirsa/portfolio-items/health-wellbeing-in-higher-education/.

U.S. Department of Education Releases First-Year Earnings Data of College Graduates

The U.S. Department of Education recently shared data on college graduates' first-year earnings, breaking down earnings by higher ed program level for the first time. Program levels in the data set feature certificates, associate degrees, doctoral degrees and professional levels.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos stated that the data will allow students to choose a program based on the outcomes of students who have already completed the program. The data has been integrated into the Education Department's College Scorecard, a product of the Obama administration.

Earlier this year, the Education Department released debt information for nearly 41,000 higher ed programs. When combining debt data and first-year earnings data, the results show that the median debt exceeded median

first-year earnings by more than \$1,000 for 6,520 programs in the data set. However, the data is limited in that it only looks at first-year earnings, which can start low in some fields and increase over time.

Whether or not prospective students will use the data to determine what program to pursue is yet to be seen, though graduate students may be more persuaded by the data, which could have an effect on enrollment in coming years.

The Education Department has stated that annual updates of the data will occur and eventually will cover data for 10 years post-graduation.

Source: "U.S. Releases Earnings Data for Thousands of College Programs." *Inside Higher Ed* article by Lilah Burke (November 21, 2019).

Creating a Culture of Well-Being on Campus

 Organizational Culture Toolkit



As cultural stewards, HR professionals play a key role in creating a positive, healthy culture on campus.

The free Organizational Culture Toolkit in CUPA-HR's Knowledge Center offers a variety of ideas for understanding and shaping campus culture, including:

- Establishing Institutional Culture
- Evaluating and Changing Institutional Culture
- Building an Organizational Culture of Work-Life Balance and Well-being
- Defining a Values-Based Culture
- And More!

www.cupahr.org/knowledge-center/toolkits/organizational-culture



How UK's Community-Supported Agriculture Voucher Program Is Innovating Employee Benefits

The University of Kentucky (UK) Health and Wellness department, a department within UK human resources, recently introduced the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Voucher Program to improve the health and well-being of UK employees enrolled in the university's health plan, while at the same time supporting the local farming community.

The program is the keystone of UK's new comprehensive wellness program and is made possible through partnership with UK's College of Agriculture, Food and Environment's Department of Agriculture Economics and third-party vendors who manage the relationship with certified organic farms, facilitate the point of sale, and address customer service issues. After two years of research and testing through two pilot programs, the voucher program was established as an official employee benefit in 2018.

A Peek Into the Program

A limited number of vouchers are available to enrolled employees. Those interested must submit their name into a lottery for the chance to receive a voucher. Vouchers are either \$200 toward a large share or \$100 toward a small share and can be used at one of five participating local organic farms. The purchase of a share includes weekly pick up of a basket or box of produce at designated pick up locations May through October. Produce included in weekly shares is based on Kentucky's growing season and chosen by the farm.

As an added benefit provided by the farms, add-ons, such as free-range chickens and eggs, are also available for purchase. Voucher holders are given the opportunity

to attend an annual farmer meet-and-greet where they can meet their farmers and learn more about the farms. They also have access to monthly educational blog posts and workshops provided by a registered dietitian featuring recipes and ways to use and prepare produce provided in the shares.

Employee Health Outcomes

Employees who participate in the voucher program have experienced many statistically measurable behavioral changes, such as increased daily intake of fruits and vegetables; decreased consumption of processed foods; fewer doctor's visits; better food preparation skills; and better digestive health and overall energy. Estimates indicate that for every dollar spent on the program, \$2.47 was saved in medical expenditures.



UK human resources leaders have been instrumental in the support of the voucher program, which has served as a model for employers in the surrounding area. The program is a step toward UK Health and Wellness's five-year strategic plan to improve the culture of health at UK, as well as provide resources for stress and resiliency, physical activity, nutrition, health screenings and other awareness-raising wellness events.

Read more about the University of Kentucky's Community Supported Agriculture Voucher Program at www.cupahr.org/press-releases/university-of-kentucky-health-and-wellness-receives-cupa-hrs-br-innovation-award/ and www.kyfarmsshare.org/how-does-it-work.



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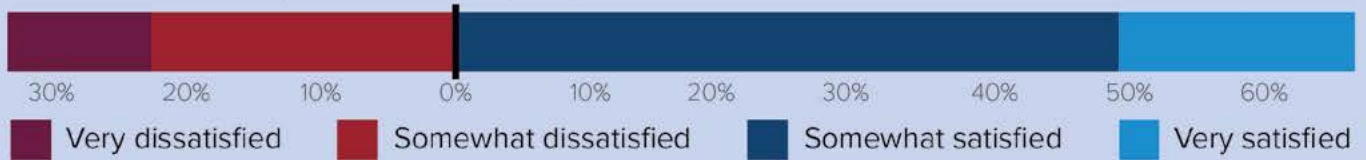
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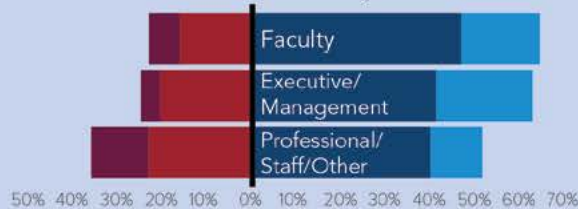
Financial Wellness in Higher Ed

Insights From the 2019 Higher Education Financial Wellness Survey¹

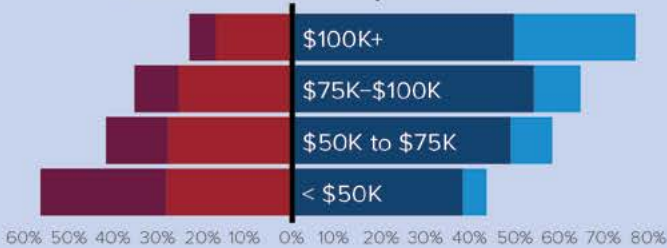
— **33%** of higher ed employees are unsatisfied with their finances² —



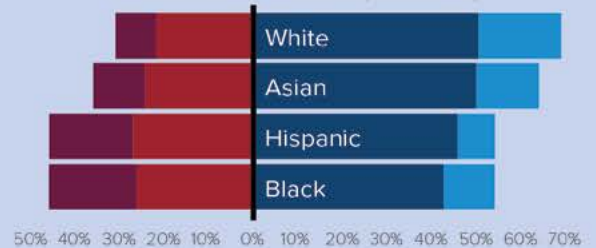
Overall Satisfaction by Position



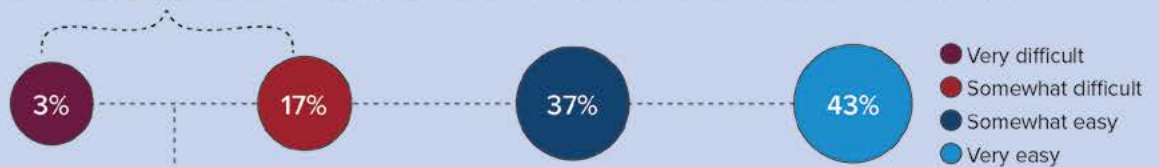
Overall Satisfaction by Income Level



Overall Satisfaction by Ethnicity



— **20%** say it is difficult to make ends meet each month —



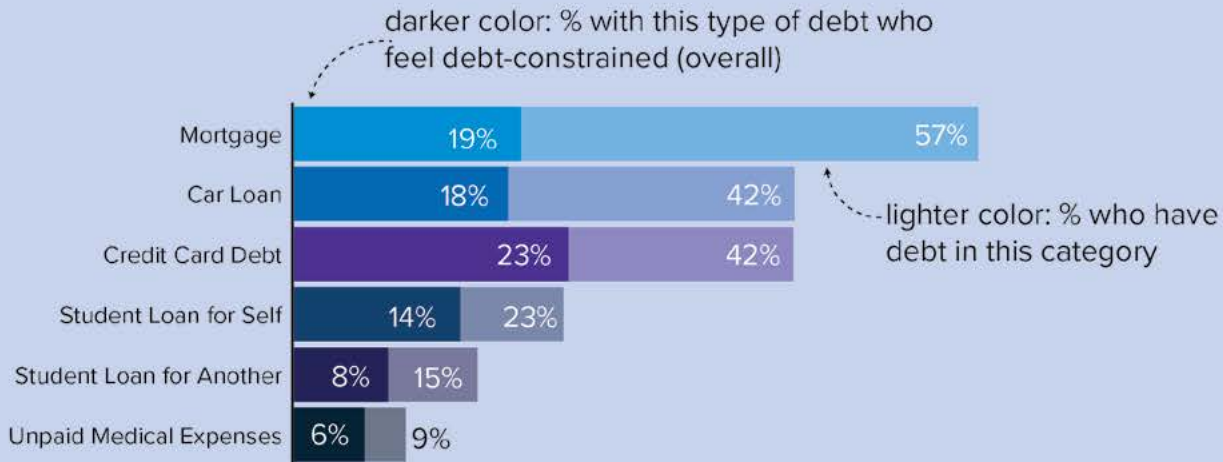
Difficulty making ends meet varies by ethnicity



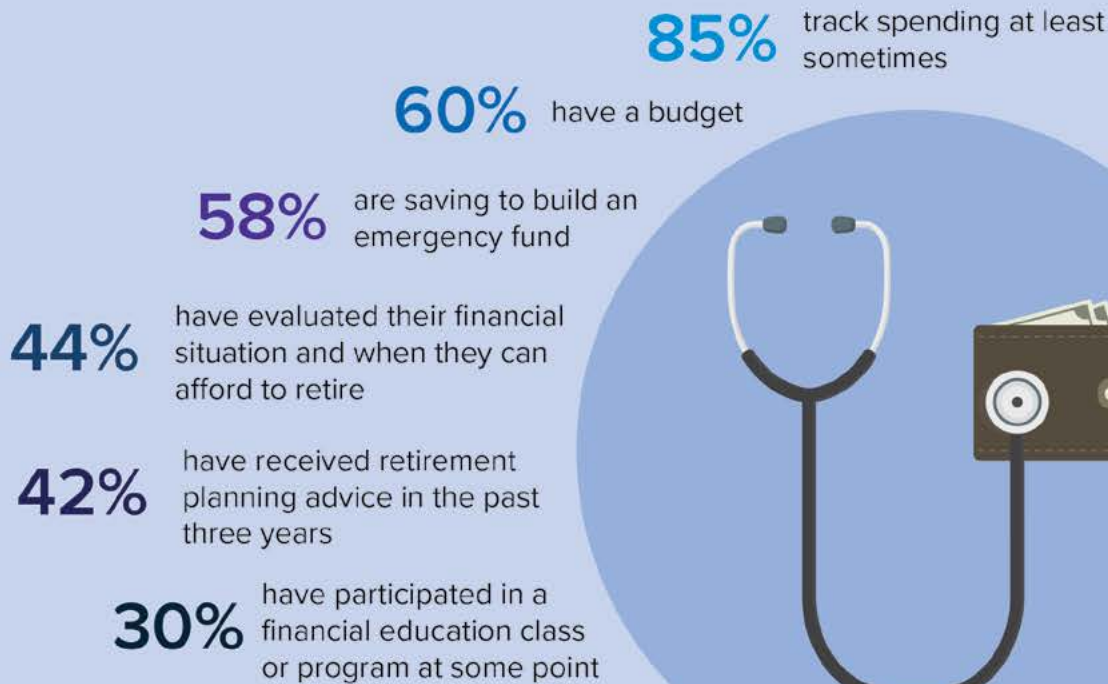
¹number of participants = 1,004

²finances refers to assets, debts, and savings

80% reported at least one type of debt



Financial Wellness Practices





DOL's Overtime Rule: Past, Present and Future

By Josh Ulman and Basil Thomson

Five and a half years ago, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Wage and Hour Division (WHD) proposed changes to the 2004 regulations governing overtime pay requirements under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

The long journey to a final rule has spanned two different presidential administrations and included the development of a Request for Information (RFI), two Notice of Proposed Rulemakings (NPRMs), two final rules (2016 and 2019), multiple in-person listening sessions, and federal court litigation. The less-than-straightforward implementation process resulted in years of uncertainty for the regulated community, leading CUPA-HR to dedicate considerable resources to advocacy strategies and education efforts.

Background

The FLSA requires employers to pay their employees at least a minimum hourly wage and an overtime rate for every hour the employee works over 40 hours in a week. The statute exempts certain categories of employees from these requirements, including executive, administrative and professional employees (the “white-collar” exemption). The FLSA tasks the DOL with defining executive, administrative and professional employees by regulation and requires the department to revisit these definitions from “time to time.”

Until January 1, 2020, these white-collar employees were exempt from the FLSA’s overtime and wage requirements if they were paid a salary of at least \$455 per week or \$23,660 annually, and primarily performed

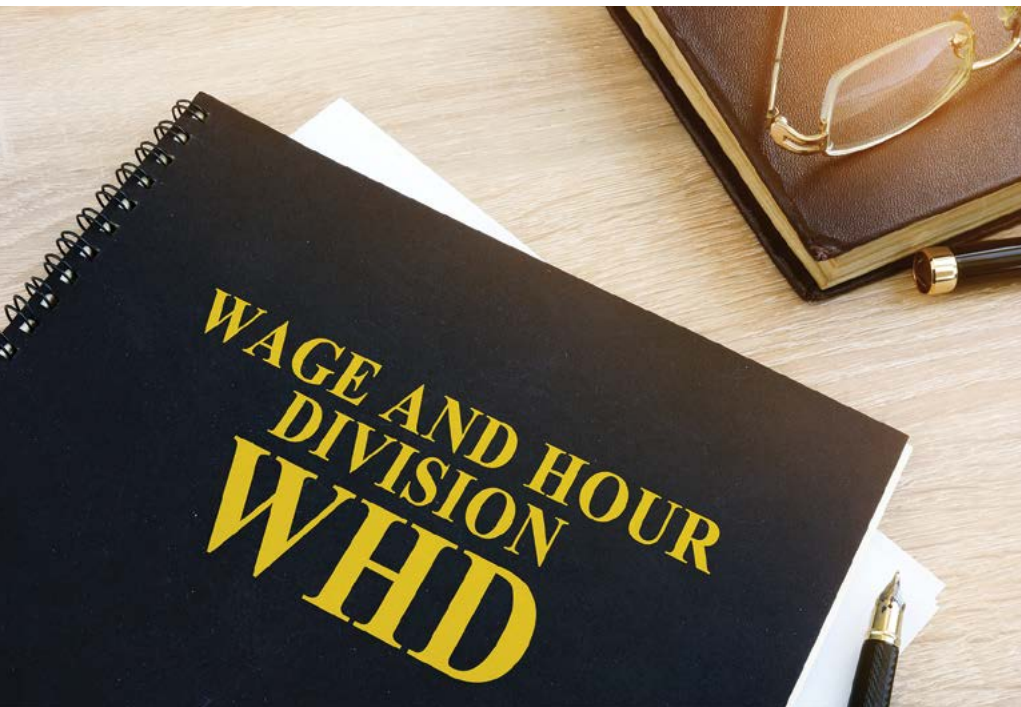
responsibilities that the DOL considers customary of professional, executive and administrative work. These responsibilities were defined in a 2004 regulation.

Changes Under President Obama's DOL

Toward the end of President Obama’s second term, he issued a memorandum directing the Secretary of Labor to revisit the 2004 rule and make changes to the white-collar exemptions. On June 30, 2015, in response to the memo, the DOL proposed increasing the overtime threshold to \$50,440 per year and automatic annual increases to the salary threshold. This was the first time an automatic threshold increase would have been imposed by the DOL. That proposal was met with widespread concern from colleges and

universities across the country, leading CUPA-HR to submit comments and economic analyses, write letters to Congress and meet with administration officials to advocate for positive changes to the DOL’s initial proposal.

With the new rule having taken effect on January 1, 2020, we are revisiting the lengthy journey that led to this point, highlighting resources and continuing areas of concern, and previewing some advocacy items that are to come.





Nevertheless, the DOL issued a final rule in May 2016 increasing the salary threshold to \$47,476 per year and implementing automatic updates every three years. On November 22, 2016, before the final rule could go into effect, a federal court in Texas temporarily enjoined the DOL from enforcing the new regulation. The court issued a decision permanently enjoining the rule on September 1, 2017. President Obama's DOL appealed the injunction, and the Trump administration, which inherited the appeal, requested and was granted several extensions as it considered the best path forward.

Changes Under President Trump's DOL

Part of the DOL's consideration involved the June 2017 issuance of an RFI seeking comment about how the DOL should go about updating the overtime regulations in light of the court's ruling. Later that fall, informed by a survey of 334 chief HR officers, CUPA-HR, joined by 20 other higher ed associations, filed

substantive comments on the RFI outlining what we believed to be the DOL's best course of action moving forward.

The following year, the DOL announced five public listening sessions to gather additional feedback on questions related to the salary test. In March 2019, the DOL published a new proposal raising the salary threshold to \$679 per week or \$35,308 annually. CUPA-HR, joined by 18 other higher ed associations, filed comments in response, offering general support for the DOL's proposal while also including suggestions for improvement. On September 24, 2019, much sooner than many had anticipated, the DOL announced its final rule raising the minimum salary level generally required for exemption from \$455 per week or \$23,660 annually to \$684 per week or \$35,568 annually. The final rule went into effect January 1, 2020.

CUPA-HR FLSA Overtime Resources

The Impact of the DOL's Exempt Salary Increase on Higher Education Employers

Prepared by Alex Passantino, Partner of Seyfarth Shaw and former acting administrator of the DOL's Wage and Hour Division, this detailed white paper provides guidance in determining whether higher ed employees are exempt under the FLSA following the implementation of the final rule. Specifically, it includes guidance related to the treatment of:

- Coaches
- Athletic Trainers
- Academic and Non-Academic Administrators
- Residence Hall Directors
- Post Docs

The paper also explores situations of interest to higher ed, such as prorating the salary threshold for partial-year employees whose salaries are paid throughout the year, and circumstances where salary amounts are paid by multiple entities.

FLSA Overtime Final Rule: What You Need to Know

This on-demand webinar took place soon after the new rule was announced. It includes an excellent overview of the changes and issues of particular concern to higher ed employers. Learn more at www.cupahr.org/webinars.

The Impact of the FLSA Overtime Rule on Higher Education

This research brief details the history of the salary threshold and looks at the higher ed areas most likely to be impacted, based on CUPA-HR's extensive higher ed workforce data.

For more, visit **CUPA-HR's FLSA Overtime News and Resources** web page at www.cupahr.org/flsa.



Seeking Additional Clarification Through Opinion Letters

In June 2017, the DOL announced that it would reinstate the issuance of opinion letters, a longstanding practice of the DOL before it was eliminated during the Obama administration and replaced with broader “administrator interpretations” to employers and employees regarding application of the FLSA. An opinion letter is an official document authored by the WHD on how a law applies to specific circumstances presented by the person or entity requesting the letter. Opinion letters represent official statements of agency policy and can provide insight into how the DOL would interpret the application of the laws on which the letters

Since the change, the DOL has been active in providing guidance to employers through the opinion-letter process.

offer guidance. Most importantly for employers, opinion letters may be relied upon as a good-faith defense to wage claims arising under the FLSA.

Since the policy change, the DOL has been very active in providing guidance to employers through the opinion-letter process. Two letters of importance to higher ed were issued to clarify the use of the teacher exemption to coaches and extension agents. These letters are also explained in-depth in the CUPA-HR white paper.

One letter, FLSA2018-6, addresses the application of the teacher exemption to overtime pay of coaches at a local public school. The school employed no full-time coaches, instead relying upon community members to meet its coaching needs. According to the letter, the coaches spent most of their time instructing student athletes in the rules and fundamentals of their sports, while also devoting time to recruiting, supervising team members during trips to and from games, disciplining team members and accounting for equipment.

The DOL concluded that the coaches qualified as exempt teachers.

In the second letter, FLSA2019-4, the DOL recognized the application of the teacher exemption to a nutritional outreach instructor employed by a land-grant public university. The position was employed through an extension services department and required a high school diploma or GED. Because the primary duty of that position was to impart knowledge — in this case, knowledge about nutrition and cooking techniques — the DOL found that the teacher exemption applied. Notably, the DOL also recognized that the “regulations do not restrict where a teacher may teach or to whom a teacher may impart knowledge, [and concluded that] an employee who teaches online or remotely may also qualify for the teacher exemption.”

While these letters, the DOL’s guidance and CUPA-HR’s white paper have clarified many of the lingering questions related to the white-collar exemption, there are still areas where additional clarification is needed. For instance, employees engaged in medical internships or resident programs are exempt from overtime without regard to salary, but it is unclear whether veterinarian interns or residents would similarly fall within the exemption. CUPA-HR has

received numerous questions on applicability of the exemptions to situations such as that of the veterinarian intern, and we are focusing our advocacy work on guidance and opinion letters from the DOL for clarity.

Additional Regulations to Keep in Mind

In addition to the WHD’s work on overtime, it is also working on updates to regulations governing the regular-rate requirements and the fluctuating workweek method of pay which may impact employer considerations as it relates to overtime. At the time of writing, the DOL’s final rule on the regular rate had just cleared review at the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. This likely means it will have been issued by the time this issue of the magazine reaches you. Look for finalized regulations governing the fluctuating workweek later in 2020.

***About the authors:** Josh Ulman is chief government relations officer for CUPA-HR. Basil Thomson is government relations specialist for CUPA-HR.*



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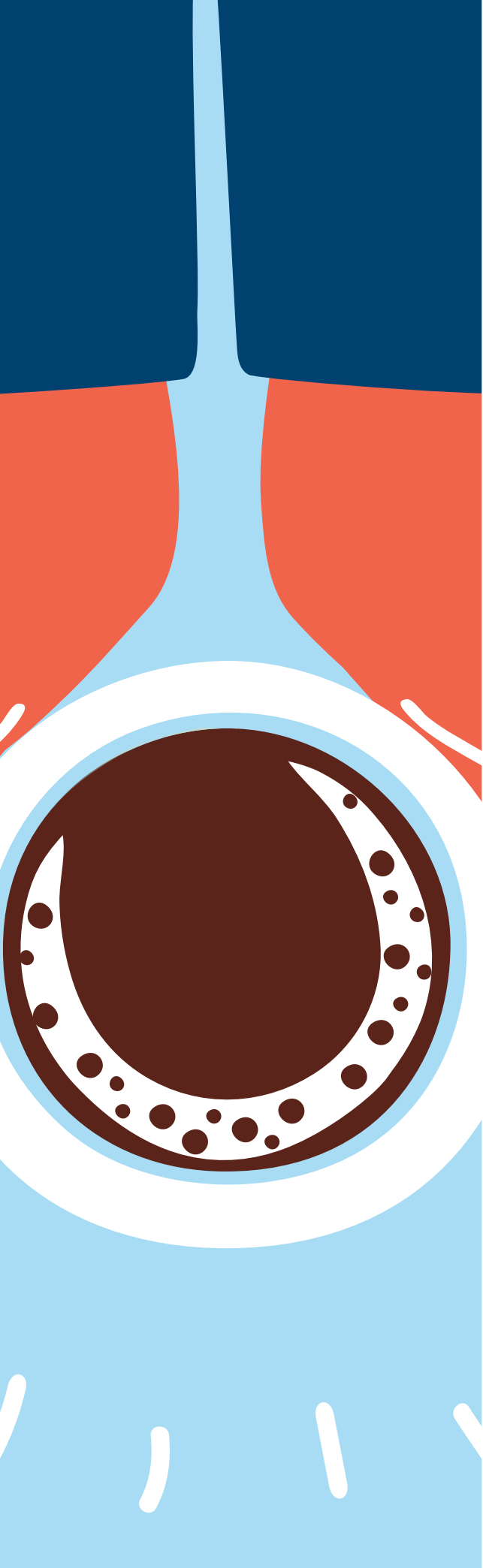
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Leading With Kindness

Characteristics of Caring Work Cultures

By Michael O'Malley and Kristin Heasley

Suppose you could increase employee well-being, reduce benefits costs and improve productivity, all by doing one thing that is entirely under your control — teaching leadership to practice kindness in the workplace. La Salle University's HR department began its campus transformation two years ago, recognizing that leadership and the culture it creates are essential to boosting employee health and organizational success.

Although leadership is multi-faceted, here we'll focus on kindness — an often-understated attribute of leadership.

The Case for Kindness

In recent years, kindness has surged in importance and is vying for an esteemed place among other organizational virtues. Kindness offers organizational and life-affirming benefits. Studies have shown that those who are mindful of the needs of others and engage in acts of generosity are happier and more optimistic; experience greater satisfaction with life and psychological well-being; feel more connected to others; are less socially anxious; have a greater sense of self-worth; are more understanding and less critical of their own mistakes; and tend to be more forward-thinking and motivated.

Kind acts within an organization foster greater sociability, connectedness, interpersonal trust and cooperation among employees. Practicing kindness also encourages thoughtfulness and restraint when you're tempted by the mood of the moment and reduces tendencies to impulsively react and put your self-interest first. Additionally, kind and caring acts are essential to preserving amicable and harmonious relationships, upon which all successful organizations are built.

La Salle University's HR department has emphasized several cultural priorities, including creating level playing fields; recognizing and celebrating employees' important life events; going above and beyond; not "funishing" employees; and rooting out and alleviating incivility.

Level Playing Fields

Companies with caring cultures create environments where employees are less likely to feel inferior. They downplay status and power differences throughout the organization, which can hinder sincere, two-way communication. Executives have open-door

Kind acts within an organization foster greater sociability, connectedness, interpersonal trust and cooperation among employees.

policies; workspaces tend to be undifferentiated; status symbols such as special parking places do not exist or are limited or allocated by need; and organizational structures are flat (employees see themselves more in terms of their job function than as titles or on a hierarchical scale).

Furthermore, executives model the equal value of people. For example, employees at educational technology company Instructure frequently see the CEO with employees early in the morning, discussing work and career paths over coffee. Clearly, this executive plays a more vital role in the business than other employees,

but his actions demonstrate that each employee is valued as an equal with unique talents.

Recognition and Celebration of Important Life Events

La Salle make a point to celebrate significant dates and life events for their employees. Celebrating and sympathizing with employees shows regard for others' feelings and needs. Like a caring family, caring organizations share meals together during special occasions, celebrate holidays and recognize important life transitions, such as marriages or retirements. These celebrations form the foundations of social capital by creating tighter bonds among employees.

Going Above and Beyond

Some organizations are stretching far beyond the norms of recognition and celebration. BambooHR treats birthdays as paid holidays. N2 Publishing, a high-quality publisher of local magazines, gives newlyweds a \$400 marriage stipend and continues the gift annually. Insomniac Games, an award-winning games developer, provides new parents with a custom onesie, art books and toys, as well as a baby briefcase to help parents keep newborn paperwork organized. Edmunds, the authoritative, independent source for all things automotive, has a weekly gathering called Cadillac Catch-Up. Every Thursday, the company recognizes work anniversaries, births, new employees, retirements and other life events.

Some companies have special accommodations in place for sick

employees, give extra time off when needed, arrange transportation when employees have lost theirs, pay medical bills to supplement a family's insurance, provide temporary housing for employees in transition, put deceased employees' children through college, and more. Other examples include programs dedicated to servicing employee needs. The Motley Fool introduced the Fool in Need program where employees voluntarily contribute a few dollars each pay period to a fund pool to help others. Only a select few administer the program to ensure the privacy of

those who receive aid through the fund. Concord Hospitality created an annual six-figure reserve to confidentially help employees with urgent needs. Insomniac Games has a leave donation bank that accumulates donated vacation days for anyone to use for unforeseen medical hardships.

No "Funishment"

Healthy organizations realize that their effectiveness relies upon the goodwill and solidarity of groups. Because of this, much effort is put into social outings and rituals that bring employees together. These outings are not the forced activities

conjured up in annual meetings. They also are not, as one employee coined, "funishments"—artificial teambuilding exercises that people are forced to take part in and enjoy.

Social events that build the joints and connective tissues of teams, which in turn enable members to move nimbly and effectively in unison, occur regularly and spontaneously in the organizations. Social activities may appear contrary to real work, and no-nonsense organizations may view it as time that could be better spent putting fingers to keyboards. However, forming meaningful relationships

Is Your Institution Falling Into the Toxic Leadership Trap?

Take note of how hostile behaviors could be penetrating the boundaries of ethics and etiquette within your workplace. Your institution may be falling into the toxic leadership trap if:

- Executive leadership at your organization doesn't believe extreme behaviors occur within the organization, such as those exemplified by bully managers, and stories are dismissed as exaggerations of dissatisfied or vengeful employees.
- Your organization keeps destructive managers around because they offer something of value to the organization (revenue, research, innovations).
- Your organization takes sides with the perpetrator instead of the victim. In a recent instance, authorities told a female worker who had received sexually explicit messages from her boss not to give out her personal cell phone number and to change it to prevent future occurrences. Similarly, if a manager targets an employee, observers are sometimes quick to infer that the employee must be "uncooperative" or "difficult" or has done something that provoked the manager.
- There are enablers at your organization. Toxic managers are unable to inflict damage alone — they need help from people who will watch over them, keep them safe and do their bidding. Often, this includes protégés of senior managers who are rewarded for their loyalty.
- Employees experience retaliation after disclosing to internal administration an issue they're having with someone in a leadership position.

is real work that top-performing companies emphasize. These companies realize that personal affinities and deep social bonds are failsafe measures against team breakdowns and are critical to team performance.

Root Out Incivility Among Leadership
Despite the elevation of kindness and social solidarity in business conversations, an ample inventory of incivility persists in the workplace. Studies show that workplace incivility (discourteous, rude, condescending behaviors) has worsened over the past decade, especially as it relates to leadership.

In a recent survey, 36 percent of employees said they have managers whom they would describe as “dysfunctional.” This makes sense, given that 75 percent of employees say their boss is the most stressful part of their job.

Poor leadership can lead to devastating psychological and physiological harm. Our bodies mobilize their defenses to stressors by changing glucose levels, cardiovascular output, blood flow, respiration and engaging our “fight or flight” response. These reflexive mechanisms are designed for short-term maneuvers to repel or escape harm, yet employees who spend a sizeable chunk of their waking hours at work are subject to an ongoing state of stress. A prolonged state of high arousal can lead to decreased concentration, sleep disturbances, fatigue, weight loss, depression, headaches, backaches, gastrointestinal complications, musculoskeletal disorders and cardiovascular disease. Stress-related costs attributed to absenteeism,

turnover, declines in productivity and increased healthcare expenses are between \$200 billion and \$300 billion annually in the United States. Clearly, employees cannot perform optimally under unrelenting pressure.

Creating a Caring Culture

If you see your work culture as less than caring, here are some tips to get your organization started down the right path based on the experiences of La Salle University:

1. Assess the current culture, and identify key leaders who will champion your cause. It’s a truism that change begins from the top, and it’s unlikely that change will occur without a push from senior leadership. Think about how you can connect with those individuals and use their status and contacts to influence others. Openly share your list of priorities with them, and ask them to support HR’s strategic plan.
2. Look for opportunities to partner with faculty, vendors and consultants to help bring critical programming to campus. A number of people and entities are available to provide employees with opportunities for educational and personal growth at little to no cost. These activities confirm genuine employer concern that employees’ lives do not exist only outside the workplace. By bringing vendors and other subject-matter experts (such as nutrition counselors, stress management therapists, retirement planners, budgeting experts or even someone to explain Medicare) into your campus community, you enhance

employees’ abilities to cope with whatever life throws their way, and you underscore their value to the institution.

3. Engage employees in the change effort. As busy HR professionals, we don’t always have the time to fully participate in our campus communities. Don’t let your role stand in the way of getting to know your employees and letting them get to know you. If you want people to come to your events and read your newsletters, go to their events and read theirs. Ask for ideas and input, and help every chance you get. La Salle HR regularly checks in with employees — informally at events and formally through surveys, focus groups and one-on-one discussions. Employees want to feel included and will likely be happy to assist in the transformation to a kind, caring community.

Kindness in Action

After seeing first-hand how companies are benefiting from kind, caring leadership and the cultures they engender, the transformational efforts at La Salle are paying off, as the university’s workforce is now exhibiting a renewed vitality; managers have readily accepted their roles as active talent developers; and there have been noticeable improvements in educational and performance metrics.

***About the authors:** Kristin Heasley is assistant vice president of human resources at La Salle University. Michael O’Malley is managing director at Pearl Meyer.*



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Mindfulness Matters

Strategies for Centering, Reflecting
and Meditating in the Workplace

By Jennifer Addleman

Chiming in on a conference call while driving. Watching a webinar while working on a project. Scrolling through social media while watching your favorite show. Sound familiar? Being busy is the modern-day badge of honor, and many of us are self-declared multitaskers as a result. The variety of tasks that get tossed onto our desks in higher ed HR requires us to juggle our day-to-day work with the unexpected, making it easy to see why we place so much emphasis on multitasking.

For years we've heard that multitasking is a positive skill. As recruiters, we know that candidates who claim multitasking as one of their best attributes may be more likely to snag a job than those who can handle only one task at a time. However, in reality, being pulled in so many different directions can lead to stress, depression and nagging agitation. A 2017 Gallup poll found that eight out of 10 Americans feel stressed. Chronic stress can lead to difficulties with digestion, sleep, reproduction and overall health.

Maybe it's time to bring manic multitasking to an end and focus on mindfulness instead.

Why Mindfulness?

There is plenty of research in the area of mindfulness and the effects it has on the body and mind. The University of California Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center uses a mindfulness attention awareness scale to determine how distractions interfere with mindfulness throughout daily activities. The survey asks respondents to rate the prevalence of statements, such as "I tend to walk quickly to get

where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way;" "I forget a person's name almost as soon as it's been told to me for the first time;" "I drive to places on auto pilot and then wonder why I went there;" and "I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past." If you relate to these statements, try practicing mindfulness to help you concentrate on the present moment and the task at hand.

What comes to mind when you hear the term meditation or mindfulness? Does the thought of closing your eyes and sitting still in the midst of a busy workday make you squirm? Before you toss the idea altogether, let's break down what mindfulness is, and what it's not:

- Mindfulness is the practice of being present, aware of and accepting your thoughts, emotions and sensations as you experience them.
- Mindfulness is not religious practice, nor is it necessary to sit on a pillow while chanting, surrounded by candles and incense.
- Mindfulness is not about emptying the mind. It's about recognizing your thoughts from a place of appreciation, without letting them take over.

Thoughts race across our minds at light speed — some positive, some negative — while our minds engage in an internal dialogue. We choose the thoughts to which we give the most attention. Being mindful doesn't mean ignoring negative thoughts completely. Rather, it means to observe negative thoughts and then let go of the power they have on your mind. Doing so will free up headspace for kind and positive thoughts, and you may find that you react more positively and productively when negative situations arise.

Effects on the Brain

There are numerous studies that explore the positive effects mindfulness and meditation have on the brain. Our brains are powerful and complex organs made up of

Maybe it's time to bring manic multitasking to an end and focus on mindfulness instead.

three parts: the prefrontal cortex, the hippocampus and the amygdala. The prefrontal cortex helps with awareness and decision-making. It's the logical part of your brain that helps you remember not to touch a hot stove. The hippocampus helps with your memory and the ability to learn new things. The amygdala is responsible for fear, or the "fight or flight" response.

The amygdala was helpful to our ancestors when facing dangerous situations, like deciding whether to fight or run from a saber-toothed tiger. The amygdala signals a response from other parts of the brain and body, causing an increase in heart rate, rapid breathing and extra oxygen flow to the brain to make you alert. While we're no longer threatened by saber-toothed tigers, we may be confronted by a colleague or have to deliver bad news at our institution or a speech in front of a large crowd. Meditation has been proven to help tackle these modern-day saber-toothed tigers.

A University of Oregon neuroscientist studied the effects of meditation on the brain and found that regular meditation decreases the amygdala's brain cell volume, which is responsible for fear, anxiety and stress. Other studies showed that when the amygdala shrinks, it also thickens the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus, which enables you to handle stressful situations in a more productive way and enhances decision-making abilities. Further studies conclude that

long-term memory can benefit from meditation. If you have difficulty recalling facts under pressure, meditation may help.

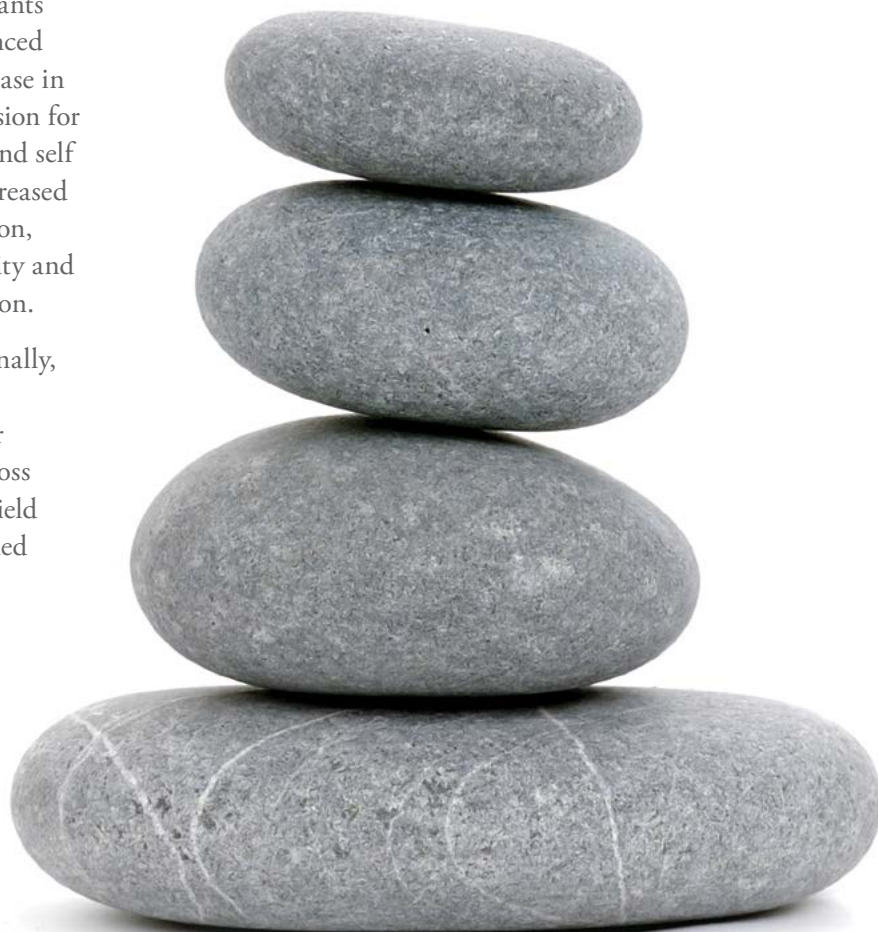
Studies support that mindfulness exercises can benefit the way we behave and feel. Some higher ed institutions have conducted research and offer courses that weave in mindfulness and meditation to boost the health and productivity of employees and students. Northeastern University, Harvard and Headspace researched the effects of participants using a meditation app for two weeks.

Results showed that participants experienced an increase in compassion for others and self and decreased aggression, irritability and depression.

Additionally, medical provider Blue Cross Blue Shield performed a study that

found meditation helped employees through changes they encountered in their professional and personal lives.

Participants reported feeling calmer and better equipped to handle changes in a more productive way after taking part in mindfulness exercises and meditation. Practicing mindfulness during a season of change allows individuals to pinpoint and process their feelings, in turn helping them become more aware of their reactions and gain more control over their responses.



"In a busy workplace, building in deliberate time to pause and breathe is critical to both the well-being of individual employees and the collective health of the organization."

On the Institutional Level

Employers are taking notice of the positive impact mindfulness programs have on their workforces. Promoting mindfulness programs not only fosters a greater sense of community, but doing so can also improve productivity and absenteeism rates among the organization.

Companies like General Mills, Delta Airlines, Apple, Google and Goldman Sachs value the benefits of mindfulness programs by offering meditation apps, meditation rooms, classes and on-site wellness centers that promote meditation and emotional health. Many higher ed institutions, including Harvard, Clemson University, The Ohio State University and the University of California San Diego offer a variety of mindfulness programs and spaces where faculty, staff and students can practice mindfulness exercises. A recent study by the University of Miami reported that offering its football team the option to participate in mindfulness activities as a part of its training program helped improve players' moods and focus.

Putting Mindfulness Into Practice

There are many ways to practice mindfulness. Some include meditation, breathing exercises and sensory impressions. One of the easiest ways to practice mindfulness is to focus on your breathing.

Most of us default to shallow breathing and poor posture, especially during stressful times. Shallow breathing results in poor oxygen flow throughout the body. Recent studies have shown that practicing controlled breathing for short periods of time can improve focus, reduce anxiety, slow the heart rate and lower blood pressure.

Other breathing exercises include box breathing and alternate nostril breathing. To practice box breathing, imagine a square in front of you and breathe around the square. Sit or stand up straight to maximize lung capacity, then inhale for a count of four, hold your breath for a count of four, exhale for a count of four, wait for a count of four and repeat. Box breathing is a quick exercise to help calm the body and can be done anywhere. Alternate nostril breathing is alternating inhaling and exhaling through each nostril. This exercise can help boost energy levels and reduce anxiety.

Sensory exercises have been used to help with anxiety, especially in group settings. Positive psychology uses the raisin as an example, but this exercise can be done with any kind of food or object. With the raisin (or other object) in front of you, pay attention to how it looks, feels, smells and tastes. What happens to the raisin when you move it around in your hand? Concentrating on each detail of the object helps you focus on the

task at hand. This exercise can be done simply by paying attention to the senses around you. What do you see, hear, smell, feel and taste? This application helps you become more aware of the present moment and can be done while on a walk or waiting in line.

Results at Rollins College

Rollins College utilizes various mindfulness techniques on campus. Michele "Micki" Meyer, Lord Family assistant vice president for student affairs—community, asks her staff to meditate before team meetings. Meyer also leads mindfulness sessions across the campus throughout the year for faculty, staff and students. "I've found that meditation has helped employees across campus build resilience in the workplace," says Meyer. "Taking a few moments to allow staff members to slow down, tune in and center before a meeting has helped them focus on the task at hand. In a busy workplace, building in deliberate time to pause and breathe is critical to both the well-being of individual employees and the collective health of the organization."

Several units on campus have implemented mindfulness sessions during meetings by encouraging team members to follow along with a meditation app for 10 minutes. During a study on the effectiveness of mindfulness practices, a mindfulness quiz was distributed before the meditation to evaluate

the staff's ability to remain present and focused. The same quiz was distributed after several sessions. The results were positive and identified improvements in most areas, such as being more present in situations and staying focused while performing tasks. Employees expressed their interest in practicing mindfulness on a regular basis.

Another way Rollins College is committed to the mental well-being of faculty, staff and students is by offering mindful meditation, yoga and tai chi classes. A new student residential housing facility will include a yoga and meditation room. The college's well-being committee recently awarded financial grants to faculty and staff departments to help purchase meditation apps for their

teams to promote mindfulness.

Practice What You Preach

As HR leaders, we often put the needs of others before our own, but it's important to take a few mindful moments for ourselves so that we can engage in positive interactions with colleagues and better serve students.

What can you do to practice mindfulness throughout your workday? It doesn't have to be an in-depth course. It can be as simple as taking several small moments throughout the day to do a breathing exercise.

Remember, mindfulness is not a quick fix. Just like a regular wellness regimen, it takes time and practice. Start with a small challenge to

practice mindfulness for five days. Once your five days are up, reflect on how the practice influenced your interactions at work.

A Breath of Fresh Air

While we don't always have control over the projects that pile onto our desks, the interactions we have with our coworkers or the distractions that derail our workflow, we can control how we react and approach each task. Immersing mindfulness into your daily routine can help you begin each workday with a positive mindset, better prioritize your to-do list and cultivate a more productive work environment, one deep breath at a time.

About the author: Jennifer Addleman is director of benefits and well-being at Rollins College.

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ON-CAMPUS CHILDCARE

Building a Better Work-Life Balance

By Christopher Dominiak



“Does the childcare center have a good reputation?”

“Are they qualified to care for my child?”

“What will it cost?”

These questions, among others, fill the minds of parents preparing to return to work after the birth of a child. One way several institutions are helping alleviate the stresses involved in choosing a childcare provider is by providing on-campus childcare. On-campus childcare has been proven to help working parents better focus on their work, boost the productivity of employees with young children and promote a healthy work-life balance.

While some organizations may picture dollar signs when thinking about introducing on-campus childcare as an employee benefit, the benefits often offset the cost.

Benefits

On-site childcare can ...

- help reduce employee absenteeism and tardiness by cutting out drop-off, pick-up and out-of-the-way commutes;
- increase productivity, engagement and morale among employees;
- be used as a recruitment and retention tool;
- encourage employees to return to work sooner after the birth of a child;
- promote work-life balance;
- allow employees to check on their children throughout the day and allow breastfeeding mothers access to their children;

- frame the institution as an employer of choice;
- make the institution eligible for state and federal tax credits;
- increase retention of students with children and increase on-time graduation rates.

Student Involvement

Beyond the scope of potential benefits and challenges, consider how the center can bring more to the institution by doubling as a research laboratory, early childhood education site or internship provider where students in child-related studies can gain teaching experience.

The University of Tennessee-Knoxville's Early Learning Center is affiliated with the Department of Child and Family Studies and accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The center has received academic support from more than 100 students enrolled

in child and family studies disciplines, such as audiology, speech pathology, nursing, psychology and special education. The center has undergone multiple research studies on topics such as nutrition, literacy, physical activity and teaching experiences.

Visit <https://elc.utk.edu/> to learn more about UTK's Early Learning Center.

Challenges

The prospect of on-campus childcare may seem like a no-brainer once you've considered the potential benefits for the institution, employees and students. However, institutions must first decide if the venture is worth the financial investment, time commitment and liability, and what rules and stipulations to put in place.

Cost

On-site childcare doesn't mean free childcare. Costs will fall to the institution (if it's provided as an employee benefit) or employees who utilize the service (if its purpose is to bring in revenue).

Space and Furnishings

Is there indoor and outdoor space currently available for a childcare facility? If so, does it meet licensing requirements, state regulations and fire department codes? Does the space include access to restrooms and a kitchen? If space isn't available, will a facility be built? Don't forget to take into account fire safety, building codes, zoning and environmental health. Once space has been determined, furnishings, toys, snacks and cleaning supplies still need to be stocked on an ongoing basis.

Hours of Operation

What will the hours of operation be? This is dependent on employee work schedules, which are dependent on the needs of the institution. Some employees may arrive at the office early in the morning and some may leave later in the evening. How will this affect hours?

Institutions must first decide if the venture is worth the financial investment, time commitment and liability, and what rules and stipulations to put in place.

Staffing

Background checks must be performed on all childcare staff members. An alternative to traditional staffing could be partnering with students in child-related studies. Students could work at the center to earn internship hours and gain teaching experience.

Liability

An institution's liability increases when all-day infant or toddler care is offered, and this may result in higher insurance premiums.

Building and Child Security

This includes thorough incident-reporting processes, background checks, hiring qualified workers, installing security technology around campus, making employees aware of who is coming in and out of the facility, and training facility staff for emergencies.

Tension Among Staff

Employees who don't have children may see childcare benefits as unfair treatment, which could create tension among employees. The flip side to this is that employees without children could benefit indirectly from reduced absenteeism and tardiness of colleagues with children.

Other Considerations

Before any business idea is set in motion, leaders must first assess the needs of the target demographic. In the case of on-campus childcare, you may find that there are working parents at your institution who prefer the daycare where their children are currently enrolled, or maybe the size of your institution isn't favorable for the venture.

Creating enrollment restrictions and payment options are also of utmost importance.

Solicit Interest

Has on-campus childcare been explicitly expressed as a growing need among employees? Consider sending out a survey to gauge interest.

Enrollment Regulations

How many children per employee can be enrolled? What is the age cut-off? Will the service be provided to single parents only or dual-career households as well?

Payment Options

What payment options exist? Will income-based rates be available? Will rates be higher for dual-income households? What about dual-income households with multiple children enrolled?

Institution Size

Is the size of your institution conducive to a childcare facility?

What Level of Risk Is Your Institution Willing to Invest in On-Campus Childcare?

High-Risk Business Model

Management-Fee Contract: The childcare provider manages operations and performs day-to-day functions in exchange for a management fee that covers administrative costs. The institution has a direct say in rates, hours of operation and salaries. Revenue will be returned to the institution and deficits will be charged back to the institution. The institution assumes all financial risk and reward.

Medium-Risk Business Model

Profit and Loss: The childcare provider performs day-to-day management and covers operational losses and retains excess revenue. The institution's financial responsibilities are limited to providing space (existing space or building a facility), building insurance and utilities, providing adequate parking, and maintaining the building, grounds and furnishings. The childcare provider could cover start-up costs while the institution commits to full reimbursement over time.

Low-Risk Business Model

Tuition Discounts or Preferred Provider: The institution provides financial support or guaranteed enrollment at a nearby facility.

Large campuses may be more open to the idea, while small campuses may not support it due to lack of size or interest.

A Tailored Fit

On-campus childcare is not a one-size-fits-all solution. There are multiple ways to bring this service to or modify it to fit your institution. As with any business decision, the institution must determine what level of risk it is willing to invest in on-campus childcare.

If your institution isn't ready to take the leap to on-campus childcare services, consider other options for childcare. The University of Arizona offers sick and back-up childcare programs for their parent-employees. As a part of The University of Arizona's Life and Work Connections, the Sick and

Back-Up Childcare Program offers sick and emergency back-up care for employees eligible for full benefits and students currently enrolled in undergraduate and graduate studies. The program is subsidized by the university, and eligible participants can use the service 10 days per year. The service is applicable when children are sick and unable to attend school or childcare and when there is an unscheduled interruption in regular school and/or childcare arrangements.

Starting From Scratch

On-campus childcare is undoubtedly a massive undertaking. This isn't a service that can be devised and built within a short period of time. However, if you want stakeholders at your institution to seriously consider the idea, the

first step is to start conversations around it. Identify those who will use the service, set up an interest meeting, and compile and share a list of benefits and business models — but be prepared to offer ideas and solutions to the concerns that will no doubt be raised. If your institution cannot support an all-day service, present alternatives, such as sick and back-up childcare. No matter the service level, any form of institution-provided childcare promotes the work-life balance that is not always present in today's workplace.

About the author: Christopher Dominiak is manager, benefits systems & administration at The University of Arizona and a 2018-19 CUPA-HR Wildfire Program participant.

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Destigmatizing Mental Health on Campus

What Can HR Do?

By Matthew Verdecchia



When the behavior of a colleague, faculty member, staff member or student breaks the pattern of that person's typical conduct, it may cause your ears to perk up. Whether you call it intuition or a side effect of working in HR, most of us in the "people business" are aware when something is awry.

Each year, more than 45 million Americans suffer from a wide array of mental illness or behavioral health conditions, including depression, anxiety, factors leading to suicide and more. Yet, a stigma continues to persist that may prevent those affected from seeking help. Like other nationwide organizations, colleges and universities are beginning to prioritize behavioral health education and support services, but they have more work to do to create safe, productive workplaces for all.

Mental health issues impact everyone, making it critical to recognize and assist employees in a proactive, preventive manner that mitigates risk for the institution as a whole.

The Reality of Mental Health on Campus

Accepting the reality that behavioral health issues exist on campus and taking steps to understand their many forms is a step in the right direction. However, behavioral health carries a stigma that often makes it taboo to discuss openly on campus and in the workplace. Not only is mental health often considered a private concern, it is not commonly discussed, causing many people to feel alone in their struggles and to think their condition indicates weakness. Further, many of those affected may fear judgement from others — even their employer — and may be hesitant to reveal

behavior, and those affected by mental health conditions need to know they are not alone.

Let's take a look at the numbers:

- 1 in 10 people in the U.S. have been diagnosed with an emotional illness.
- 1 in 5 experience clinical depression.
- Only 5 percent of individuals with a mental illness seek treatment.
- Of employers surveyed by Watson Wyatt, 53 percent reported that returning to work is more difficult for associates following an absence for a mental health reason.

sometimes be difficult to recognize. Some symptoms include depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance abuse, ADD/ADHD and others.

The best approach to supporting individuals and their emotional well-being is to recognize atypical behavior. While each condition is unique, there are several common indicators that someone is experiencing mental, physical or emotional stress that should be discussed or addressed. Take note if behavior is atypical and starts to become a pattern, such as weight fluctuations, altered sleep patterns, substance abuse or misuse, disinterest in maintaining themselves, or changes in personality, such as a short temper or decreased interest in socializing.

Training and awareness can go a long way toward destigmatizing mental illness, improving empathy, and reducing the fear many feel when engaging with someone experiencing a behavioral health issue.

Depression is now the world's leading cause of disability. For colleges and universities, depression and other forms of mental illness can impact faculty, staff and students and can have an impact across campus, from the classroom to the quad. Providing

From a professional perspective, this change may be noticeable in other ways, including an increase in mistakes at work, changes in behavior and performance, changes in group dynamics, absenteeism or on-the-job presenteeism, issues with focusing, confusion, inconsistent work patterns, lower job efficiency, friction with other associates, unusual behavior, excessive complaints, and signs or symptoms of substance abuse.

Regardless of the specific issue or condition a colleague is experiencing, what happens next is important in order to provide the support and resources necessary to help.

their condition for fear of missed professional opportunities or even loss of employment. On the other side, employers may be afraid to ask questions, which can further exacerbate these feelings and fears.

Mental or behavioral health issues can encompass a wide range of conditions affecting mood or

support and resources, as well as lessening the stigma associated with behavioral health, are critical to effectively address this issue.

Identifying Signs and Symptoms

Behavioral health conditions include myriad diagnoses that, paired with varying symptoms, can

Supporting Those Affected

To support colleagues on campus, take time to improve your understanding of mental, emotional and brain health.

Training and awareness can go a long way toward destigmatizing mental illness, improving empathy, and reducing the fear many feel when engaging with someone experiencing a behavioral health issue.

HR pros should seek out ways to improve campus culture and internal support systems for those affected by mental illness. Consider these strategies:

Partner with resources.

Seek out internal and external services that can extend the reach and support provided on campus, such as employee assistance programs (EAPs), community mental health organizations and hospitals and health clinics. Raise awareness of these resources across campus and ensure they are frequently communicated to faculty, staff and students. These groups can also assist HR in creating and implementing related policies.

Prepare and train key team members. Provide administrators, faculty and staff leadership with the tools necessary to appropriately handle sensitive issues. This empowers leaders to resolve and possibly even prevent issues in the early stages. Ensure that key team members understand how to respond when an incident arises in order to reduce risk, minimize disruption and help those affected get the support and assistance they need.

Practice supportive confrontation. Create a comfortable, private setting when discussing mental health with an

employee or colleague. Be aware of any personal bias ahead of time that could affect the conversation, but most importantly, stay calm, be empathetic and be a good listener.

Knowing when to act and how to respond can make a big difference in the outcomes for both the individual and those around them. If a coworker is exhibiting any of the following, it may be time to take action:

- Expressing feelings of hopelessness
- Acting recklessly or taking risks
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Having dramatic mood changes
- Withdrawing from family, friends and others
- Expressing rage or uncontrolled anger
- Stating they feel like a burden to others or feel trapped
- Displaying unusual anxiety or agitation
- Complaining about not sleeping or sleeping all the time

Through supportive confrontation, encourage the individual to confide in a person of trust (doctor, clergy, counselor) or mental health professional. The EAP can also be a helpful resource in determining appropriate steps. If someone expresses a desire to hurt themselves or others, immediately contact the EAP or 911.

Creating a Stigma-Free Campus Environment

For these efforts to be successful and to support faculty, staff and students with mental illness, there must be a

campus-wide effort to address and eradicate the stigma toward mental health. Educate associates about the signs and symptoms of mental health disorders and encourage them to talk about stress, workload, family commitments and other issues. This helps normalize brain health and emphasizes the fact that mental illnesses are real, common and treatable.

Taking these steps, in combination with providing resources and other mental health benefits, can improve the environment on campus and ensure those impacted by behavioral health issues understand they are not alone.

Everyone wants to be treated with dignity and respect, and by demonstrating the college or university's commitment to effectively addressing behavioral health, faculty, staff and students experiencing these issues will know they can speak up and receive the help they need.

About the author: *Matthew Verdecchia, M.S., CEAP, is senior trainer/organizational development, EAP+Work/Life Services with Health Advocate.*



HR AND BENEFITS

Tag-Teaming to Provide Well-Rounded Wellness Programs

By Ashley Eschler, Tracy Hooker and Erin Tilbury



There's no shortage of articles jam-packed with solutions to workforce issues, yet the solutions often contradict one another. One day the message is that collaborative workspaces are the most ideal, and the next day it's that personal workspaces lead to higher productivity. Current best practices suggest that we need to make personal connections with our employees, and that connecting with them on social media allows us to know them on a personal level; yet, other research suggests that social media usage leads to feelings of depression and anxiety. Swamped with these conflicting messages, who would want to be accountable for a gray area such as workplace well-being?

To determine who is responsible for workplace well-being, take a look at where the motivations for having a “well” workforce lie. Typically, motivations derive from either HR or benefits.

Well-Being Through the HR Lens

Through the HR lens, well-being is seen as a talent and retention tool. When a prospective employee is considering a new position, looking into what the employer offers in the way of wellness programs can be an indicator of what the company culture is or what the company wants its culture to be. HR can and should use well-being as a tool to attract and retain all talent, be it adjunct faculty, your longest-tenured professor or a campus staff member.

Well-being policies help shape the work-life balance an employer offers employees. It’s no longer taboo to ask about well-being policies during interviews out of

fear that the interviewee will be categorized as lazy or leave the impression that work isn’t important to them. As work perks that once existed only within the realm of Silicon Valley employers have slowly crept into the well-being portfolios of higher ed (think lunchtime yoga classes, dry cleaning pickup and meal delivery service discounts), questions about work-from-home

policies, flexible work arrangements and vacation leave are commonly asked by interviewees during the beginning stages of recruitment.

HR also considers well-being initiatives as ways to improve employees’ everyday health. For example, offering the flu vaccine for employees could prevent widespread absences and help maintain a steady workflow around the office.

Well-Being Through the Benefits Lens

On the other hand, in the benefits arena, interest in well-being stems — at least in part — from the fact

prediabetes that could increase the frequency of provider visits and the institution’s healthcare spend in the long run.

For an employer to offer a well-rounded wellness experience, it should consider both programs that benefit the employee culture as a whole and programs that are aimed at long-term health improvements. This means both HR and benefits are responsible for wellness programs.

The University of Colorado Experience

Located in one of the healthiest states in the country, the University of Colorado values wellness as a necessary part of the employee experience and employer offerings. Here, wellness is treated as both a part of HR and a part of benefits. Wellness through HR encompasses all employees, while wellness through benefits targets employees who take advantage of the employer-offered health insurance.

The University of Colorado has HR departments on all of its campuses and in system administration. Due to the unique personality of each campus, HR policies are largely decentralized, with HR leaders meeting regularly to discuss campus action. This allows for each campus, and even departments, to have well-being policies that work best for each campus’ workforce and to compete with other comparable employers in the area. Campus and department leaders are then

For an employer to offer a well-rounded wellness experience, it should consider both programs that benefits the employee culture as a whole and programs that are aimed at long-term health improvements.

that healthier employees will reduce the institution’s healthcare spend. Employers spend large amounts of money on health insurance, and more money is spent on unhealthy employees than healthy ones. While HR professionals tend to focus on factors that could affect employees’ everyday health, benefits professionals focus more on macro health factors, such as high blood pressure, lack of exercise and

empowered to utilize campus resources, such as wellness and recreation centers and faculty and staff expertise, to promote well-being.

Although HR is a shared function among the campuses, health insurance benefits at the University of Colorado are centralized. The University of Colorado insures employees of the university, CU Medicine and UHealth, and their dependents, through the CU Health Plan. The CU Health Plan offers an array of health and dental insurance options, as well as wellness programs that have been selected based on the employee perspective, not the employer perspective.

Wellness is approached as an opportunity to help people be the best version of themselves from a health perspective. Wellness programs are usually focused on changing habits. As is evident through research, people don't change until they're ready. This means that employees won't seriously engage with a wellness program until it's the right time for them. However, the CU Health Plan covers nearly 85,000 people, so every day may be the right time for someone desiring healthy lifestyle changes. This means the employer needs to have programs readily available in a format that fits employees' needs.

The university, as well as CU Medicine and UHealth, have weight-loss programs that incentivize employees to get and stay active, mindful-eating programs, pre-diabetes and hypertension programs, and more.

However, simply offering a program isn't always enough to reach members or keep them engaged. The program delivery must be effective in garnering interest and retaining participants. The university and its affiliated health units have members in all 50 states and around the world, so most wellness programs are available online. There are also in-person classes for those who prefer this method over the digital format. Offering a comprehensive collection of wellness programs should include those aimed at many different disease or pre-disease states and should also include different delivery methodologies.

Measuring Wellness Program Success

With the technological advancements of today, we all look to data to prove the success of our endeavors. With wellness, this means looking at the return on investment (ROI) metrics to prove a program's viability. ROI is a factor, but wellness programs should also focus on their success in changing employees' habits and behaviors. UC regularly hears from employees about what benefits they'd like to have and continually monitors what competitors are offering.

From the benefits angle, UC selects and builds wellness programs aimed at areas with a high healthcare spend or high participant counts. Success is measured by examining participation numbers in our programs and monitoring program engagement based on communication timing, program completion and new participants.

The success of UC's programs is gauged on employee involvement. Because UC has such a large footprint, it relies on individual success stories and word of mouth to get the news out about a program.

The Future of Well-Being

Wellness is becoming more digital, and UC now offers work arrangements to fit people's lives, such as working remotely, flexible work hours and making wellness programs accessible to employees through their cell phone, tablet or other device. Examples of employees using technology to meet their health goals include using the Breathe app on their Apple watches to help them do deep breathing exercises during a stressful work day or snapping a photo of a meal to record the calories before digging in. Adapting policies and programs to fit the needs of the ever-evolving workforce will help employees reach their health goals, help recruit and retain talent, and lower your institution's healthcare spend in the long run.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

January 2020

January 23

Webinar – Quarterly Washington Update With CUPA-HR's Government Relations Team

January 30

Southern New England Chapter Webinar – Changing Demographics

February 2020

February 13

Webinar – Understanding the Higher Education Enrollment Cliff and How HR Can Help

February 26

Webinar – Developing an Integrated Talent Strategy Across the Life Cycle for Faculty and Staff

March 2020

March 20

North Carolina Chapter Professional Development Workshop – Jamestown, North Carolina

March 29-31

CUPA-HR Spring Conference – Savannah, Georgia

April 2020

April 2-3

Iowa Chapter Conference – Des Moines, Iowa

April 8-10

Arkansas Chapter Conference – Hot Springs, Arkansas

April 19-21

CUPA-HR Spring Conference – Minneapolis, Minnesota

April 30-May 1

Southern New England Chapter Conference – Sturbridge, Massachusetts

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