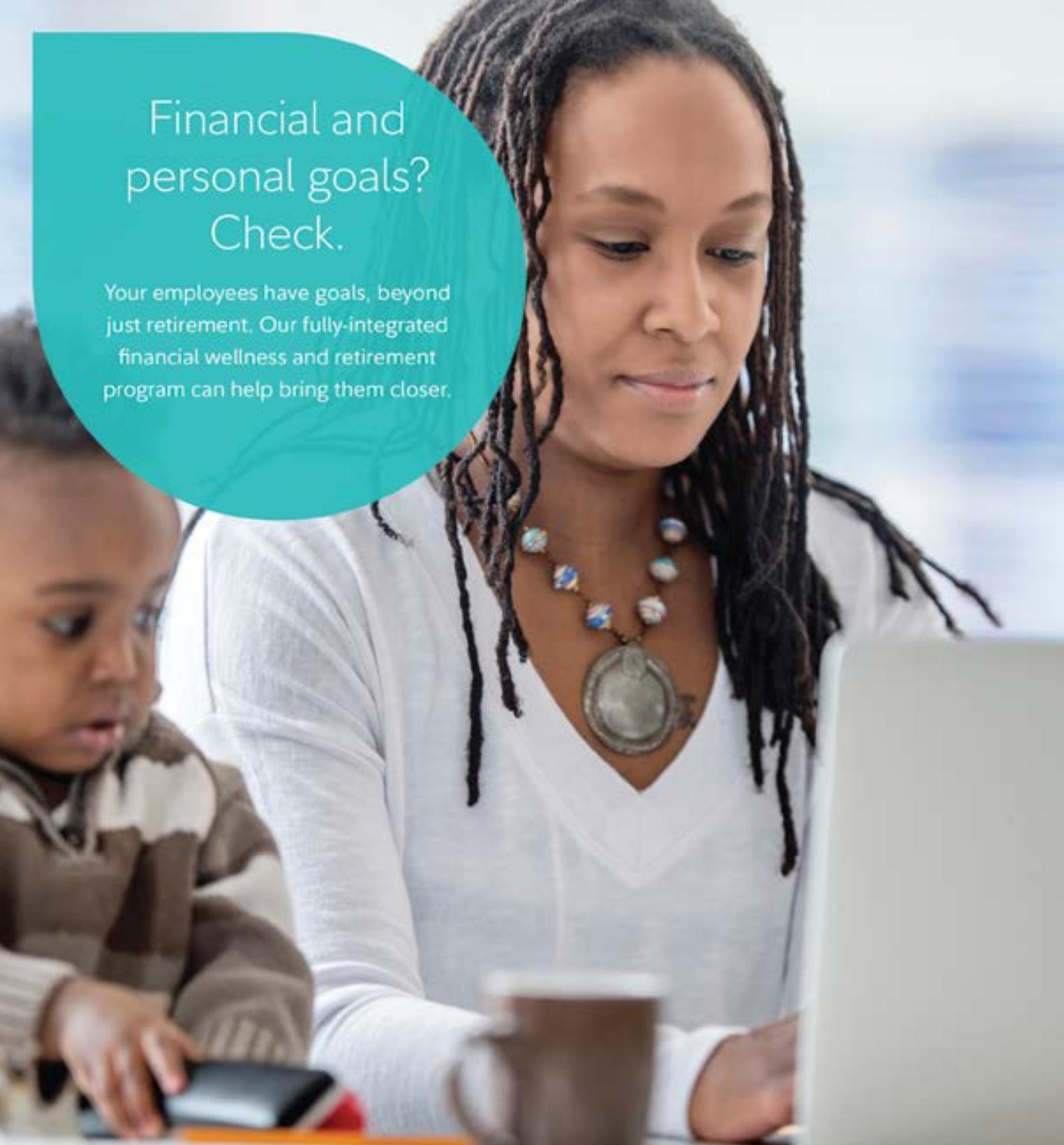


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Baking
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Page 14





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THE WINTER 2020-21 ISSUE



8



20



26



32

ON THE COVER

- 14** Baking Self-Care Into the Culture of HR

DEPARTMENTS

- 4** Briefs
- 6** Research

FEATURES

- 8** The 2020 Presidential Election and What's in Store for Higher Ed HR
- 20** UF Engaged: A Conversation-Centered Campaign That Turned Performance Management on Its Head
- 26** Opening Doors for Strategic Partnerships With Academic Leadership
- 32** A Timely Redesign: How One HR Pro Took Her Institution's Onboarding Process Online

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Featured in This Issue

While pollsters and pundits had forecast that a President-Elect Biden would enter the White House with a significant mandate, buoyed by Democrats broadening their majority in the House of Representatives and flipping the Senate, the reality is that Americans remain divided and President-Elect Biden will have a much more difficult time pushing through the robust legislative reform agenda he campaigned on.

— *The 2020 Presidential Election and What's in Store for Higher Ed HR, Page 8*



So how do we move self-care and effective coping methods from "something to get on the list" to values in higher ed HR offices that are as important as excellent customer service and strategic thinking?

— *Baking Self-Care Into the Culture of HR, Page 14*



As a byproduct of our research, we found that we had lost sight of *why* we evaluated performance. Most telling was that many supervisors gave high evaluation ratings to avoid difficult or uncomfortable conversations, and many supervisors didn't have the tools or expertise to have those meaningful discussions.

— *UF Engaged: A Conversation-Centered Campaign That Turned Performance Management on Its Head , Page 20*



Anyone can be a champion for HR, including those who influence decisions or can remind others that HR is made up of human beings.

— *Opening Doors for Strategic Partnerships With Academic Leadership, Page 26*



"Traditionally at my university, onboarding meant making sure the paperwork and mandatory training were completed ... The new process focuses on the employee and making sure their experience is simple, seamless and enjoyable, and that they are not overwhelmed or stressed. Don't get me wrong, we are not replacing the personal touch with our online system, we are enhancing the experience to decrease our time spent on mundane activities, thereby spending more time to focus on the employee rather than focusing on completing a checklist."

— *A Timely Redesign: How One HR Pro Took Her Institution's Onboarding Process Online, Page 32*





Pew Research Center Poll Finds That 60 Percent of Americans Intend to Get a COVID-19 Vaccine While 21 Percent Say They Do Not Intend to Get Vaccinated

A Pew Research Center survey taken in November found that Americans' intent to get a COVID-19 vaccine has risen to 60 percent (based on a survey of 12,648 U.S. adults) as confidence in the research and development process of the vaccine increases. Conversely, the survey found that 39 percent of U.S. adults say they "definitely" or "probably would not" get vaccinated. However, 18 percent of this group say they might get vaccinated after more people have been vaccinated and more information about the vaccine is available.

While there is uncertainty around who is next in line to receive a COVID-19 vaccine following healthcare workers and first responders, the Pew survey found that 21 percent of U.S. adults said that they do not intend to get vaccinated even when more information about the vaccine is available.

Additionally, the survey found that Black Americans are less likely to get vaccinated compared to other racial or ethnic groups, with only 42 percent saying they would get a vaccine.

Wariness toward the vaccine expressed by adults could make it more challenging for higher ed administrators in the months ahead as they deliberate mandating the vaccine for their institutions.

Source: "Intent to Get a COVID-19 Vaccine Rises to 60% as Confidence in Research and Development Process Increases." *Pew Research Center* article by Cary Funk and Alec Tyson (December 3, 2020).

*CUPA-HR's **COVID-19 Resources page** is frequently updated with useful resources for HR and higher ed administrators as the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on higher education continue to unfold. Visit www.cupahr.org/knowledge-center/covid-19-resources.*



NIRSA Health and Well-Being Initiative Shares New Inter-Association Definition for Well-Being Applicable to Higher Education

In January of 2020, as part of CUPA-HR's ongoing commitment to health and well-being in higher ed, CUPA-HR joined 14 other higher education associations 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.

NIRSA has since created a new definition for well-being as it relates to higher education, stating on its website, "In our pursuit to co-create cultures of integrated well-being on campuses worldwide, we want to ensure we are building from a shared understanding and foundation. Since there was not an existing definition that defined well-being, especially as it applies to higher education, the members of our organizations asked that one be created." NIRSA's definition is as follows:

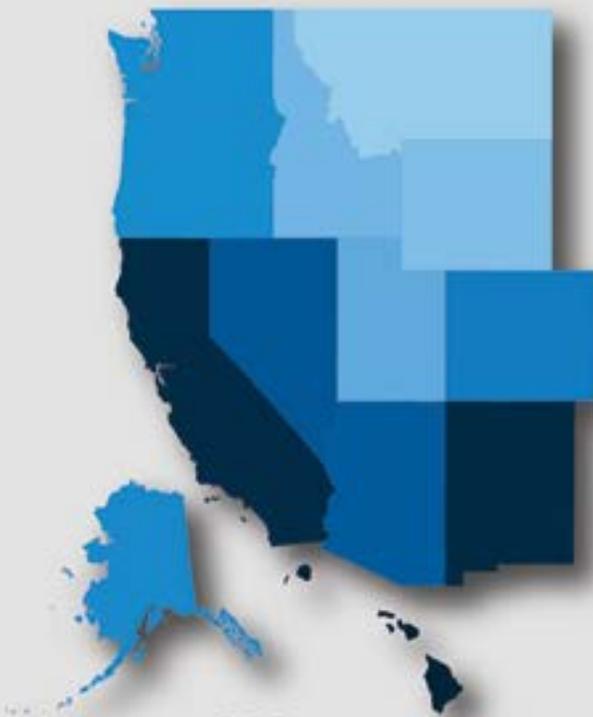
We define well-being as an optimal and dynamic state that allows people to achieve their full potential. Our focus is on two interdependent types of well-being: 1) individual and 2) community. Individual well-being is defined within three broad and interrelated categories: (a) the perceived assessment of one's own

life as being generally happy and satisfying, (b) having one's human rights and needs met, and (c) one's contribution to the community. Community well-being is defined by relationships and connectedness, perceived quality of life for all people in the community, and how well the community meets the needs of all members. By focusing on the whole — the whole person, the whole educational experience, the whole institution, the whole community — well-being becomes a multifaceted goal and a shared responsibility for the entire institution.

NIRSA hopes this shared understanding of well-being can be a stepping stone for systemic change. Efforts to improve the well-being of higher education professionals is more important now than ever before, as employees across all institutions face countless COVID-19-related challenges and burnout.

Visit <https://nirsa.net/nirsa/portfolio-items/health-wellbeing-in-higher-education/> to read the full statement.

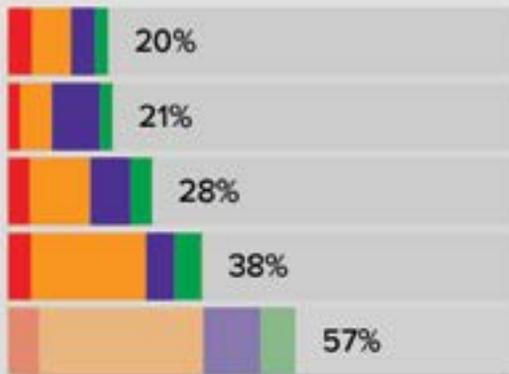
Racial/Ethnic Diversity in the Higher Education Workforce



West
Overall Diversity
28%



Midwest
Overall Diversity
19%



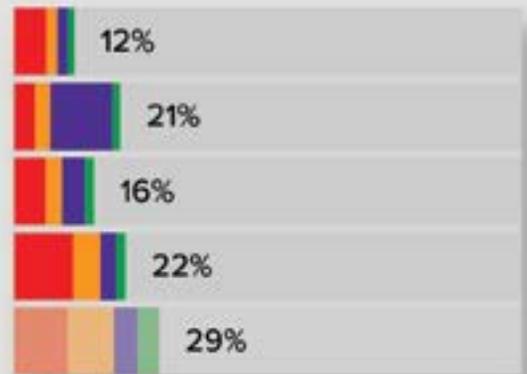
Administrators

Faculty

Professionals

Staff

Students



Administrators

Faculty

Professionals

Staff

Students

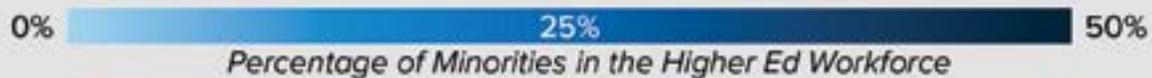
Racial/Ethnic Groups

■ Black
 ■ Hispanic
 ■ Asian
 ■ Other**
 ■ White

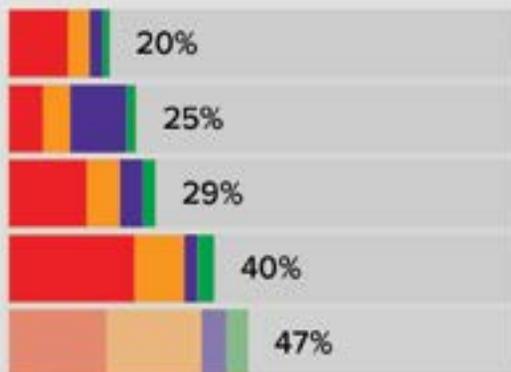
Using CUPA-HR 2020 data, the following maps show **overall diversity** by state (as percentage of minorities) and region for **administrators, faculty, professionals and staff combined**. Below each map, diversity is shown by **workforce area and race/ethnicity**. Student diversity* is also included as **a reference to compare** how closely the higher ed workforce matches the students it serves.

The data show that minority representation in the higher ed workforce is highest in the south and west and lowest in the midwest and northeast. In no region does minority representation in the higher ed workforce come close to matching that of the associated student population. In each region, students of color will find themselves best represented in the lowest-paid staff positions. Across regions, minorities are least represented among administrators, the highest-paid positions.

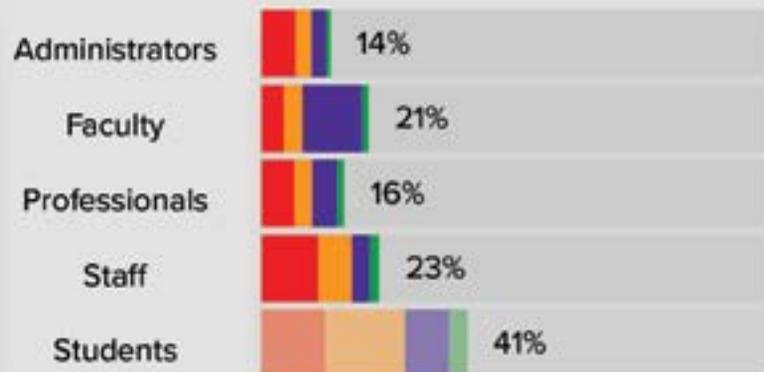
To explore this data further, please visit the interactive version of these maps at www.cupahr.org/magazine/winter-2020-graphic.



South
Overall Diversity
30%



Northeast
Overall Diversity
19%



*Student data from IPEDS (2018) Total Fall Enrollment.

**Other includes Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaska Native, and two or more races.





The 2020 Presidential Election and What's in Store for Higher Ed HR

By Josh Ulman and Basil Thomson

After a contentious election, Vice President Biden is now President-Elect Biden. The House of Representatives will continue to be controlled by the Democrats; however, their majority is significantly diminished. At the time this article was written, they had clinched 222 seats, with Republicans taking 211. In the Senate, control came down to the outcome of two runoff races in Georgia that took place on January 5. Democrats won both races in Georgia, positioning Vice President-Elect Harris to provide the tie-breaking vote and hand Democrats control of the chamber.

While pollsters and pundits had forecast that a President-Elect Biden would enter the White House with a significant mandate, buoyed by Democrats broadening their majority in the House of Representatives and flipping the Senate, the reality is that Americans remain divided and President-Elect Biden will have a much more difficult time pushing through the robust legislative-reform agenda he campaigned on. That said, his administration will wield an immense amount of executive power that they will be able to use to fulfill many aspects of their campaign agenda. Here, we focus on likely changes to employment policy that will be top of mind for higher ed HR.

Executive Actions

Given the congressional gridlock that President-Elect Biden is likely to inherit, we expect to see Biden use “pen and paper” to enact a significant portion of his policy agenda. Much like former presidents who have done the same, we can expect that he will rescind on day one many of the executive orders that have been issued during the Trump administration. A large part of the Biden administration’s initial actions will likely be to unwind Trump’s dizzying web of executive actions relating to immigration. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which has allowed undocumented immigrants brought to the country as children to live, work and study in the United States, was reinstated in December following a District Court order. If the Trump administration tries to administratively terminate DACA, a Biden administration has made clear the program’s protection is a day one priority. It is also expected that the Trump administration’s 2017 travel ban, Executive Order 13780, on nationals from some Muslim-majority countries will be repealed.

In the workforce space, Biden is expected to revoke President Trump’s September 22 Executive Order (EO) on “Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping.” The EO imposed new requirements on federal contractors, including colleges and universities, with respect to the content of workplace training programs. Biden may also go on the offensive in this area and issue an executive order that requires bias training programs for federal contractors to address

discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and disability. Additionally, Biden may attempt to restore and build on the Obama administration’s Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces Executive Order, which conditioned federal contracts on the company’s record of compliance with federal, state and local labor and employment laws.

While this is just the tip of the iceberg, keep in mind that administrative actions do not happen instantaneously. The Executive Branch faces various

The anticipated unwinding of the Trump administration’s agenda will take time and will have to be reasonably balanced with other issues that will likely take priority, such as the economic and health response to COVID-19.

obstacles to implementing policy changes, including the transition of personnel and the confirmation process for political appointments, the regulatory process itself, and possible legal challenges to the administration’s policy changes. The anticipated unwinding of the Trump administration’s agenda will take time and will have to be reasonably balanced with other issues that will likely take priority, such as the economic and health response to COVID-19.

U.S. Department of Labor

Over the past couple weeks, President-Elect Joe Biden has announced several members of his transition team. The transition team for the Department of Labor (DOL) is composed of 24 members from various backgrounds, including academia, the federal government, left-leaning think tanks, and labor organizations. Expect Biden to appoint some familiar faces to the DOL so the agency hits the ground running and can carry out an aggressive agenda from the start.

Initially, it is expected that Biden will focus efforts on revoking or stopping Trump-era regulations that have been finalized or are close to being finalized when he takes office. The Trump-era Independent Contractor Rule under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and the Trump-era Joint Employer Rule under the FLSA are likely to be priorities in the first 100 days. It is also widely expected that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) would be directed to issue an Emergency Temporary Standard for workplace safety procedures related to COVID-19.

The DOL will also revise existing guidance under the FLSA on independent contractors and joint employment and it would not be surprising to see the DOL’s Wage and Hour Division opinion letters get the axe. The opinion letter process, which had been a longstanding practice of the DOL, was eliminated during the Obama administration and replaced with broader “Administrator Interpretations” — a Biden DOL could do the same.

A Biden DOL will also look to revive Obama-era regulations like the Persuader Rule and the Obama-era Overtime Final Rule, which doubled the minimum salary threshold (used to determine if an employee is exempt from overtime protections) and indexed the threshold to inflation. However, these will not be addressed until later in the presidency and could be complicated given lawsuits that struck down both rules.

U.S. Department of Education

At the Education Department, while it will likely take some time, we expect a Biden administration to work on rescinding and reforming the Trump administration's final rule that changes how colleges and universities must handle allegations of sexual assault and harassment under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The final rule, which is currently subject to lawsuits, went into effect on August 14, 2020, despite requests from plaintiffs that the rule be delayed while it continues to be challenged in court.

National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

Presidents face additional challenges in implementing policy through independent agencies. For example, with respect to the actions of the NLRB and EEOC, a Biden-Harris administration can only implement changes after it secures a majority on those boards. As far as the NLRB is concerned, the earliest a Biden-Harris administration could secure a majority in the absence of

someone leaving the board before their term is up is on August 28, 2021. In addition, the NLRB's general counsel largely controls the board's litigation positions and what cases to bring before the NLRB. Republican General Counsel Peter Robb is serving a term that expires in August of 2021. Note, however, the NLRB chair, who is designated by the president, has significant authority over case management and can determine to some extent the timing of issues that come before the board.

With respect to the EEOC, the earliest a Biden-Harris administration could obtain a majority on the commission in the absence of someone leaving before their term is up would be in July of 2022, when Chair Janet Dhillon's (R) term expires. In addition, the agency's litigation activities are controlled in large measure by the general counsel, Republican Sharon Gustafson, whose term expires in 2023. Note, however, the EEOC chair has significant authority over policy decisions that are sub-regulatory, and the president controls who on the commission is designated chair.

Once Democrats gain a majority on the NLRB and EEOC, there will be a whole host of topline items for them to tackle, which we will address at a later date.

Immigration

When it comes to immigration challenges that higher ed HR continues to face, we are likely to see a significant change between President Trump and President-Elect Biden. President-Elect Biden holds opposing views as it relates to

humanitarian programs, refugees, enforcement and international students — likely meaning that we will see a Biden administration pause or freeze much of the regulatory action that could be underway when he assumes office. Some notable regulations that we expect to see abandoned include:

- the proposed rule on Duration of Status which creates a fixed duration of admission of either two years or four years for international students
- the proposed rule seeking to rescind an Obama-era regulation which extended eligibility for employment authorization to certain H-4 dependent spouses of H-1B nonimmigrants; and
- a proposed rule reforming the optional practical training program, which was widely expected to eliminate the STEM extension promulgated under the Obama administration.

While the Trump administration and the incoming Biden administration are as different as night and day on the aforementioned immigration policies, when it comes to temporary worker programs, like the H-1B program for high-skilled nonimmigrants, expect some of the scrutiny that these programs have attracted under Trump to exist under Biden. In his "Build Back Better" campaign platform, Biden states that "an immigration system that crowds out high-skilled workers in favor of only entry-level wages and skills threatens American innovation and competitiveness."

President-Elect Biden holds opposing views as it relates to humanitarian programs, refugees, enforcement and international students — likely meaning that we will see a Biden administration pause or freeze much of the regulatory action that could be underway when he assumes office.

This populist streak could mean that recently finalized regulations — which were enjoined by a federal district court on December 1 — introducing stricter eligibility criteria for H-1B specialty occupations and changing the computation of wage levels for permanent labor certifications and labor condition applications may reemerge in a dissimilar manner under the Biden administration.

Congress: A More Modest Agenda

Despite the results in Georgia, one thing that is certain is that the filibuster will remain in place for the 117th Congress, and the corresponding legislative agenda will be modest given the slim margins in the House and slimmer margins in the Senate.

About the authors: Josh Ulman is CUPA-HR's chief government relations officer, and Basil Thomson is a member of the government relations team.

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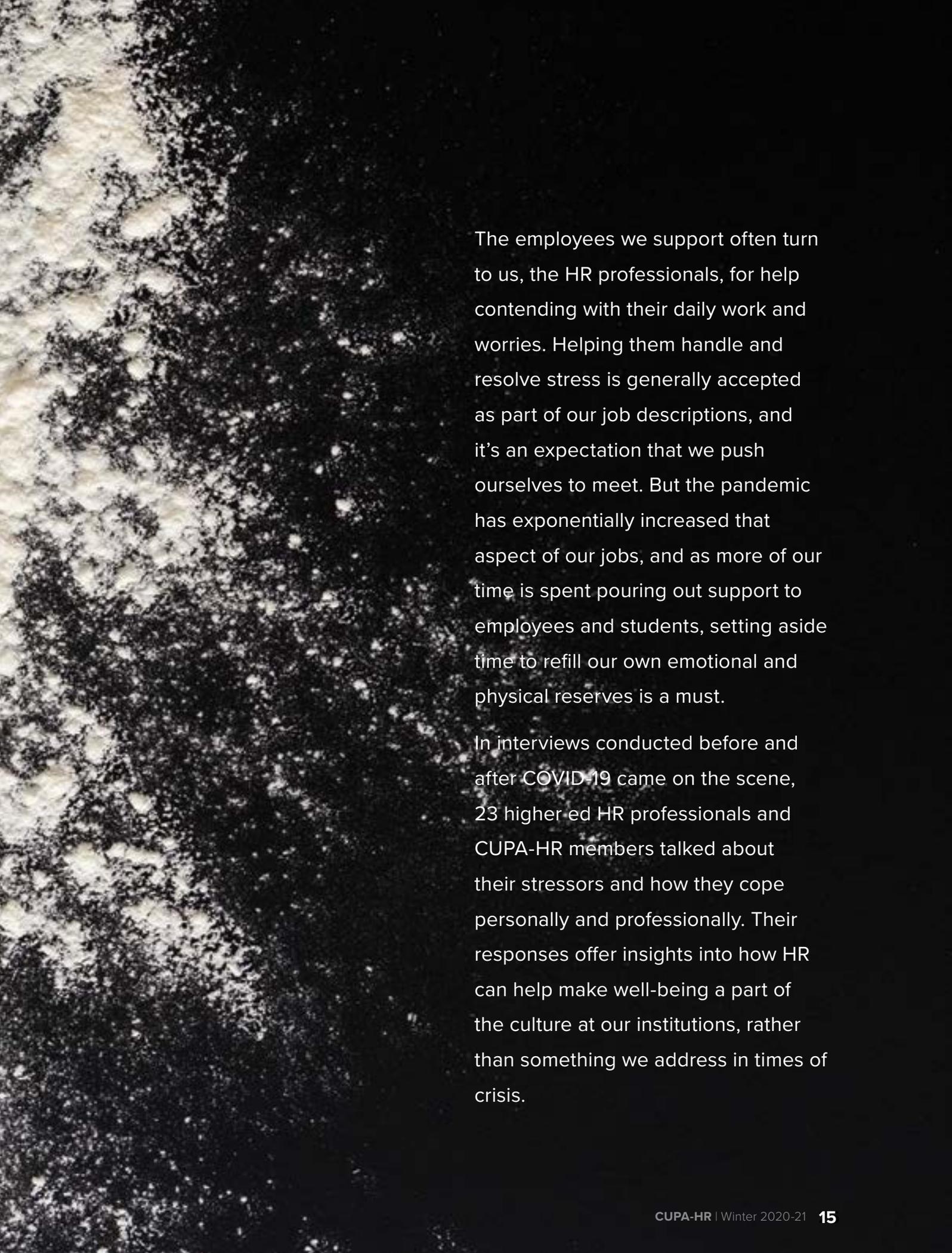
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Baking
Self-Care
Into the
Culture
of HR

By Sarah Lobb



The employees we support often turn to us, the HR professionals, for help contending with their daily work and worries. Helping them handle and resolve stress is generally accepted as part of our job descriptions, and it's an expectation that we push ourselves to meet. But the pandemic has exponentially increased that aspect of our jobs, and as more of our time is spent pouring out support to employees and students, setting aside time to refill our own emotional and physical reserves is a must.

In interviews conducted before and after COVID-19 came on the scene, 23 higher ed HR professionals and CUPA-HR members talked about their stressors and how they cope personally and professionally. Their responses offer insights into how HR can help make well-being a part of the culture at our institutions, rather than something we address in times of crisis.

Assessing the Challenges for HR

Before the pandemic, the stressors of frequently changing policies, heavy workloads, the responsibility of communicating big changes, and the constraints of working with limited resources required stamina and creativity to overcome.

The stressors we are dealing with now? Processes and policies changing even more rapidly than before; devising and orchestrating return-to-work, permanently remote work, and campus occupancy plans with even fewer resources; contending with the constraints of hiring freezes or reductions in force; planning for uncertainty (which is where humor comes in, if you have the energy to laugh); maintaining strong relationships across professional teams and within our personal lives in a virtual format, and keeping our employees and families healthy and safe from both COVID-19 and burnout.

All of these stressors increase the pressure to always be “on” and ready to navigate the unexpected in an environment where it’s difficult to disconnect from our work.

This is all very heavy. Based on the interviews with HR pros, here’s how we’re coping:

- Adding structure to our days and parameters around working hours with consistent breaks, thus strengthening the boundaries between work and personal life
- Nurturing our minds and bodies through consistent exercise, sometimes as simple as

a walk outside

- Connecting with trusted colleagues to converse about something other than work
- Spending time with family
- Meditating, listening to music, cooking

While these coping mechanisms help alleviate stress in the short term and get us through our day-to-day, HR needs a long-term plan in place — one that will help us feel better prepared to face well-being issues when the next crisis comes along.

Learning From Other Helping Professions

HR pros are in a unique position on campus because we are often called upon to communicate with and help employees when they are at their most vulnerable and in distress. And because confidentiality is a critical part of our role, we do not have the same opportunities as others to process what we see and hear by talking about it. Published research surrounding another helping service — social work — can give us clarity and perhaps provide HR with ways to support our own mental health.

In her paper *Mental Health Social Workers: The State of Their Well-Being and Support* (2016), Laura Conway draws upon her own research and that of others to find that the high stress among social workers stems from “lack of resources, pressure to work long hours, covering for open positions, high volume of work and not feeling appreciated by employers nor by general society.” Further, Conway found that the “organization’s

mindset towards self-care is extremely influential in a social worker’s maintenance of well-being.” Conway’s research prompts the question, “How is mental well-being regarded at my institution?” Is it baked into the culture or treated as an afterthought?

In *Stress and Burnout in the Helping Professions*, author Nancy Ratliff studied others’ research to understand the origins of the stress in these fields and how such stress might be alleviated. Researcher Alfred Kadushin found that the performance of services itself is the reward, which leads to the question of whether we are routinely overlooking the success and ingenuity behind our accomplishments, and saying nothing when we receive no acknowledgement or thanks. Researcher Ayala Pines quite plainly stated that the relationship between the supporting professionals and the employees they support doesn’t go both ways. That’s a no-brainer in human resources.

Ratliff’s article offers research-based suggestions for alleviating extreme stress, including:

- exploring personal therapy
- making free time
- establishing a well-adjusted circle of friends (perhaps through your local CUPA-HR chapter)
- separating work and home life (easier said than done these days)
- exercising and being active

- listening to music
- meditating

Other researchers recommend institutional or organizational changes to reduce stress:

- reducing workload overall
- offering more breaks
- balancing the amount of demanding work and less draining tasks
- recognizing each worker's needs and providing the right opportunities for growth, development and training

- setting well-defined objectives that can be measured and periodically reviewed to show the positive impact of one's work.

One other option is for the organization to address professional and personal stress head-on and support the formation of coping

mechanisms tailored to individuals or teams, such as HR. However, to sustain that support through good times and bad may require a cultural shift for our institutions.

Leading by Example — Rollins College's Well-Being Work

Rollins College is one institution that exemplifies what it means to bake well-being into its institutional culture. In an episode of CUPA-HR's Mental Health in the Time of COVID-19 podcast series, Jennifer Addleman, director of benefits and well-being, shared several programs and tools the college has created to support the well-being of everyone on campus.

Addleman provided a look into virtual events and activities that faculty and staff are encouraged to attend, such as webinars and lunch-and-learns on adapting to change, coping with loss, parenting and caregiving tips, how to create healthy habits, and much more. As part of the institution's employee assistance program, telecounseling is available for faculty and staff, as well as confidential online screenings and tools to gauge emotional well-being. Additionally, the faculty and staff well-being committee has awarded several well-being grants to departments on campus to access a meditation app that can be used during meetings. Addleman reports that employees who use the app note that they are more present and focused throughout the day and that their team dynamic is more positive when they meditate together.

On the student side, the college is building new student housing that will have a yoga and meditation room. Mindfulness, meditation and tai chi classes are offered at no cost, allowing students to participate with faculty and staff to engage in mindfulness together.

Addleman suggests the best way for HR pros to begin making well-being a priority for themselves is by starting small: make time for yourself, remember that mindfulness takes practice, and try breathing and sensory exercises mentioned in her article, *Mindfulness Matters*, in the Winter 2019-20 issue of *Higher Ed HR Magazine*.

Systemizing a Culture of Care for HR

A culture shift is not something that happens overnight, as HR is well aware. So how do we move self-care and effective coping methods from something to get on the list to becoming HR values that are as important as excellent customer service and strategic thinking? Here are some ways to get started:

- **Talk about the stressors from day one on the job.** When you onboard a new HR professional to your team (regardless of where they are in their HR career), discuss what issues and stressors often come up, how team members deal with them, and what the work environment offers to relieve stressors.
- **Create an HR competency for knowing how to take care of one other.** Although the nature of our work prohibits us from talking to anyone who doesn't "need to know" or who isn't legally allowed to know, as HR professionals, we can take care of each other. How can coworker care become an expectation in our job descriptions? Alter the description of a team player to someone who engages in self-care that allows that person to be a more productive and positive member of the team. Higher ed pros must fill each other up so we can continue to pour out support and encouragement to employees.
- **Offer an employee assistance program (EAP) training a few times a year that is specific to dealing with stress in HR.** This can be training created by HR professionals for HR professionals and attended only by HR professionals.

It's key to remember that the work we do holds incredible gravity — it can make a significant difference in people's lives, for better or worse. By recognizing that we have a heavy load to bear, we better respect ourselves for the work we do. This is the first — and maybe most important — step in self-care. As we put 2020 behind us, let's make mental well-being for HR a priority so we can continue to support those who need us in the year ahead.

***About the authors:** Sarah Lobb is assistant director, HR, division of student life at the University of Iowa, and a 2019-20 CUPA-HR Wildfire Program participant. CUPA-HR's Wildfire Program is sponsored in part by HigherEdJobs.*



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A photograph of a roller coaster with several cars upside down against a clear blue sky. The cars are blue with red accents. The track is yellow and green.

UF Engaged: A Conversation- Centered Campaign That Turned Performance Management on Its Head

By Dr. Kevin Clarke, Brook Mercier and Amber Wuertz



Editor's note: Although the University of Florida developed its new performance management approach before the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the new measures they have implemented are well-suited to our new workplace reality, including the need to conserve resources and manage remote workers, while strengthening relationships and increasing engagement between supervisors and employees.

If you asked employees of the University of Florida (UF) about the staff performance appraisal system in place until 2017, you would not be impressed with their answers. We know, because we asked, and the responses were brutally honest.

Terms like “antiquated,” “painful,” and “time-consuming” were commonly seen in feedback about the process. “It was almost like there was a sense of dread each year for both leaders and employees,” stated one employee.

So how did the University of Florida move from a bureaucratic, time-wasting process to an award-winning approach to performance management?

The story began in 2017 when Jodi Gentry, vice president for University of Florida Human Resources (UFHR), forged a strategic commitment centered on the concept of “preeminence through people.” One of the specific goals that came from the commitment was that UFHR would support the university’s efforts through an

aligned and contemporary approach to performance management that focuses on fostering high performance. Gentry’s vision became a guiding principle for UFHR’s work in the years to come.

A Problem Meets an Opportunity

At UF, Employee Relations oversees the staff performance management process. As Employee Relations surveyed the landscape in 2017 and considered what performance management looked like at the university, Gentry challenged the department to use the opportunity to revolutionize the way performance was thought about, talked about, measured, and especially, how performance could be improved.

Looking back, we were given an incredible opportunity, but at that moment in time, we realized that our existing evaluation system was an obstacle to achieving the goals of our strategic commitment.

The old staff evaluation process was completely on paper with no web-

based options, which led to manual processing and way too many filing cabinets. The old system utilized five ratings: exceeds performance standards, above average performance standards, achieves performance standards, minimally achieves performance standards, and below performance standards.

However, performance that was “above average” for one supervisor might have been “average” for another due to the subjective application of ratings. The annual evaluations were conducted in March each year, which made the entire month very unproductive as supervisors spent an inordinate amount of time writing evaluations for each one of their employees. Having to recall information from the past year for each employee was time consuming and, frankly, not worth the time required to write the evaluation.

“Most concerning of all was that we, in HR, were promoting an HR-centric system that was forcing supervisors into ineffective leadership behaviors,” says Dr. Kevin Clarke, associate director in Employee Relations and past president of the CUPA-HR Florida Chapter.

Once UFHR was ready to make significant changes, the question on everyone’s mind was “What now?” UFHR knew that the system was broken. We found that between comments, questions and complaints from every corner of campus, the old system was loathed by many, with little faith in the system that we invested so much time and effort in each year. HR professionals can sometimes be resistant to change, but UFHR fully

As a byproduct of our research, we found that we had lost sight of *why* we evaluated performance. Most telling was that many supervisors gave high evaluation ratings to avoid difficult or uncomfortable conversations, and many supervisors didn’t have the tools or expertise to have those meaningful discussions.

embraced the moment and made the bold decision to turn performance management on its head.

The Transition

With the March 2018 evaluation cycle looming, attention shifted to disrupting the old routine. Many ineffective habits had been ingrained in the staff evaluation for many years, and the team didn't want those practices to linger in the cultural memory of the institution. UFHR took the drastic step of making performance evaluations voluntary for 2018. Not surprisingly, some units complained, and some continued using the old system either out of habit, out of the realization that they needed a method to document issues with employees, or to have the crutch to lean on for determining merit raises.

Concurrently, Employee Relations conducted a survey of supervisors and staff employees to publicly validate concerns about the old evaluation system, and more importantly to determine what was most needed in a new performance management program. One of the glaring low points of the survey was that 44 percent of supervisors who responded were either somewhat or extremely dissatisfied with the old evaluation process. In general, the survey indicated that UF supervisors and employees were not equipped to facilitate meaningful conversations about performance and goal setting in a timely and effective manner. The survey confirmed that employees needed more frequent feedback, and supervisors needed support to become more effective at giving performance feedback.

As a byproduct of our research, we found that we had lost sight of why we evaluated performance. Most telling was that many supervisors gave high evaluation ratings to avoid difficult or uncomfortable conversations, and many supervisors didn't have the tools or expertise to have those meaningful discussions. Administrators were also concerned that evaluation ratings were needed to determine merit raises, which are infrequent at the institution and were never timed with the March annual evaluation cycle.

Employee Relations conducted focus groups with stakeholders across the institution to openly discuss what a better system would look like, and then conducted a review of peer institutions across the country. Interestingly, many peer institutions were grappling with the same ineffective staff evaluation process UF had been using. A review of performance management practices in the corporate world found that the best organizations had ended laborious evaluation systems, instead focusing on fostering and efficiently documenting the engagement between the supervisor and employee.

It's a Philosophy, Not a System

As you consider your own institution's performance management system, consider the use of the word "system." Early on, UFHR realized that performance management is not a system; it is a philosophy that represents the performance culture of an organization. If we're honest, systems are ineffective because there's a lack of meaningful engagement happening in the

fundamental relationship between the supervisor and the employee. If the supervisor and employee relationship is broken, or even misaligned by a few degrees, HR efforts won't be as effective. What we found, and ultimately used as the foundation of building a new outlook on evaluations, is that performance management is not about a system, but rather about the results that can be achieved by focusing on the communication and development of the employee-supervisor relationship.

With the support of the vice president, UFHR was given a blank slate to design a new performance management approach. We recognized the need for a nimble approach that would increase engagement between supervisors and employees, and ultimately increase the productivity and effectiveness of human resources of the university. We also knew we could not simply reissue something similar with new window dressing. Instead, we had to think outside of the box, find something that would align HR with the institutional goals of preeminence, and do it simply and effectively. Further, we had to focus on adding value to supervisors' feedback and contributing to the pursuit of a positive workplace that increased employee job satisfaction and advancement potential. Ultimately, we wanted to create a way to encourage the exchange of supportive, constructive and timely interaction between supervisors and employees.

UF Engaged Was Born

We knew it was important to return to the basic foundational

principle of that professional relationship between the employee and the supervisor by focusing on the engagement necessary for that relationship to be successful. To build on this new concept and cultural change, the team created a new brand that could have an entirely new performance culture and framework built around it: UF Engaged. UF Engaged represents the philosophy of supporting engagement between supervisors and employees, achieved through providing clear, timely and meaningful feedback.

The essence of UF Engaged is an ongoing conversation about performance and development between employees and supervisors. The team designed UF Engaged to focus on more frequent, structured conversations known as quarterly check-ins. These quarterly conversations are anchored to the employee's position entry date, which distributes the check-ins throughout the year and avoids a single due date for everyone, which was a flaw in the old system. The quarterly approach encourages a shift in the culture by encouraging continuous engagement rather than an annual evaluation event.

The quarterly approach encourages a shift in the culture by encouraging continuous engagement rather than an annual evaluation event.

Quarterly check-ins also feature an employee self-assessment, which fosters two-way feedback critical to success and reinforces that this communication is a conversation, not a transaction.

Three Core Objectives

UF Engaged guides leaders and employees to discuss three core objectives:

- 1. Document progress, strengths and accomplishments** – Recognize where things have gone well during the quarter. Good work should be acknowledged and celebrated!
- 2. Indicate areas where good performance can be elevated or where improvement is needed** – While areas of unsatisfactory performance may not exist for every employee, there are always opportunities to take performance to the next level.
- 3. Identify goals and needed career skill development and growth opportunities** – This objective can provide agreed upon strategies to foster development and short- and long-term goals for employees who are performing at a high level, or may address short-term goals and expectations for required improvement for employees who are not meeting performance expectations.

The three objectives are intentionally broad, allowing departments to tailor their objectives to meet departmental priorities or specific employee needs without a cumbersome HR form that pigeon-holes into specific categories that may not apply to the employee.

The expectation is that the quarterly check-ins do not mirror the old process, but rather serve as a 15-30 minute conversation discussing pertinent points that are relevant to each quarter.

UF created the UF Engaged structure within PeopleSoft's ePerformance 9.2 module. The result is a very user-friendly tool, which includes not only the quarterly check-in, but probationary employee check-ins, a performance improvement plan feature, and a module for performance notes to document specific items during the quarter that can be used in preparing for the check-in.

The system is fully automated to send email reminders to supervisors and employees about upcoming quarterly check-ins, and maintains a historical record of all activity. Although the PeopleSoft system was designed to facilitate UF Engaged, an institution can use the strategies and theory of UF Engaged within any system or environment.

A Campaign for Change

Given the complexities of replacing a legacy evaluation system and starting from scratch, the team knew that an all-out campaign was required to be successful.

“The successful implementation of UF Engaged was achieved through a team effort,” recalls Amber Wuertz, management analyst for UFHR's Office of Strategic Initiatives and UF Engaged project manager. Also contributing to the effort were colleagues from Employee Relations, Training and Organizational Development, UF Information Technology, and HR Liaisons from other campus units. UFHR

Communications designed the UF Engaged logos and facilitated a change-management plan, including a comprehensive communication plan to maximize the efforts of the team. The Employee Relations team then took the show on the road by presenting UF Engaged to countless departments, employee groups and leadership teams.

Promotional and instructional videos were produced to amplify the message, and partners across campus were involved in user-acceptance testing in PeopleSoft to ensure that the implementation of the tool would be error free.

Creating Tools for Growth

In the months before UF Engaged was launched, a tremendous effort was focused on delivering resources that would better equip supervisors to have meaningful conversations.

At an institution with thousands of staff employees and hundreds of supervisors, UF recognized that many supervisors have great success engaging with employees, while others have challenges with engaging on a consistent basis. UF Engaged was designed to support all managers and employees in their professional growth and lead them toward higher engagement and performance.

To help foster a culture of performance engagement among supervisors and employees, UFHR created a UF Engaged website, numerous toolkits, informational articles, check-in guides and other helpful tools to encourage collective growth. UFHR's Training and Organizational Development department incorporated UF Engaged into several existing courses

to ensure that the philosophy would be integrated into training opportunities. Further, UFHR Communications produced a series of communications called "One Conversation" to inform and prepare supervisors and employees for the initiative.

The team celebrated the culmination of months of hard work when UF Engaged went live in October 2019 with the first quarterly check-in completed in January 2020. The University of Florida was recognized for these successful efforts by receiving the 2020 CUPA-HR Southern Region HR Excellence Award for UF Engaged.

Past, Present and Future

A common question UFHR is asked is whether UF Engaged refers to the past, present or future. The answer is that it refers to all three.

UF Engaged provides supervisors and employees with the opportunity to discuss past performance and set future goals rather than waiting an entire calendar year for the evaluation. The initiative also represents the present relationship between a supervisor and employee engaged in a productive and meaningful professional relationship. Lastly, UF Engaged charts the future through meaningful discussion about what success will look like as a result of growth-oriented goal setting.

Campus feedback on the initiative has been very supportive, including praise from the president of the university. Employee Relations monitors quarterly check-in completion rates across campus, which have been very encouraging,

and that information can be used to identify areas of campus where additional support or guidance may be appropriate.

Refilling the Tank

For one team member, the impact of UF Engaged was immediate. As Wuertz shared during the presentation of UF Engaged at the CUPA-HR Virtual Annual Conference in October, "I didn't realize how much I needed my emotional tank refilled. That helps you remember why you love your job!"

Wuertz shared that with UF Engaged, she and her supervisor have intentional conversations about her as a professional, allowing her to self-reflect on where she can improve, and helping her set aside time to think about and discuss professional goals and opportunities for growth.

The success of UF Engaged is changing the culture of performance at UF and will be measured long-term. Mercier states that "Although we were very proud of the work to launch UF Engaged, we know the real work in shifting the culture is yet to come, and we know that the benefits of UF Engaged will be realized over many years, one conversation at a time, focused on performance and outcomes. UF Engaged is about the conversation!

***About the authors:** Dr. Kevin Clarke is associate director, human resources; Brook Mercier is assistant vice president of HR; and Amber Wuertz is management analyst, human resources, all of the University of Florida.*

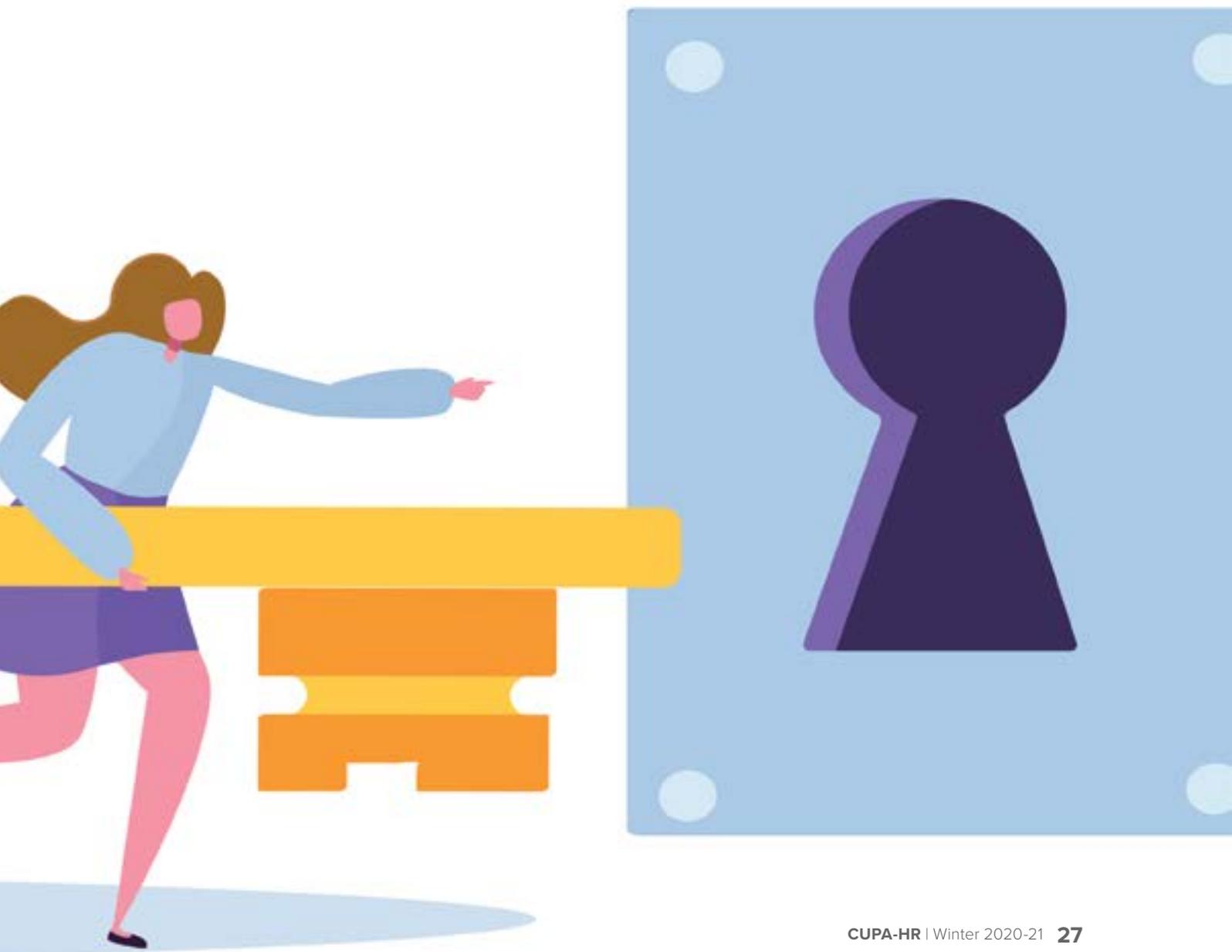
Opening Doors for Strategic Partnerships With Academic Leadership

By Kari Elgee Sanders and Heather Graham



A common struggle for higher ed HR professionals is connecting with academic leaders and being seen as a strategic partner. How does an HR department move from being a transactional department to one that can help advance the institution's mission when it has been historically difficult to do so?

Gonzaga University decided to get to the bottom of this question by conducting a campus climate survey to learn about the campus community's perception of HR and the barriers that were preventing HR from being seen as more than a disciplinary body.



Identifying the Barriers and Easy Wins

A third-party vendor was hired to conduct the survey, and the HR team was surprised to learn that the department's reputation was holding the team back from being a strategic campus partner. It was time for a different approach.

After assessing feedback from the survey, the next step was to identify easy wins that could change the narrative and produce more positive interactions with HR. For example, feedback from the survey stated that HR didn't always respond in a timely manner. The team found that a simple solution was to set up automatic email responses during anticipated periods of delay when workloads were heavy and to set the teams' phones to ring to the front office, so that callers were immediately directed to the correct person.

One positive finding from the survey was that HR was viewed as generally helpful; however, the HR team knew that there was opportunity for improvement. Often in our eagerness to lend a helping hand, the HR team took on responsibility for the problems of the campus community and assumed we knew what someone

wanted or needed. The team began listening more and asking, "What do you need?" and "How can I help?" which reduced frustration for both parties and helped HR staff leave responsibility for the action with the appropriate party. This ultimately resulted in less blame being directed at HR and the right people completing the work.

Finding and Using Champions

Once the HR team made these simple yet impactful changes, it was time to identify, build and leverage champions on campus. Champions are those who speak highly of you when you're not in the room and who call out the need to have you present at meetings where decisions are being made. Anyone can be a champion for HR, including those who influence decisions or can remind others that HR is made up of human beings. Creating relationships with colleagues outside your HR role, such as by joining committees where you can participate as an individual staff member and not as the HR pro, can help create and build champions. Lean on those relationships to help your community see you as more than just your HR title.

Elgee Sanders joined an informal lunch running club where she can interact with colleagues without her HR hat on. Participating in the club has allowed her to meet colleagues with whom she otherwise wouldn't have had any interaction. These relationships have been a helpful way to get HR in the room when decisions are being made at the institution. For example, one participant in the running club became president of staff assembly and occasionally bounced ideas off Elgee Sanders.

For Graham, joining the university's BIAS team helped her build relationships with faculty members when she paired up with them on bias report responses. The relationships she built on the BIAS team have come in handy when it has been necessary for her to work with a faculty member, department chair or other academic leader on employee issues. Representing the university on a greater level as an individual member of the campus community and not just as an HR representative has shown academic leaders that Graham wants to make a difference and that her role in HR isn't only about compliance.

While it can be helpful to build relationships with those who are higher up at your institution and

Creating relationships with colleagues outside your HR role, such as by joining committees where you can participate as an individual staff member and not as the HR pro, can help create and build champions. Lean on those relationships to help your community see you as more than just your HR title.

can influence decisions, champions are also those who know you as an individual and can vouch for you. This could help open doors that might otherwise be closed.

Champions may also be people with whom you frequently interact on a professional level. Often, these individuals understand your academic leaders, how they prefer to be communicated with and may even have access to information that could influence decisions. Build these relationships, and let these individuals see HR as more than a roadblock. Identify the subtleties and culture of your institution, and recognize that your champions can be partners in helping you as an HR professional in achieving institutional mission, vision and goals.

Putting Knowledge Into Practice

Once the HR team knew where we could improve based on responses in the climate survey and had identified campus champions to help bring HR into the conversation, it was time to put our knowledge into practice. The team had an opportunity do just that when a new leader was hired into the provost office during a transitional period.

This individual was brought to the institution to be a change-agent, and Graham and Elgee Sanders knew that they needed to approach this leader differently to set the stage for a strong relationship with HR.

HR arranged to meet the new leader to discuss what was expected of HR, what HR expected of the them, and how HR partnered with leaders on campus. The HR team thought we

had developed a strong relationship since this leader frequently reached out with questions. However, the reality was that the leader already had approval for their action item and was coming to HR after the fact.

What HR thought was the beginning of a conversation was actually the end, and the team was frequently surprised when action items came through that were outside of HR's scope or process. HR continued to be seen as the source of red tape rather than a strategic partner who was trying to implement the new leaders' ideas within the confines of HR's operational processes. Subsequently, the budget and personnel officer became frustrated because they were caught in the middle and unable to execute the leaders' ideas when HR was involved.

In one way, the new leader was simply trying to execute a job offer, close a recruitment, reorganize office staff, and so on. Similarly, HR needed to follow a process and procedure to reduce or eliminate risk to the university and individual. It was clear HR needed to bring in campus champions and start over. In hindsight, the HR team took away several learning points from this experience:

- **HR tried to own the relationship.** Instead, we needed to be more intentional about encouraging a collaborative approach to working together.

- **HR tried to tell the leader how to work with HR and establish HR's expectations.** Instead, we should have asked, "What do you need?" and "How can we help?" Additionally, HR should have leaned more heavily on our champions and sought advice on ways we could have better collaborated and partnered with the leader, such as through other institution leaders, budget officers and administrative assistants.
- **HR gave directives.** To encourage being brought in during the decision-making process, instead of after decisions have been made, HR should keep in mind that they are a consultative partner and can help guide decisions by providing options.

Turning a Negative Into a Positive

Fortunately, the HR team took the lessons learned in stride and applied them to a successful onboarding event for an incoming group of campus leaders.

Graham leveraged her relationship with the outgoing provost to propose a half-day onboarding session with five new incoming academic leaders. A sample agenda was created, including reasons why the leaders should attend and meet with HR. HR then invited all existing leaders to attend so they could be champions for the team and hear the same information that was shared with their new colleagues. And providing snacks and lunch is always a positive way to encourage people to attend!

Tips to Successfully Onboard New Leaders

- **Supply your academic leaders with materials that are relevant to them, assist with their understanding of the institution, and how they can interact with HR to get things done** — In an effort to reduce paper, increase usability and contribute to sustainable efforts, Gonzaga’s HR team provided a thumb drive of PDF documents and links to access key documents and folders on the campus intranet. The drive supplemented meetings and included helpful information, such as organizational charts of HR and specific functional and academic areas, and flow charts of key processes, such as the flow of the recruitment cycle and search committee guidelines.

- **Know your role** — When you get time with academic leaders, ensure the time you are spending with them is useful by preparing in advance information on recruitment, leave or accommodations, and employee relations cases within their areas of responsibility. This ensures HR can speak to the questions leaders have on status updates as well as cases that need to be brought to their attention. As a matter of respect, the HR team at Gonzaga always speaks with the area leader before reporting situations to the provost. This ensures that academic leaders, whether deans or provost, are not surprised by these communications. This has been key to HR’s relationship with leaders, and those leaders have agreed to do the same for us. Respecting the value of time is also critical to a successful

relationship between HR and academic leaders.

When Gonzaga’s HR team first received the results from the campus climate survey, it seemed like a daunting task to move from transitional to strategic while also working to improve HR’s reputation. After several years of work, it has been well worth the effort to change the way HR is viewed and utilized at Gonzaga. The process is ongoing and the team continues to develop relationships that ultimately help HR support the academic leaders in achieving the institution’s its mission, vision and values.

About the author: Kari Elgee Sanders is employment manager; Heather Graham, is senior HR partner: academic division, both of Gonzaga University.

From Transitional to Strategic: Tips for Transforming Your HR Team

1 Assess HR's reputation and address it head on.

- ☑ Make easy changes (e.g., set realistic deadlines)
- ☑ Do what you say you'll do

2 Leverage your champions

- ☑ Initiate the relationship: Get to know department needs
- ☑ Grow the relationship: Make time and communicate often

3 Provide strategic, relational onboarding for new leaders

- ☑ Get to know your new leaders
- ☑ Be collaborative (involve the *right* people)

4 Keep trying!

- ☑ Don't take challenges personally
- ☑ Be open to try something new



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Navigating life together



A Timely Redesign: How One HR Pro Took Her Institution's Onboarding Process Online

Finding ways to make practices and procedures more efficient while maintaining the same value for each employee is an ongoing task for human resource professionals.

Neha Pearson, senior talent acquisition specialist at The Catholic University of America (CUA) and a 2019-20 CUPA-HR Wildfire program participant, recognized a time-saving opportunity at her institution when CUA's new chief HR officer and chief information officer (CHRO/CIO) shared his vision to integrate IT into HR processes.

Pearson explains, "When our new CHRO/CIO came on board, he articulated his vision for the department, and two of his major goals were: 1) a customer-centric focus, and 2) to streamline processes to save time and utilize resources efficiently." Pearson had a project in mind that aligned perfectly with that vision: revamping the staff onboarding process by putting it all online. After receiving buy-in from the CHRO/CIO, Pearson quickly got to work.

Identifying Stakeholders

The first step to streamlining the process was to identify and seek input from multiple stakeholders at CUA. Pearson collaborated across the board with the Department of Card Services to assist with new employee ID cards, the Department of Transportation to assist with parking registration, Payroll to help with tax questions, and Technology Services to assist new employees with computer access and login information. Once stakeholders were looped in, Pearson began working on the new onboarding website, which would require her to step outside her comfort zone and gain new technical skills.

Gaining New Skills Along the Way

Web design and development, coding and digitizing paper forms were skills that Pearson had no prior experience with, but leaning into the challenge helped her create a clear and concise website that communicated the onboarding process in three simple phases:

Phase 1 – Before Your Start Date

This section prepares new hires to work at CUA with a list of tasks to complete before the first day, including completing a background check, completing the Form 1-9 Section One, reviewing university benefits, setting up direct deposit, completing tax forms, and reviewing parking and transportation options.

Phase 2 – On Your First Day

This section helps new hires get set-up on their first day with details on how to complete Section Two of the Form 1-9, activate their employee account, get employee ID cards, verify personal information and complete required training.

Phase 3 – The First 30 Days

This section acclimates new hires to the culture of CUA by providing information on job descriptions, new hire orientation, signing up for benefits and the 90-day review.

When the site went live at the end of CUA's 2020 spring semester, it received an enthusiastic response. But CUA's HR team found it

invaluable when the COVID-19 pandemic forced a rapid transition to remote work, and they had no other option but to onboard new hires remotely.

With the website up and running, Pearson is now planning for the development of an onboarding app that will provide new employees with support and send alerts and reminders throughout the onboarding journey. The app will be another tool that will save time and streamline the process even more by ensuring a consistent and employee-centric experience for all new hires.

Paving the Way for More Professional Opportunities

Pearson reaped both personal and professional rewards from the experience. She was able to hone her project management skills by overseeing the many moving parts, including coordinating with a number of stakeholders, creating a successful business plan and seeing the project through to completion on a tight deadline — all with limited resources. She also fine-tuned her presentation skills

Pearson's advice to other higher ed HR pros in the beginning stages of planning their onboarding redesign is to follow the People, Process, Technology model:

- **Strategy:** Understand your leadership strategy and mission.
- **People:** Identify the right stakeholders and think through all the interactions.
- **Process:** Understand the workflow, review it and look for efficiencies that can be achieved.
- **Technology:** Look to see how and what technologies you can leverage to automate, streamline and enhance the experience.
- **Continual Improvement:** Seek feedback into all of the above to make sure you can continually improve on what you have started.

When the site went live at the end of CUA's 2020 spring semester, it received an enthusiastic response. But CUA's HR team found it invaluable when the COVID-19 pandemic forced a rapid transition to remote work, and they had no other option but to onboard new hires remotely.

by presenting the project to the CHRO/CIO and other invested stakeholders.

An additional gain for Pearson was that the project helped pave the way for more professional opportunities. After seeing her work on staff onboarding, the provost's office tapped Pearson to create a similar onboarding process for CUA faculty.

Pearson reflects, "Traditionally at my university, onboarding meant making sure the paperwork and

mandatory training were completed ... The new process focuses on the employee and making sure their experience is simple, seamless and enjoyable, and that they are not overwhelmed or stressed. Don't get me wrong, we are not replacing the personal touch with our online system; we are enhancing the experience to decrease our time spent on routine activities, thereby spending more time focusing on the employee rather than focusing on completing a checklist."

About the author: Neha Pearson is senior talent acquisition specialist at The Catholic University of America, and a 2019-20 CUPA-HR Wildfire Program participant. CUPA-HR's Wildfire Program is sponsored in part by HigherEdJobs. If you would like to contact Neha Pearson about her project, you can email her at pearsonnm@cua.edu or connect with her on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/nehapearson.

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 2021

January 26

Northern New England Chapter Virtual Event - Leading Remote and Hybrid Employees

January 26

Northern New England Chapter Virtual Event - Managing a Remote Workforce

January 26

Research Skills Lab: DataOnDemand Advanced Analysis

January 27

Webinar: Resilience in the Workplace

January 27

DC Metro Chapter Virtual Event - Leading Through Uncertainty

January 28

Northern New England Chapter Virtual Event - Applying the Learning (Closing Session for Winter Event Series)

February 2021

February 5

Maryland Chapter Virtual Event - What Senior Leaders Need/Expect From HR

February 10

Research Skills Lab: DataOnDemand Basics

February 11

Virtual Workshop: Creating the Next Higher Ed Workforce

February 19

Maryland Chapter Virtual Event - What Senior Leaders Need/Expect From HR

February 24

Research Skills Lab: Data Visualization Basics

February 25

Webinar: How to Use Data and Empathy to Handle COVID-19 Workforce Reductions

March 2021

March 5

Maryland Chapter Virtual Event - Creating a Retirement Culture on Campus

March 19

Maryland Chapter Post-Event Discussion - Creating a Retirement Culture on Campus

March 22-23

Workshop: 2021 Virtual CHRO Summit

April 2021

April 12-14

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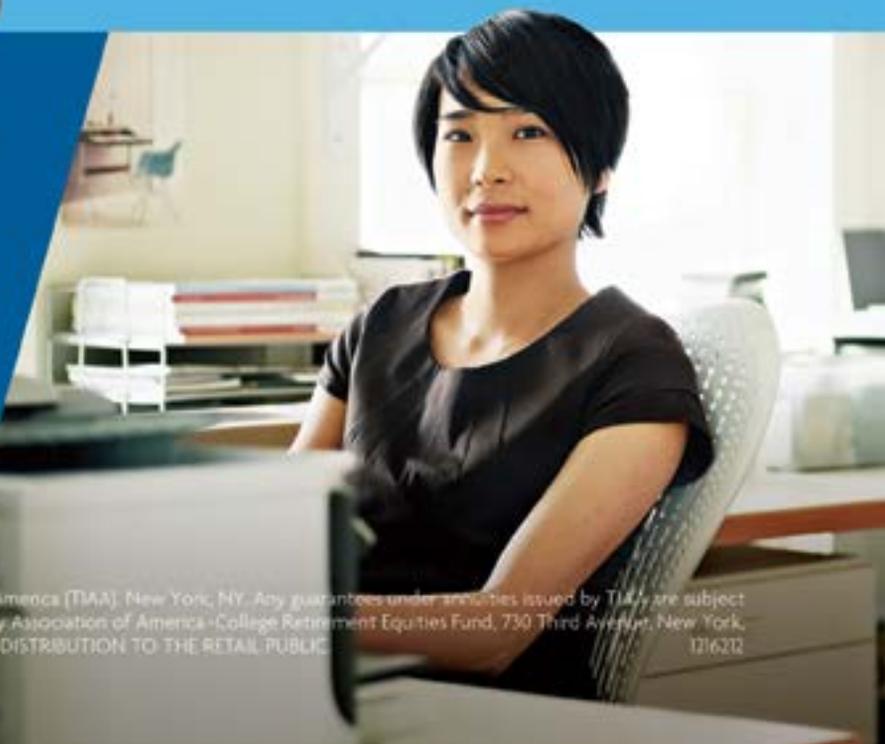


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