

2018 UNC System Employee Engagement Survey Results

University of North Carolina, Asheville

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning

Background

UNC Asheville administered the UNC System Employee Engagement Survey, part of The Chronicle’s Great College’s to Work for Program in collaboration with the UNC System Office and Modern Think. Employees were invited to take the survey between January 29, 2018 and February 12, 2018. The survey measures the degree to which employees are engaged in the work of the campus.

Methodology

Data were analyzed to understand the institutional strengths and opportunities as perceived by UNCA employees. Response rates by campus demographics and job categories were compared to the demographic and job distributions of the campus to determine the representativeness of the survey sample. Demographics of the sample were within 6% of the distribution of the campus population percentages for the 17-18 academic year. For response rates, see Table 1. The survey consists of 60 questions and 15 dimensions. Annually, Modern Think performs a factor analysis of the national dataset of responses to validate the dimensions of the survey.

Table 1.
Engagement Survey Response Rates

Demographic category	Response rate
University of North Carolina - Asheville	64%
UNC System Overall	50%
SHRA	66%
EHRA*	62%
Faculty	52%
Other (adjunct faculty)	26%

*EHRA includes faculty

The average overall campus percent positive and percent negative for all questions and dimensions were compared to (1) our UNC System and (2) Arts & Sciences Baccalaureate Peer Comparison Groups and (3) the 2015 results of UNCA’s administration of the Great Colleges to Work for Survey. Per the recommendation of Modern Think, we focused on differences between the 2015 and 2018 results that were greater than ten percentage points.¹ We categorized the benchmark comparisons by designating them *excellent* where we were above both, *good* where we were above one and below the other, and *fair* where we were below both. Two researchers

independently reviewed these data to identify outliers, top and bottom groups, and percentage differences. We then used the Modern Think taxonomy (figure 1) to identify statements that fell in the yellow and red categories for opportunities and the green categories for strengths. We thematically grouped these statements and dimensions to establish campus strengths and opportunities that we describe below. Then, average percent positive responses by job category (Faculty, EHRA, and SHRA) were compared to the campus strengths and opportunities to determine alignment and discrepancies.

To better understand these strengths and opportunities, qualitative comments (approximately 368 comments each

Percent Positive		Percent Negative	
SCORE	INTERPRETATION	SCORE	INTERPRETATION
75% +	Very Good to Excellent	< 10%	Excellent to Very Good
65% - 74%	Good	10% - 14%	Fair to Good
55% - 64%	Fair to Mediocre	15% - 19%	Yellow Flag
45% - 54%	Warrants Attention	20% - 29%	Red Flag
< 45%	Poor	> 30%	Acute

Figure 1 Modern Think Taxonomy

¹ To indicate degree of difference, we created the following taxonomy – a difference in more than 10 percentage points corresponds to a drop and more than 20 percentage points corresponds to a significant drop.

for two questions) were analyzed independently by two researchers for key themes. These themes were then compared with the overall strengths and opportunities.

For these findings, our primary focus was on areas that are supported by multiple statements, and affect all groups. We were limited by the aggregate data provided by Modern Think (predominantly percent positive by role and demographics). Data for EHRA staff (EHRA employees without including faculty employees) was unavailable; therefore, EHRA data was used.

Findings

The findings have been synthesized into three key strengths and three opportunities. Overall campus results are reported with our 2015 results and peer benchmarks. We also include how responses by job category and responses to open ended comments support these strengths and opportunities. Finally, we describe differences between Faculty, EHRA, and Staff employee average responses.

Strengths

Employees greatly value our liberal arts mission. This theme describes a collection of overall positive responses to questions and dimensions that refer to qualities of the UNCA liberal arts mission: the uniqueness of the UNCA mission, the value that the university places on teaching students, and the engagement of the campus with the community. Open ended responses support the feeling that employees appreciate UNCA’s unique liberal arts mission as it allows the campus to have an impact, work on a small campus and regularly interact with students.

Table 2.
Survey Items Supporting ‘Employees Greatly Value Our Liberal Arts Mission’

Survey Item	Percent Positive	Comparison to benchmarks	Comparison to 2015
Pride - the sense of pride and connection faculty/employees report regarding their affiliation with the institution.	78%	Good	Consistent
I am proud to be a part of this institution.	78%	Fair	Consistent
Teaching Environment – the balance between teaching, research and service; the support for advising/mentoring students; and recognition for outstanding teaching.	75%	Excellent	Consistent
There is appropriate recognition of innovative and high quality teaching.	78%	Excellent	Consistent
This institution actively contributes to the community.	83%	Good	Consistent

*Dimensions are indicated by grey shading.

Faculty and staff average responses provide a little more detail to this theme of valuing the UNCA mission. The overall pride items remain consistent, but relative differences among job category responses illustrate the degree that these types of employees either engage with or value of various aspects of teaching.

Table 3.
SHRA, EHRA & Faculty Survey Items Supporting ‘Employees Greatly Value Our Liberal Arts Mission’

Survey Item	Faculty	EHRA	SHRA
I understand how my job contributes to this institution’s mission.	93%	93%	88%
Teaching is appropriately recognized in the evaluation and promotion process.	87%	85%	68%

There is appropriate recognition of innovative and high quality teaching.	77%	77%	77%
Pride - the sense of pride and connection faculty/employees report regarding their affiliation with the institution.	82%	81%	74%
I am proud to be part of this institution.	81%	80%	75%

Employees feel positive about their department. This theme describes the combination of dimensions and questions that identify employees' positive regard for coworkers and environmental factors in their department. Open ended responses support the feeling that employees appreciate the coworkers, supervisors, and department as well as the flexibility of work schedule and freedom in carrying out their work.

Table 4.
Survey Items Supporting 'Employees Feel Positive About Their Departments'

Survey Item	Percent Positive	Comparison to benchmarks	Comparison to 2015
I have a good relationship with my supervisor/department chair.	82%	Fair	Consistent
Supervisor/Department Chairs – relationship faculty/employees report with their department chair or supervisor and assesses critical managerial competencies.	74%	Good	Consistent
Overall, my department is a good place to work.	82%	Good	Consistent
My supervisor/department chair supports my efforts to balance my work and personal life.	83%	Excellent	Consistent

Overall, faculty and staff positively rate their experiences working in their departments; however, the job category average responses illustrate that job category influences how employees experience various aspects of the department.

Table 5.
SHRA, EHRA & Faculty Survey Items Supporting 'Employees Feel Positive About Their Departments'

Survey Item	Faculty	EHRA	SHRA
Overall my department is a good place to work.	86%	85%	76%
I have a good relationship with my supervisor/department chair.	86%	85%	80%

Employees are satisfied with their work. Overall, the campus reported feeling positive about the work that they do. This is evident from consistently high positive responses to all questions in the survey pertaining specifically to the work in which individuals are engaged. Open ended comments supported this sentiment when employees remarked how they enjoy the work that they do.

Table 6.
Survey Items Supporting 'Employees are Satisfied with their Work'

Survey Item	Percent Positive	Comparison to benchmarks	Comparison to 2015
My job makes good use of my skills and abilities.	80%	Good	Consistent
I'm given the responsibility and freedom to do my job.	79%	Fair	Consistent
I understand how my job contributes to this institution's mission.	90%	Good	Consistent

Opportunities

The three key opportunities are: Employees are frustrated with the frequency and quality of communication between departments, and between upper level administration, staff, and faculty (*Quality of Communication Between*); employees do not feel like they have the resources that they need to do their job well and achieve their goals (*Insufficient Resources*); and employees are frustrated with system policies related to yearly performance reviews and career advancement (*System Policies*).

Quality of Communication Between. The most resounding opportunity presented by these data was that employees report a lack of positive feeling about the communication that they encounter between faculty, staff, and administration. This also highlights the ways that employees do not feel recognized or included in the major issues and events of the campus. This group of items describes an overarching feeling of not being on the same team as a result of not encountering meaningful communication outside of their departments. Open ended comments described employees' desire for more communication in general, more collaboration and more recognition through the form of peers and supervisors expressing interest or pointing out the value of employees work.

Table 7.
Survey Items Supporting 'Quality of Communication Between'

Survey Item	Percent Positive	Comparison to benchmarks	Comparison to 2015
Communication – the quality of internal communications specifically related to transparency, clarity and interactivity.	58%	Good	Consistent
Changes that affect me are discussed prior to being implemented.	49%	Good	Consistent
At this institution we discuss and debate issues respectfully to get better results.	54%	Good	Consistent
Faculty, administration, and staff are meaningfully involved in institutional planning.	50%	Good	Consistent
Senior leadership provides a clear direction for this institution's future.	52%	Fair	Consistent
Senior leadership communicates openly about important matters	49%	Fair	Drop
There is regular and open communication among faculty, administration, and staff.	45%	Fair	Consistent
The institution has clear and effective procedures for dealing with discrimination.	64%	Fair	Drop
Senior leadership show a genuine interest in the well-being of faculty, administration and staff.	57%	Good	Drop
There's a sense that we're all on the same team at this institution.	50%	Good	Consistent
Our recognition and awards program are meaningful to me.	33%	Fair	Significant drop

*Dimensions are indicated by grey shading.

Both faculty and staff average responses express frustration with communication and transparency, though SHRA employees are less positive about these issues. For instance, SHRA employees also are less positive about senior leadership communicating about important issues. For all job categories, this theme was more specific to senior leadership and change than the overall campus results.

Table 8.

SHRA, EHRA & Faculty Survey Items Supporting 'Quality of Communication Between'

Survey Item	Faculty	EHRA	SHRA
Senior leadership communicates openly about important matters.	50%	53%	43%
Changes that affect me are discussed prior to being implemented.	57%	53%	43%
Communication – the quality of internal communications specifically related to transparency, clarity and interactivity.	63%	61%	52%
Senior leadership provides a clear direction for this institution's future.	45%	52%	49%
At this institution, we discuss and debate issues respectfully to get better results.	55%	54%	51%

Insufficient resources. Overall, employees are not satisfied with available resources. This applied to salary, personnel (i.e. adequate staff/faculty), and facilities. Open ended comments described a frustration with pay, benefits, lack of personnel, and childcare support and a desire for better facilities.

Table 9.

Survey Items Supporting Insufficient Resources

Survey Item	Percent Positive	Comparison to benchmarks	Comparison to 2015*
I am paid fairly for my work.	31%	Fair	Consistent
I am provided the resources I need to be effective in my job.	52%	Fair	Drop
The facilities (e.g. classrooms, offices, laboratories) adequately meet my needs.	59%	Fair	Drop
My department has adequate faculty/staff to achieve our goals.	29%	Fair	Significant drop

* a difference in more than 10 percentage points corresponds to a drop and more than 20 percentage points corresponds to a significant drop.

Analysis of data by job category indicate a definite lack of resources when it comes to pay. As we will discuss in the section addressing major differences in responses by job categories, faculty also feel that facilities are lacking.

Table 10.

SHRA, EHRA & Faculty Survey Items Supporting 'Insufficient Resources'

Survey Item	Faculty	EHRA	SHRA
I am paid fairly for my work.	36%	37%	25%
I am provided the resources I need to be effective in my job.	48%	47%	56%
My department has adequate faculty/staff to achieve our goals.	23%	27%	29%
This institution's benefits meet my needs.	53%	56%	59%

System policies. Employees reported dissatisfaction with many of the System Office and Office of State Human Resources policies (e.g. state health benefits, performance reviews). Open ended comments indicates a frustration with issues of fairness and accountability in the implementation of these policies as well as clearer and more opportunities for professional development and advancement.

Table 11.
Survey Items Supporting System Policies

Survey Item	Percent Positive	Comparison to benchmarks	Comparison to 2015
Professional Development – the reported satisfaction with career/professional development opportunities for staff, and support for research and clarity of the tenure process for faculty.	62%	Fair	Drop
I understand the necessary requirements to advance my career	58%	Fair	Drop
Our review process accurately measures my job performance.	50%	Fair	Drop
Fairness – confidence in fair and consistent treatment, especially regarding performance management and issues of accountability.	56%	Fair	Consistent
Issues of low performance are addressed in my department	46%	Fair	Drop
This institutions benefits meet my needs.	57%	Fair	Drop

Of Note

The following theme and survey item did not fit into the above strengths and opportunities but warrant attention given the drop in percent positive from 2015.

Diversity. Several of the items that Modern Think groups into its Diversity questions (these have not been identified as a statistically significant dimension for the survey) have dropped from our 2015 results.

Table 12.
Survey Items Of Note Related to Diversity

Survey Item	Percent Positive	Comparison to benchmarks	Comparison to 2015
The institution places sufficient emphasis on having diverse faculty, administration, and staff.	65%	Fair	Drop
The institution has clear and effective procedure for dealing with discrimination.	64%	Fair	Drop

This institution’s culture is something special. Given the positive responses regarding the uniqueness of the institution’s mission, it is surprising that the following survey item dropped from our 2015 results.

Table 13.
Survey Item Related to UNCA as a Special Place

Survey Item	Percent Positive	Comparison to benchmarks	Comparison to 2015
The institution’s culture is special – something you don’t just find anywhere.	66%	Good	Drop

Faculty and Staff comparison

Overall, SHRA staff are less engaged and satisfied with their work on the UNCA campus. In most cases, the largest discrepancy in positive responses was between the SHRA and faculty employee categories. To identify the key themes of these discrepancies, we identified the questions and dimensions that

differed more than twenty percentage points. SHRA employees are less satisfied with (1) opportunities for professional development and advancement, (2) communication and collaboration opportunities on campus, and (3) more satisfied with the campus facilities.

Table 14.
Survey Items Where Faculty & SHRA Employees' Responses Notably Differ

Theme #	Survey Item	Faculty	EHRA	SHRA
1	I am given the opportunity to develop my skills at this institution.	76%	75%	54%
1	I understand the necessary requirements to advance my career.	72%	70%	43%
1	Professional Development – the reported satisfaction with career/professional development opportunities; and for faculty, support for research and clarity of the tenure process.	74%	73%	49%
1	Promotions in my department are based on a person's ability.	70%	62%	37%
1	Our review process accurately measures my job performance.	63%	56%	43%
3	The facilities (e.g., classrooms, offices, laboratories) adequately meet my needs.	45%	51%	70%
3	Facilities – the reported satisfaction with physical workspace, overall campus appearance and confidence in experiencing a safe and secure environment.	57%	65%	77%
2	There is regular and open communication among faculty, administration, and staff.	56%	50%	36%
2	We have opportunities to contribute to important decisions in my department.	85%	75%	54%

Given the methodological constraints involved with using the data Modern Think provided, it was harder to identify differences between the Faculty and EHRA employee categories. There were four survey questions where Faculty and EHRA employee responses notably differed. For all four of these questions, EHRA, SHRA, & Faculty employees all differed in their responses. For instance, Faculty employees feel most positive about contributing to decisions in their department, SHRA feel least included in important decisions, and EHRA employees are less positive than the Faculty.

Table 15.
Survey Items Where SHRA, Faculty, & EHRA Employees' Responses Notably Differ

Survey Item	Faculty	EHRA	SHRA
There is a good balance of teaching, service, and research at this institution	44%	55%	83%
The institution take reasonable steps to provide a safe and secure environment for the campus.	69%	79%	84%
Our senior leadership has the knowledge, skills and experience necessary for institutional success.	59%	70%	69%
We have opportunities to contribute to important decisions in my department.	85%	75%	54%