

# The Higher Education Workplace

Published by the College and University  
Professional Association for Human Resources

Spring 2018



## Working in a Fish Bowl:

Navigating a Compensation Study in a  
Transparent Environment

Page 34

also  
in this  
issue

**18** How to Be an Influencer:  
A Three-Step Process for  
Selling Your Ideas

**22** The CUPA-HR Wildfire  
Experience

**30** Developing the Skill Set and  
Mindset of Future University  
Leaders

# Why in the World Would Anyone Want to Do Our Job?

By Andy Brantley, CUPA-HR President and Chief Executive Officer



During the years that I was the chief HR officer at the University of Georgia, my sons, Josh and Caleb, were in middle school. One night at dinner, we were having the typical conversation during which I (as the parent) was trying to pry tidbits of information from them regarding what they did at school, careful to ask open-ended questions that required more than a “yes” or “no” response. After a few awkward minutes of less-than-satisfying exchange, Josh asks me what I did that day. My first thought was, “Such a clever boy to try and turn the conversation!”

But I had experienced one of those days ... a particularly challenging employee relations issue, a request to respond to a “what-if” scenario should we need to cut budgets, panicked calls from others who had received the same budget-related request, and an interesting exchange with a dean. I shared all of this with my sons, and Caleb responded, “Why in the world would anyone want to do your job?!”

So, why would anyone want to work in higher ed HR? We, as higher ed HR leaders, tend to focus on challenges like those I shared instead of the much more important — and much more rewarding — reasons why we are in HR. Our work with other higher ed leaders to help them shape the culture and acquire or cultivate the talent and the competencies needed to be relevant and impactful now and into the future is critically important to the success of our institutions. Our work and our leadership are also critically important as we guide and support our faculty and staff as they create the learning environment and the learning communities of our colleges and universities.

This leads to two of our biggest challenges. First, we must do a better job of emphasizing the importance of, and rewards from, our work as higher ed HR leaders. Second, we must create a pipeline of future higher ed HR leaders. Age 55 ... that is the median age of higher ed chief HR officers, according to CUPA-HR’s *2018 Administrators*

*in Higher Education Survey* ([www.cupahr.org/surveys/results](http://www.cupahr.org/surveys/results)). For those of us who are at or close to this median age, and for the CHROs who aren’t close to this age, what are we doing to guide and mentor the early-career professionals who are a part of our HR organizations? Our personal learning and growth will always be important, but our much more important role is preparing the next round of leaders.

CUPA-HR’s e-learning resources, including “CUPA-HR Bootcamp” and “Understanding Higher Education” are easy, free ways to support the learning and development of early-career professionals. Our free webinars and low-cost virtual workshops are also great ways for you and your entire team to learn together. Thousands (and that is not an exaggeration!) of higher ed HR professionals and other campus leaders are taking advantage of these resources and other resources in our Knowledge Center every year.

As we prepare to begin the fifth year of CUPA-HR’s Wildfire program — a year-long learning and development experience for early-career higher ed HR professionals — it’s important to celebrate the tremendous success of the program and the impact it has had on participants and on CUPA-HR. I hope you will read the Q&A with this year’s class that is featured in this issue and consider ways that you can develop similar on-campus learning and development opportunities for your early-career professionals.

And for the record, neither of my sons chose HR as a career. Josh is now a trauma nurse and Caleb is a structural engineer. Next time I am with the two of them, I will steer the conversation toward their work, and I’ll be sure to ask Caleb why in the world anyone would want to be a structural engineer.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Brantley". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Andy Brantley | CUPA-HR President and CEO