

# Higher Education WORKPLACE

Trend Summary 2018

THE CHRONICLE

2018  
**GREAT  
COLLEGES  
TO WORK FOR.**

Prepared by  
**ModernThink**



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## Overview

The Chronicle of Higher Education and ModernThink LLC partnered for an eleventh year of the Chronicle Great Colleges to Work For® program. The 2018 research is based on responses from over 53,000 people at 253 institutions: 165 four-year colleges and universities (95 private and 70 public) and 88 two-year colleges. This year's Trend Summary Report provides a different look at the program data, including research and analysis of highlights, and a spotlight on one 2-year and 4-year participant.

Over 7,500 of the people responding were administrators, 18,103 were faculty, and over 26,000 were staff members. The survey was sent to more than 121,500 people, with an overall response rate of 44 percent. All accredited institutions in the United States with an enrollment of at least 500 were invited to participate, at no cost to them.

Each institution was asked to submit a list of full-time employees randomly selected across four job categories: administration, faculty, exempt professional staff, and non-exempt staff. Adjunct faculty members were included for two-year colleges. The sample size, as large as either 400 or 600, was based on the number of employees in those categories. Institutions with fewer than 500 people in the designated categories were invited to survey the entire employee population.

The assessment had two components: a questionnaire about institutional characteristics and a faculty/staff questionnaire about individuals' evaluations of their institutions. The assessment also included an analysis of demographic data and workplace policies, including benefits, at each participating college. The questionnaires were administered online in the spring.

In the faculty/staff questionnaire, people responded to 60 statements using a five-point scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The statements were categorized into various dimensions and from those the Great Colleges recognition categories were determined, such as respect and appreciation, confidence in senior leadership, diversity and teaching environment.

To determine the colleges to be recognized in each category, we divided the applicant pool into two classifications: four-year institutions and two-year institutions. Within each, there were three groups, based on total undergraduate and graduate enrollment: small (500 to 2,999 students), medium (3,000 to 9,999), and large (more than 10,000).

Recognition in each Great Colleges category, except for diversity, was given to the 10 highest-scoring institutions in each size for four-year colleges, and the four highest-scoring institutions in each size for two-year colleges. In the diversity category, three four-year and three two-year colleges were recognized.

Honor Roll status, for four-year colleges, was given to the 10 institutions in each size that were cited most often across all of the recognition categories. For two-year colleges, Honor Roll status was given to the four institutions that were cited most often in each size category.

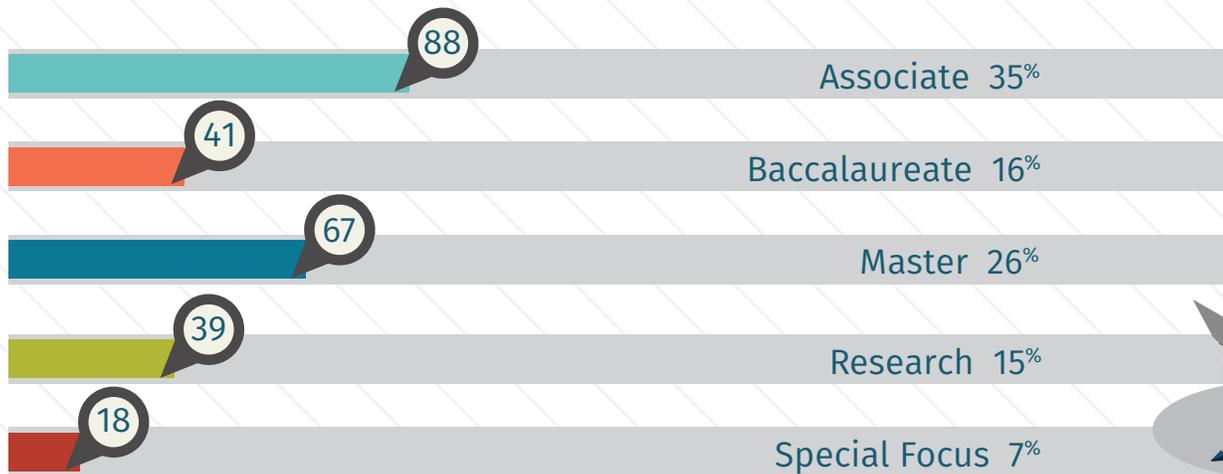
The Higher Education Workplace Trend Summary® includes representative data from both two-year and four-year institutions, and provides comparative data for some of the most relevant demographics and policies. We highlight in both chart and graphical form aggregate data depicting which schools are doing what so that you can see trends as well as where you stand relative to your peers.

We hope this report provides perspective and insight, and supports the continued good work of you and your institution.

## The Great Colleges Survey Team

# Applicant Pool Information

## Applicants by Carnegie Classification

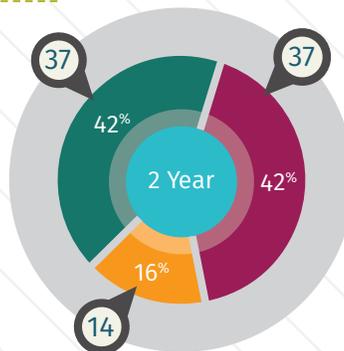


253 Total

## Applicants by Enrollment Size

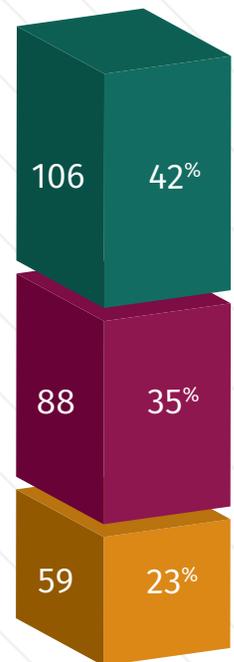


2 Year



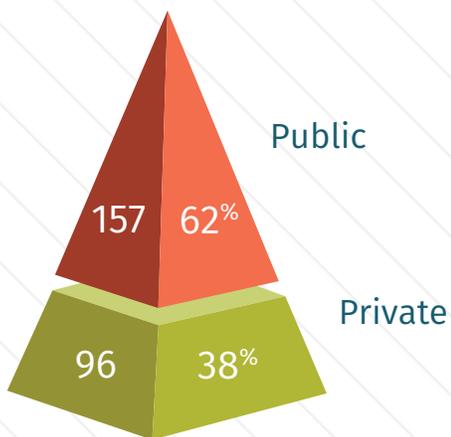
88 Total

All



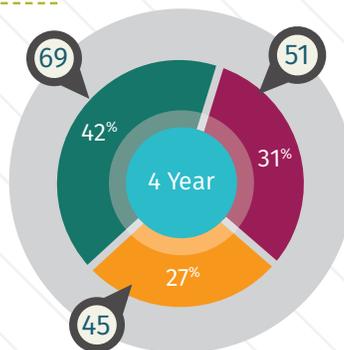
253 Total

## Public Versus Private



253 Total

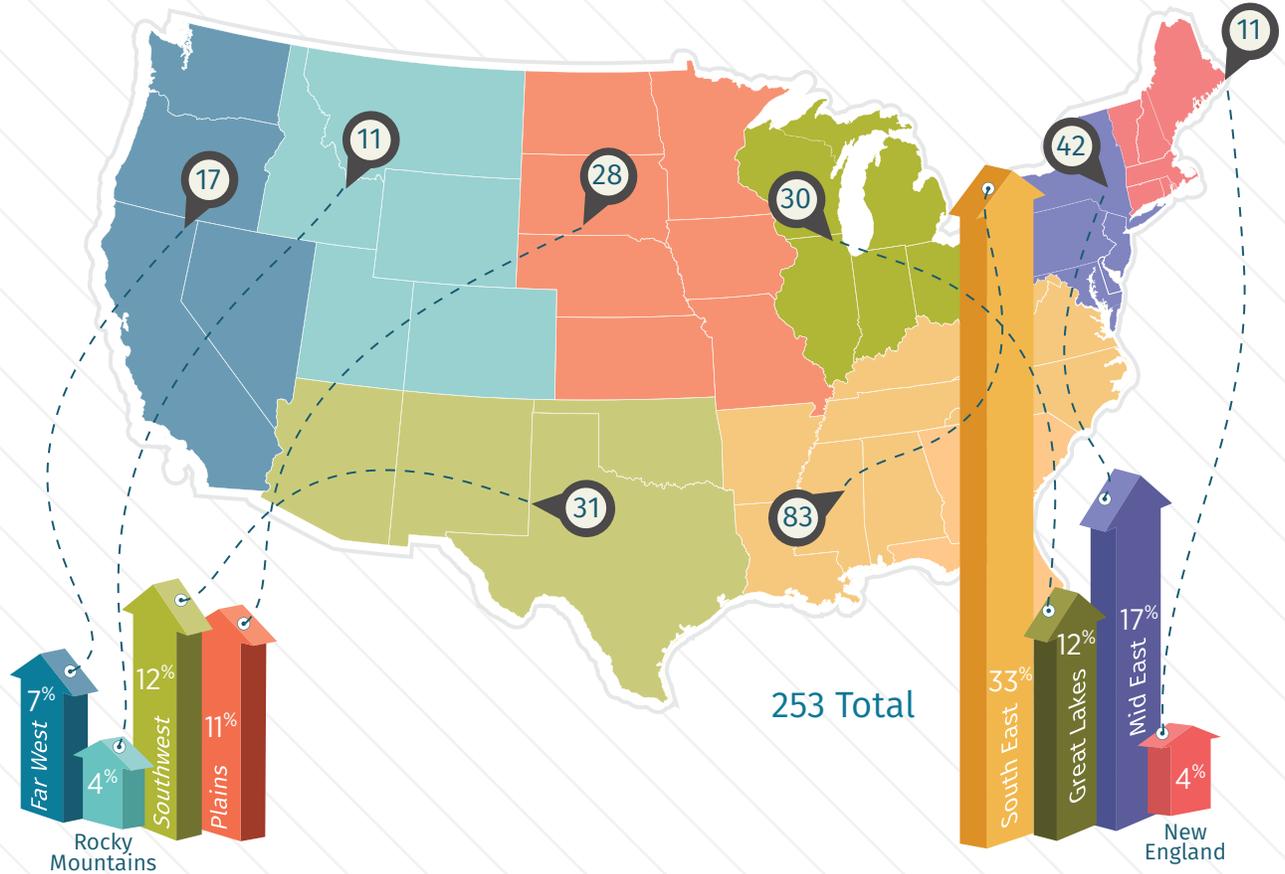
4 Year



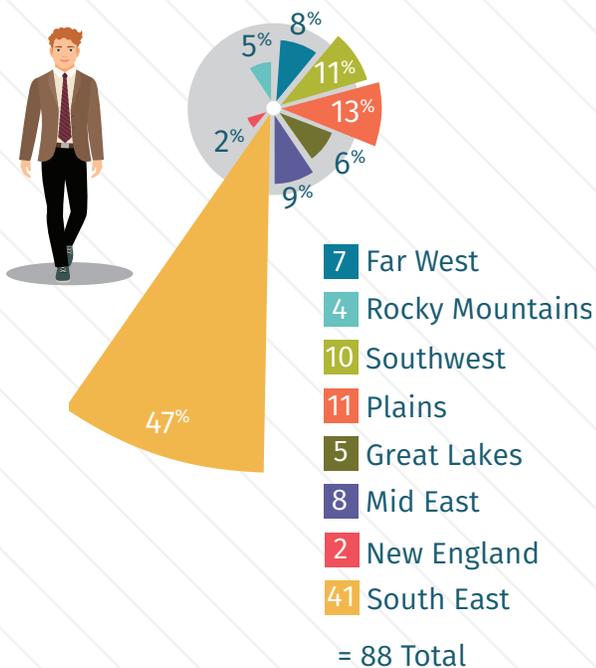
165 Total

# Geographic Distribution

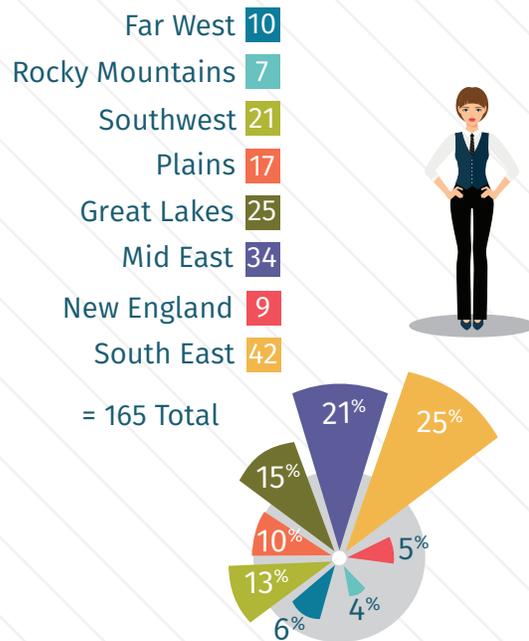
## All Applicants



### 2 Year



### 4 Year



## Sustaining a Great Workplace in Difficult Times

### Interview with Eastern Connecticut State University

Recognizing the ongoing struggle for colleges to do more with less, we asked Eastern Connecticut State University to share their approach. As a state-funded institution, they are managing to maintain a great workplace and engage employees while enduring budget reductions. Here's their story, shared by Edward H. Osborn, Director of University Relations.

Eastern is Connecticut's public liberal arts university, serving more than 5,300 students annually on its residential campus in northeast Connecticut. Eastern offers students a strong liberal arts education grounded in a range of applied learning opportunities. Ranked in the 25 top public universities in the North Region by U.S. News and World Report in its 2018 Best College ratings, Eastern also has been named a "Green Campus" by The Princeton Review eight years in a row.

Eastern has received recognition as a "Great College to Work For" nine times since the program began in 2009 and in each year the university has participated. This year marks the fourth year in a row that Eastern has made the Honor Roll for the program. Eastern is also the only public, four-year institution in New England to receive Great Colleges recognition.

#### Q: What were your initial goals for participating in the Great Colleges program and how have they changed over time?

**A:** Eastern has always prided itself on being a collaborative, collegial campus community. However, other than internal "climate surveys," we didn't have a way to assess our culture that was independently administered and could compare Eastern to national norms. The Great Colleges program does that. In addition, the level of detail in the survey instrument provides important metrics on key aspects of our campus operations, including campus facilities, employee benefits, tenure, job satisfaction, departmental dynamics and other valuable measures.

Going into the program in 2009, we had no way of knowing how we might compare with other institutions. What has been gratifying, in addition to continuing to be recognized each year in which we have participated, is the fact that the number of criteria that we are recognized for continues to grow. This is an indication that our plans for improvement are working and that the faculty and staff are committed to the path of progress. However, we do not assume that our employees will have the same positive feelings each year; the University must earn their respect every time we enter the Great Colleges program.

#### Q: Has your institution formed any committees or task forces specific to employee engagement and/or workplace culture?

**A:** There are two types of committees that serve to move Eastern's mission forward and promote a campus culture of engagement and collegiality. The first are committees designed to encourage collaboration and collective action on institutional priorities. The second are committees to support our employees and the campus culture.



## Committees to support collaboration

**The Committee on the Future of Eastern** - Shortly after arriving at Eastern in 2006, President Núñez launched an initiative to create a Strategic Plan that would advance the University forward with a common set of goals created and shared by the campus community. To ensure collaboration, transparency and buy-in, the Committee on the Future of Eastern (COFE) was composed of faculty, staff, administrators, students, alumni and members of the external community — the broadest representation possible.

More than 300 people participated in creating the 2008–13 Strategic Plan, and most recently the 2013–18 Strategic Plan. With faculty/administrator co-chairs for every major committee, frequent forums, and other communications strategies, the Strategic Plan has become a living document that drives our budget and operations. At the same time, it is also a symbol of the collective focus and unity that takes place daily on campus.

**Ad Hoc Budget Committee** - In this age of budget cuts, Eastern's allocation from the State of Connecticut has been declining steadily over recent years. To manage our budget in a collaborative environment over the past decade, the university's Ad Hoc Budget Committee has been tasked with looking at ways to reduce costs, defray expenses and help balance the budget. In addition to a representative appointed by each bargaining unit, the committee includes members of the University Senate's budget committee, as well as other faculty, staff and student representatives. Not only has the committee discovered cost savings each year, it promotes an unparalleled level of fiscal transparency across the campus. Everyone knows our balance sheet, our reserve fund balance, enrollment levels, and forces that impact the budget. In recent years, cost-saving measures have ranged from installing energy-efficient lighting systems to saving thousands of dollars by converting to Internet-based telephone service.

**Master Planning Committee** - Like most university committees, the master planning committee is composed of faculty, staff and student representatives. It reviewed the University's long-term facility needs and enrollment projections to create a campus blueprint for future construction and renovation projects that support the University's identity as a pedestrian, residential campus focused on undergraduate education.

**Green Campus Committee** - This committee also has representation from across the campus, reflecting the University's longstanding commitment to sustainability. The Green Campus Committee has led or supported the construction of LEED-Certified Buildings; encouraged energy efficiency upgrades; improved our recycling program; coordinated sustainability education programs; promoted alternative energy solutions; and led carbon neutrality efforts.

**Information Technology Committee** - To ensure that computer systems meet the needs of students, faculty and staff, this committee provides important input to the Information Services unit. As a result, Information Services moved the Help Desk from the computing center to the library this year, creating greater accessibility for faculty, students and staff, freeing up space, and increasing library traffic. It also rolled out a new consulting service to work with faculty at their own computers to troubleshoot issues.

## Committees to support employees

**Professional Development Committee** - Through the advisory support of this committee, the Office of Professional Development has led a campus-wide initiative to support faculty and staff professional development. In addition to sharing information about off-campus professional development resources, the office promotes workshops ranging from diversity training to copyright law, to FERPA regulations and first-year retention strategies. In the past year, 81 percent of faculty and staff participated in some form of professional development, a 10 percent increase over the prior year. Administrators took an average of 35 hours of professional development, with 60 secretarial staff, 50 adjunct faculty, 30 administrators, and 150 faculty engaged in professional development activities.

**Minority Recruitment and Retention Committees** - Both our faculty (AAUP) and administrative faculty (SUOAF) unions have committees to support the hiring and retention of minority employees. These committees are supported by the administration and have been effective in advancing diversity on our campus. In recent years, Eastern has had the highest percentage of minority faculty of any university or college in Connecticut, including UCONN, Wesleyan, Yale and others.



New hires are provided mentorship and professional development opportunities to grow and thrive in their positions. The committees also provide funding and support for university personnel to recruit candidates of color through recruitment sessions and the distribution of job announcements. New hires are then paired with mentors — longstanding staff members — to facilitate their professional growth and help them acclimate to the university.

“Hiring the right people is important to any organization, but it is critical when every single staff position matters. Our search committees work hard to find qualified candidates but they also understand how important it is to find people who fit our diverse campus culture. Knowing our bargaining units will step up to the plate to support new hires is equally important to the success of our human resources efforts.”

-Ken DeLisa, Chief Human Resources Officer

**Q: What steps have you taken to maintain a “great workplace” while budgets continue to be cut each year?**

**A:** There are many ways to support a healthy campus culture. In addition to the committees cited above, two other ways we invest in our culture at Eastern include:

**Celebrating success** - This includes celebrating institutional progress and individual success, and it goes beyond professional considerations. We enjoy a party at Eastern! We have receptions and celebrations for everything from retirements to special birthdays to celebrating the end of our current strategic planning cycle (a reception is being planned this fall), to a reception when we gained NCATE accreditation. Faculty and staff achievements (national appointments, grants and fellowships) are also announced on our listserv and featured in our online newsletter.



Eastern also highlights service awards given to employees, and uses our pre-semester assemblies (“University Meeting”) held three times a year — with the majority of employees in attendance — as the central stage for these recognitions. In addition to 10-, 20- and 25-year service awards, we recognize staff in various employee categories (full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, exempt staff, and non-exempt staff) with annual Excellence Award recognitions.

At our May University Meeting, we honor the Distinguished Professor of the Year, as well as the year’s retirees. In addition to having their name displayed on the “big screen,” each awardee’s short biography is read by the Vice President for Human Resources, a gift is given, and the person’s photograph is taken with the President. More often than not, each awardee is given a standing ovation, because on our small campus, each person has had a real relationship with everyone else in the room.

## Supporting employees -

- A Sick Leave Bank, managed by the various bargaining units, provides sick leave time to employees who are out of work due to catastrophic and/or extended illness. Some bargaining units allow employees to donate their own accrued leave to other bargaining unit employees who may be out for extended medical leave.
- A Tuition Waiver program allows tuition-free attendance at any of the four state universities for employees, spouses and children up to the age of 25.
- Some bargaining units offer employees additional tuition reimbursement opportunities to take courses, while other contracts set aside funds to cover the cost of attending professional development programs/workshops/conferences.
- Each summer, hourly staff are offered the opportunity to adjust their hours so they can maximize their free time and enjoy the fleeting New England summer.
- Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider helps employees secure outside resources and services to address personal issues/problems for themselves and/or a family member.
- Some contracts provide shoe allowances (for safety shoes), a clothing allowance, and stipends for maintaining work-related credentials (field training officer, firearms instructor).
- In addition to the faculty sabbatical program, staff can also petition for sabbatical leave on a limited basis.
- Other enrichment and support programs range from smoking cessation and weight loss programs to free yoga and computer software classes.

## Q: How does Senior Leadership support the efforts toward sustaining a great workplace?

**A:** President Núñez and her management team lead by example. Beyond hosting a collaborative, bi-monthly meeting of the vice-presidents and directors, the President also holds monthly breakfasts with invited faculty and staff, holds a monthly breakfast with union representatives, hosts open office hours on a routine basis, and meets with the Student Government Association for breakfast each month. In addition, she visits our 13 residence halls each fall to listen to student concerns in person.

To promote a sense of unity, in addition to the celebratory events described above, the president hosts two large annual picnics, one in the fall for students, and one in the spring for faculty and staff.

The president also leads the University by example when it comes to serving the community. In addition to serving on several boards in our town of Willimantic, CT, she serves on boards across the state, as well as at the regional and national levels in the higher education arena. Other administrators, faculty and staff are equally invested in the local and regional communities.

Finally, the President has made it a personal mission of supporting the acquisition of artwork for the campus, and holdings from Eastern's permanent collection are available for employees to decorate their offices.



“It has been gratifying to me personally to lead this campus the past 12 years as we have shared a journey marked by challenge and progress. I have found that the trust I have had in my colleagues has been returned in full measure. When employees — faculty and staff alike — are given the authority to do their jobs and collaborate in teams, great things happen. As a campus unified by a common purpose, we have become a stronger, more resilient institution, ready for future opportunities together.”

-Elsa M. Núñez, President, Eastern Connecticut State University

**Q: Given the reduced budgets and charge to do more with fewer resources, what recommendations do you have for colleges in a similar situation?**

**A:** When the Great Recession hit America in 2009, we took steep cuts in our state funding. In many other cases, institutions facing similar budgetary challenges have reduced their staffing levels, suffering a huge loss in campus morale. Our decision was to do the opposite — the President and her staff have made a public commitment in the past decade to do everything in their power not to lay off members of our workforce. This has meant doubling up jobs, using technology to do things we used to do manually, or discontinuing activities that were not focused on supporting our students. Even so, we are still a community united in a common commitment to our students, to the standards and values we share, and to achieving our goals.

Given the reality that Eastern manages its operations with these ongoing staffing shortages, we place a premium on using technology to gain efficiencies. In addition to state-of-the-art instructional technology ranging from a digital history lab to a motion capture system and virtual dissection lab, we use Grades First to monitor at-risk students, and a range of technologies (virtual tour, digital advertising) to support our Admissions Office. The Housing, Development and Campus Police departments also use specialized technology to maximize efficiencies.

Finally, recognizing that public funding for state universities is declining these days, we encourage other public institutions to support an aggressive and ongoing private fundraising program. Our own foundation has experienced multi-million dollar annual fundraising totals for the seventh consecutive year, saw an all-time high in alumni giving, and awarded a record total of scholarship funds to our students. While private fundraising efforts cannot be used routinely to support salaries and other operating expenses, such funds are critical in helping students pay for their education. With more than 40 percent of our students being first-generation, this support is life-changing on our campus.

**Q: How have you used a focus on student success and Eastern’s mission as Connecticut’s public liberal arts university to create a shared vision on campus?**

**A:** Eastern’s tagline, “A Liberal Education. Practically Applied.” describes the University’s mission as Connecticut’s only public liberal arts university. The campus community has a common goal of preparing students to become successful professionals and engaged citizens. Using a living strategic plan as the guidepost, faculty and staff share a vision and operational objectives to focus our attention on student success, with a commitment to continuously improving systems and services. This common set of values and goals serves as motivation and a direction as we work together. Because of a strategic plan that was built through a campus-wide, collaborative process, and the need to execute strategies using inter-departmental teams, the campus shares an interest in a wide range of initiatives. We work hard to avoid having individual departments work in “silos.” Examples of campus-wide initiatives include:

- 🔗 **The Employability Council** - To ensure that our students have marketable skills in today’s competitive workplace environment, Eastern recently created a new cross-functional group on campus called the Employability Council. It will be co-chaired by a member of the faculty and an administrator, and will include representatives from key units who work closely with students to prepare them for the world of work, including the Center for Internships and Career Development; the Office of Alumni Affairs; the Center for Community Engagement; and the Office of Student Employment. The council has other faculty and staff representatives, and a charge to make sure that “employability” is a campus-wide responsibility.
- 🔗 **Curriculum reform** - New majors (criminology), concentrations (actuarial science) and courses (artificial intelligence) are celebrated across campus, because everyone understands that increasing enrollments is everyone’s business and supports the University’s bottom line.

- **Interdisciplinary programs** - Majors like Labor Relations and Human Resource Management (shared across three departments) and New Media Studies (also shared across three departments) demonstrate the collaboration that is routinely practiced on campus.
- **Faculty Support** - The Academic Program Review Committee is tasked with providing supplemental funding to academic departments that demonstrate a commitment to growth and improvement. Faculty lines, travel funds, research support, and other assistance ties budget allocations to departmental assessments. This past year, the university also saw an 11 percent increase over the prior year to support faculty research. In addition, the Liberal Arts Work Committee has a program to support Faculty Fellows who engage in service learning projects. Finally, both the faculty and administrative staff bargaining units have active mentoring programs.

**Q: If you were to point to one or two things you have done over time to create and sustain your workplace culture, what would they be?**

**A:** First, as noted earlier, Dr. Núñez immediately engaged the campus community in planning a common future when she arrived at Eastern in 2006. The Committee on the Future of Eastern only created two consecutive, five-year blueprints to drive our strategic direction and guide resource allocations. As we developed these planning documents together, the commitment to a common cause and the collaborative and transparent process we created has reinforced the culture of trust that has marked Eastern for decades.

When you have a culture of trust, a clear direction shared across your campus, alignment between goals and resources, and a shared commitment to a shared vision and common goals, people make decisions in teams. There is nothing more empowering to individuals, teams and an entire campus than to know that your ideas are respected and you have the autonomy to make decisions that move the institution forward.

The second thing we did that has promoted a culture of transparency, trust and collaboration on our campus was the creation of the Ad Hoc Budget Committee. When the Great Recession hit the financial markets in 2008–09, it impacted our funding allocation from the State of Connecticut to the point where difficult financial decisions had to be made. In response, we created an ongoing forum to openly discuss budgetary issues that has resulted in an unparalleled level of financial transparency and budgetary awareness across the campus.

**Q: Are there any lessons learned or advice you would give other institutions that participate but haven't yet been recognized, or fell off the list? What about institutions that currently do not do this survey?**

**A:** The “Great Colleges to Work For” survey solicits honest, genuine reflection and assessment from participating employees. The survey reveals the true nature of an institution’s internal dynamic and the interpersonal connections across campus — people either work together and respect/trust their employer or they don’t. If a university or college is committed to assessing and improving its campus culture, we would encourage them to participate in the program. For those who might not gain Great Colleges recognition immediately, the data from the survey can provide clear direction on campus improvements. If a campus has a strong culture and climate, participating in the Great Colleges program can be a powerful reward! It is a great honor and motivator to be recognized, and the results serve as motivation to continue doing the right things well.

**Q: How do you plan to celebrate your Honor Roll recognition this year?**

**A:** Celebrating our Honor Roll status this year will begin in August at the “University Meeting” assembly held in advance of the start of the fall semester. We will unveil this year’s banner and the President will talk about the significance of the award and the motivation it provides the campus community to continue to work together and

strive toward reaching our common goals. The banner that will be unveiled in August will join other banners from previous years that are on display in our Library Atrium. A major public relations campaign is also initiated each year.

In addition, we showcase the Great Colleges recognition on our website along with other institutional distinctions, such as our U.S. News and World Report ranking, recognition as a Green College and other awards. After a decade of being named a Great College each year, we have largely institutionalized this honor. For instance, when faculty and staff candidates for hire are briefed on our institutional culture and history, the Great Colleges recognition is the first thing they hear about. Our Admissions staff also share this with prospective students and their parents, because we think it is important for them to know the working atmosphere and culture in which students study and learn.

“

### What Eastern’s Employees Have to Say:

Eastern offers a rare working environment where the emotional support generated by the close-knit community is matched by a commitment to intellectual curiosity and educational excellence. How we work (“together”) is as important as the outcomes of our work.

Dedicated Leadership despite a depressed economic climate for state agencies. Holds true to mission. Always seeking ways to improve recruitment and retention.

Among other positives, most are here for a common goal and it shows. I appreciate the way everyone is always willing to help each other move forward in order to help our students get to where they need to be.

I’m encouraged to grow professionally, the benefits are great, and the institution attempts to stay student-centered in their decision making.

People at this institution are very respectful to each other. There is a good attitude about work and a sense that we are performing important work and making a difference.

I am trusted to make decisions and do my job, assuming I am doing my job well.

”

## Benefits Policy Data



### 2 Year

	Small	Medium	Large
Dental Coverage - Individual Employee	100%	100%	100%
Vision Coverage - Individual Employee	94.44%	94.59%	100%
Prescription Drug Plan - Individual Employee	100%	91.89%	100%
Long-term Care - Individual Employee	50%	51.35%	50%
Short-term Disability - Individual Employee	77.78%	82.86%	92.86%
Long-term Disability - Individual Employee	97.14%	91.43%	100%
Life Insurance - Individual Employee	100%	100%	100%
Post-Retirement Health Insurance (other than COBRA)	88.89%	83.78%	92.86%
Alternative Treatment Options	19.44%	16.67%	38.46%
Onsite Nurse/Doctor	2.78%	13.89%	35.71%



### 4 Year

	Small	Medium	Large
Dental Coverage - Individual Employee	98.41%	100%	100%
Vision Coverage - Individual Employee	96.83%	95.83%	100%
Prescription Drug Plan - Individual Employee	95.24%	95.74%	97.78%
Long-term Care - Individual Employee	28.57%	39.58%	46.67%
Short-term Disability - Individual Employee	76.19%	68.75%	57.78%
Long-term Disability - Individual Employee	95.24%	97.87%	95.35%
Life Insurance - Individual Employee	100%	97.92%	95.56%
Post-Retirement Health Insurance (other than COBRA)	39.68%	72.92%	86.36%
Alternative Treatment Options	24.19%	35.42%	47.73%
Onsite Nurse/Doctor	41.94%	41.67%	47.73%



### Carnegie Classification

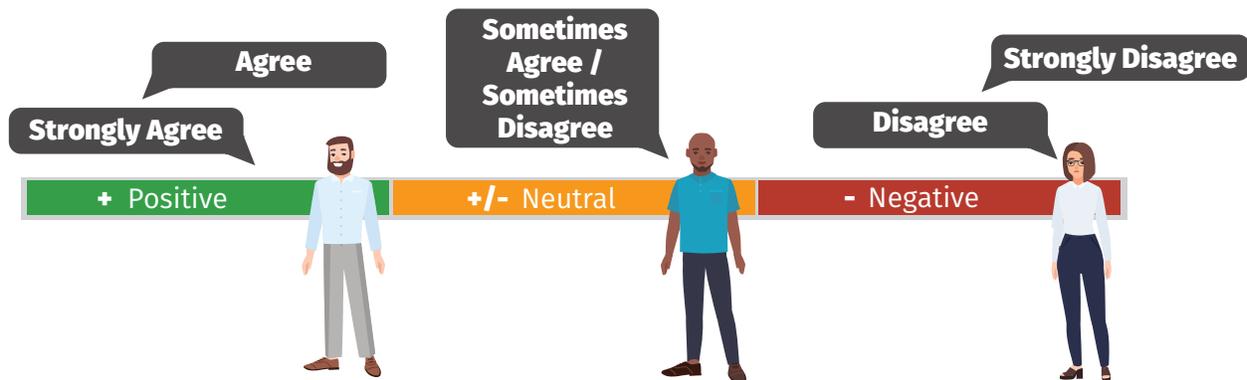
	Associate	Baccalaureate	Master	Research	Special
Dental Coverage - Individual Employee	100%	97.22%	100%	100%	100%
Vision Coverage - Individual Employee	95.40%	97.22%	96.92%	100%	94.44%
Prescription Drug Plan - Individual Employee	96.55%	100%	92.31%	100%	94.44%
Long-term Care - Individual Employee	50.57%	25%	35.38%	48.65%	44.44%
Short-term Disability - Individual Employee	82.35%	80.56%	67.69%	64.86%	55.56%
Long-term Disability - Individual Employee	95.24%	94.44%	98.44%	94.29%	94.44%
Life Insurance - Individual Employee	100%	100%	98.46%	94.59%	100%
Post-Retirement Health Insurance (other than COBRA)	87.36%	55.56%	64.06%	78.38%	44.44%
Alternative Treatment Options	21.18%	25%	26.98%	54.05%	38.89%
Onsite Nurse/Doctor	12.79%	31.43%	50%	43.24%	44.44%

# Hidden opportunities: Discovering what’s going on in the middle of your data set

By Audrey Walker

Humans are creatures that tend to have strong opinions. Just ask anyone how they feel about pineapple on pizza, the New England Patriots, or (if you’re feeling brave) politics. More often than not, people will come out either in strong support of or adamantly opposed to the topic at hand. The same division holds true for employee engagement. At any one institution, some employees may praise the students, their colleagues, and senior leadership, while others bemoan the pay, lack of parking, and communication practices. These pros and cons often end up dominating the conversation, ignoring those whose opinions put them somewhere in the middle.

To better assess employee engagement in higher education, the Great Colleges to Work For program uses the ModernThink Higher Education Insight Survey, which asks participants about various facets of their workplace experience. The largest section of this assessment tool is made up of 60 statements that survey takers respond to with one of six Likert scale options: *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Sometimes Agree/Sometimes Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Strongly Disagree*, and *Not Applicable*. The percentage of survey takers that select *Strongly Agree* or *Agree* to a statement is considered the positive score. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the percentage of those that select *Strongly Disagree* or *Disagree* make up the negative score. Right in the middle is the percentage of neutral respondents, made up of those that select *Sometimes Agree/Sometimes Disagree*.



When looking at an institution’s results, it’s easy to get caught up in the highs and lows. What do employees think their institution is doing particularly well? Is there an area that is particular cause for celebration? Where would they like to see changes? These are certainly valid questions, but employee engagement and satisfaction is more of a spectrum than a dichotomy. Those in the “neutral” zone can offer actionable insights as valid as those offered by their more polarized counterparts.

Before diving into what the numbers tell us, let’s consider this neutral ground a little more closely. Each survey statement essentially asks respondents to weigh their experiences and report which way the scales tip. On any one survey statement where someone responds with a middling score, they are saying their experiences are not consistent. For example, they may feel that they sometimes receive useful feedback, but not as regularly as they would like. In other words, the scales are balanced somewhere in the middle.

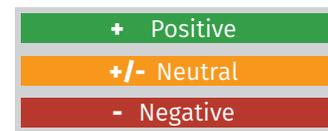
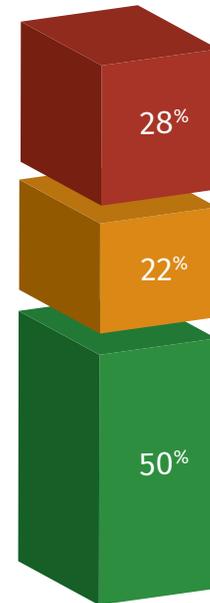
Although this data can seem ambiguous, it’s actually good news if you are an employer. Those individuals in the middle are much closer to where you would like them to be than those in the decidedly negative territory. Fundamentally, they represent untapped potential to improve employee engagement. These faculty and staff members may not be head-over-heels in love with every aspect of their jobs, but they’re partway there. While the process to address a large

contingent of unhappy employees can take time to strategize and carry out, those in the *Sometimes* area offer “low-hanging fruit” that can be addressed much more quickly. The ideal outcome in these scenarios is to marshal everyone down the spectrum of satisfaction and engagement towards the *Strongly Agree* and *Agree* perspective. This might mean swaying some of those responding *Sometimes Agree/Sometimes Disagree* towards the *Agree* side and converting some *Disagree* individuals into the *Sometimes* category.

To illustrate the power of neutral data, let's examine two of the most common grievances institutions often hear about from their employees: pay and communication. These issues are captured in two survey statements: “I am paid fairly for my work,” and “Changes that affect me are discussed prior to being implemented.” In the 2018 program, 50% of Great Colleges survey takers agreed to some extent that they are paid fairly for their work. Similarly, 51% of respondents agreed that changes are discussed with them prior to being implemented. Based solely on the positive score, the issues appear almost identical, so we have to review all response options to get the complete picture. On the negative side of the spectrum, 28% *Disagree* or *Strongly Disagree* that they are paid fairly and 20% *Disagree* to some extent that changes are communicated effectively. In the land of the undecided, 22% *Sometimes Agree/Sometimes Disagree* regarding fair pay whereas 29% *Sometimes Agree/Sometimes Disagree* about the process for communicating changes. In other words, a greater portion of employees are on the fence about their institutions' communication strategies than are on the fence about pay. Weighing the two topics at hand, the amount of work and effort that might go into addressing the communication problem is going to have larger potential payoffs for employee satisfaction than applying the same resources to addressing pay would have.



### 11. I am paid fairly for my work.



### 22. Changes that affect me are discussed prior to being implemented.





“It is a better place to work than it was last year. A lot of the problems to do with communication may be changing. In another year many of my ‘neutral’ or ‘sometimes’ responses will probably change to ‘satisfied’ if things continue going in the present direction.”

-Employee at a medium 4 year institution

Discussing changes before implementing them is just one aspect of communication that employees feel somewhat ambivalent about. According to data from this year’s Great Colleges to Work For program, on average over a quarter of employees at colleges and universities across the country have mixed feelings about various communication practices at their institutions. Some key areas are discussing and debating issues respectfully, communicating openly across job designations, and encouraging open dialogue from senior leaders. This is not surprising given that in higher education, communicating effectively with everyone can be a complex, multi-layered endeavor. Just as “location, location, location” is the key to good real estate, “communication, communication, communication” is the key to employee engagement. Even if the lines for clear communication are in place, they may not be used as effectively or as often as employees would like.

“

“Communication can always be improved no matter how good it is currently.”

- Employee at a large 2 year institution



43. At this institution, we discuss and debate issues respectfully to get better results.



55. There is regular and open communication among faculty, administration and staff.



41. Senior leadership communicates openly about important matters.



Employee recognition is often another topic that, while programs and infrastructure may already exist, tends to leave employees lukewarm. In 2018, 24% of survey participants responded *Sometimes Agree/Sometimes Disagree* to the statement “I am regularly recognized for my contributions.” Additionally, 26% report mixed feelings to the statement “Our recognition and rewards programs are meaningful to me.” One of the most common methods of recognizing employees are “Years of Service” awards. Though certainly valid, these awards can feel perfunctory and may not always convey genuine appreciation for individual efforts. Also, in the intervening five or ten years between an employee’s Years of Service Award, many other important contributions may slip through the cracks. Making consistent, regular investments in quality work and outstanding efforts can go a long way towards maintaining engaged and motivated

employees and encouraging them and others to continually give their best. Unsurprisingly, most employees would like recognition to be conveyed by increasing the size of their paycheck, but there are less expensive ways to let employees know you appreciate them. Shout-outs in meetings, encouraging peer-to-peer recognition, and hand-written thank you notes are easy ways for managers and supervisors at all levels to recognize outstanding workers.

“WELL DONE!”

“In my opinion, recognition is a huge part in a person or a group’s morale. Frequent reminders that specific groups or individuals are doing a well and making impacts would boost work morale and reduce burnout...”

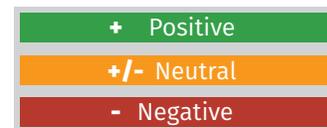
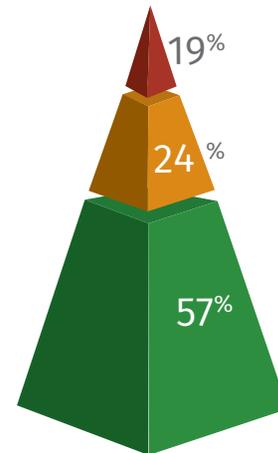
-Employee at a large 4 year institution

Employee engagement is an ever moving target and it’s important to recognize the areas in which an institution is excelling. Similarly, it is important to acknowledge and address the issues employees raise as red flags. Tackling issues that affect a large segment of employees can involve significant commitments in terms of time and resources and it can be a while before employees see changes. In the meantime, it is worth exploring areas where employees are less decided in their opinions. If a large portion of employees report sometimes agreeing or disagreeing on a particular topic, the infrastructure already in place may not be adequately meeting everyone’s needs or may be inconsistent across the institution. In these cases, rather than grand, sweeping reform, smaller scale modifications could be what stand between an institution and a more engaged workforce.

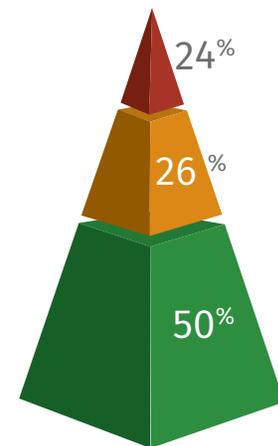
“Invest in your employees, especially those who stand out as exceptional additions to the college. Even those in ‘worker bee’ roles should be recognized and invested in if we are to truly impact turnover.”

- Employee at a small 4 year institution

### 9. I am regularly recognized for my contributions.



### 35. Our recognition and awards programs are meaningful to me.



## Top 5 Statements by Job Category

### Administration

	Positive	Negative
5. I understand how my job contributes to this institution's mission.	94%	1%
24. I have a good relationship with my supervisor/department chair.	89%	3%
49. This institution actively contributes to the community.	89%	3%
25. Overall, my department is a good place to work.	88%	3%
29. The institution takes reasonable steps to provide a safe and secure environment for the campus.	88%	4%

### Faculty

	Positive	Negative
5. I understand how my job contributes to this institution's mission.	88%	4%
24. I have a good relationship with my supervisor/department chair.	83%	7%
49. This institution actively contributes to the community.	82%	4%
1. My job makes good use of my skills and abilities.	82%	5%
2. I am given the responsibility and freedom to do my job.	82%	6%

### Adjunct Faculty

	Positive	Negative
5. I understand how my job contributes to this institution's mission.	91%	2%
24. I have a good relationship with my supervisor/department chair.	91%	2%
49. This institution actively contributes to the community.	91%	2%
2. I am given the responsibility and freedom to do my job.	90%	2%
25. Overall, my department is a good place to work.	88%	3%

### Exempt Professional Staff

	Positive	Negative
5. I understand how my job contributes to this institution's mission.	92%	2%
49. This institution actively contributes to the community.	86%	3%
24. I have a good relationship with my supervisor/department chair.	85%	5%
47. My supervisor/department chair supports my efforts to balance my work and personal life.	85%	6%
45. At this institution, people are supportive of their colleagues regardless of their heritage or background.	84%	4%

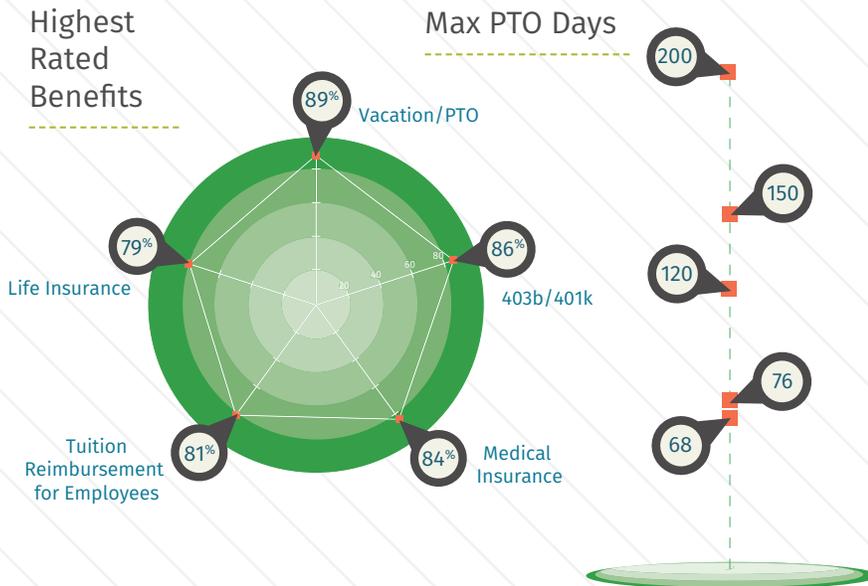
### Non-Exempt Professional Staff

	Positive	Negative
5. I understand how my job contributes to this institution's mission.	90%	3%
49. This institution actively contributes to the community.	85%	4%
47. My supervisor/department chair supports my efforts to balance my work and personal life.	85%	6%
24. I have a good relationship with my supervisor/department chair.	84%	5%
36. I am proud to be part of this institution.	82%	4%

## Top 5 States by Average Recognized Institution Score



## Top 5 Highest Rated Benefits & Max Vacation / PTO Accumulation for Recognized Institutions



## Top 5 Unique Best Practices



\* Eastern does not have a Faculty Senate. It has a University Senate in which voting membership is set by constitution among faculty, administrators, and management officials. This permits multiple perspectives to weigh in on important matters affecting the academic and administrative life of the University.

Even though the president has an open-door policy, she schedules a one-on-one meeting, once per year, to meet with each employee.

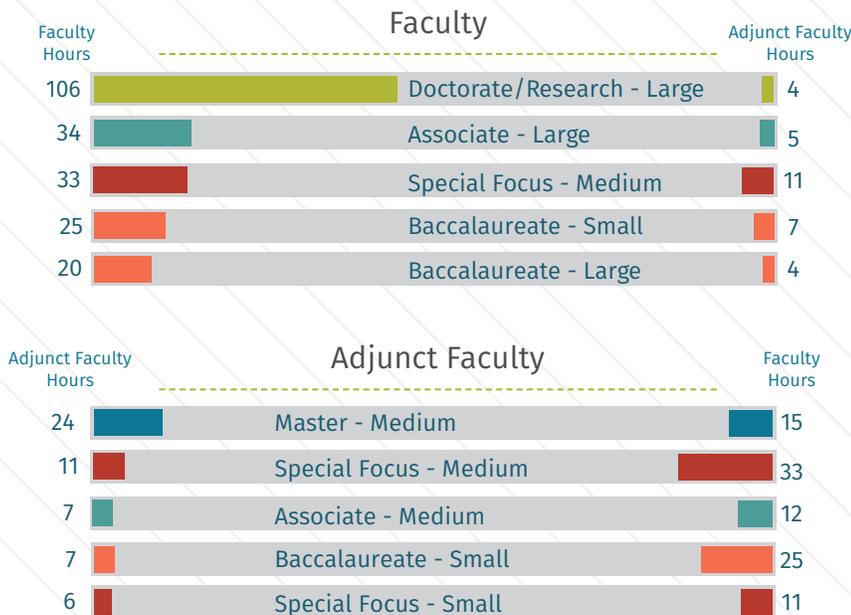
In an effort to improve career-life balance for employees, the Office of the Provost has created the Career-Life Connector Initiative to help faculty and staff balance professional and personal responsibilities. The initiative includes four career-life navigators who share their experiences of integrating work and personal life with the understanding that individuals have different priorities in their own lives. Navigators guide and direct faculty and staff to multiple resources so they can make informed decisions based on individual situations, from starting and raising a family to caring for a sick partner or aging loved one to managing difficult situations while balancing work.

During that spring convocation, employees share their best practices at an Innovation Fair; the college closes so that all employees can attend.

We have a \$2,000,000 on-site five-star accredited daycare facility on campus. Parents may eat lunch with their children at the facility.



## Top 5 # of Orientation Hours by Carnegie Classification & Size



## Three Steps to Maximizing Your Participation

As an eight-time participant in the Great Colleges program (recognized seven times), we asked Adam Swanson, Associate Vice President, Institutional Research and Effectiveness, to share Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College's approach to a successful survey administration process.

### About Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College

Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (MGCCC) is a 106-year-old institution with a tradition of excellence in promoting education and training in its district of George, Harrison, Jackson and Stone counties. Leadership and oversight for the college is provided by a 23-member Board of Trustees, each of which is appointed by the Board of Supervisors in their respective counties. The college serves more than 25,000 credit and noncredit students and awards more than 3,600 degrees and credentials annually. MGCCC is one of the most accomplished community colleges in the nation, recognized as a top online college, STEM Jobs Approved College, Great College to Work For, Military Friendly School and Fit Friendly Workplace. The college was chosen as the state's Career Preparedness Exemplar by ACT College & Career Readiness Campaign and Wallet Hub ranked MGCCC 82nd in the nation's best community colleges out of more than 1,500 colleges.

### Participation in the Great Colleges to Work For program

MGCCC has been a participant in the Great Colleges to Work For program since 2010, and through this journey, has used the results to improve upon the working environment at the institution. A research-based institutional effectiveness model is used as a tool to document the outcomes associated with performance indicators, drive continuous year-to-year improvement, and foster an environment that supports exemplar educational programs and departments. The institution collects data and evaluates that information to make data-driven decisions aimed to promote positive change.

The Great Colleges to Work For program provides an excellent avenue for us to learn about employee satisfaction and obtain feedback on a variety of workforce dimensions. The instrument is both comprehensive and well designed and is used as our primary in direct assessment for understanding trends associated with our adjunct, faculty and administrator employee groups.

Below is an outline of how MGCCC recruits employees to participate in the survey and how the results of the survey are communicated and used to facilitate continuous improvement.

#### 1. Establishing a Recruitment Model that Promotes Active Participation

It is important when conducting survey research that the participant sample is representative of the population.

MGCCC has been a participant in the Great Colleges to Work For program since 2010, and through this journey, has used the results to improve upon the working environment at the institution.

7 / 8  
Recognized / Participated



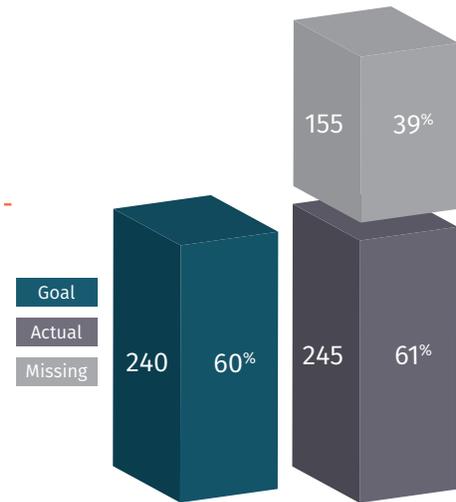
In order to make meaningful inferences about the employee population, participant sample should be an unbiased indication and representation of the population. Low response rates can be problematic so it is important to come up with a recruitment strategy that promotes active participation.

MGCCC has consistently achieved around a 50-60% response rate from employees by following these basic recruitment strategies:

- **Employee Newsletters:** A Great Colleges to Work For informational memo is added to all colleges newsletters one month prior to the administration of the survey.
- **Informational E-mail from the President’s Office:** The President’s Office sends an informational e-mail out to all employees one week prior to the administration of the survey.
- **Response Rate Goal Tracking:** The institution sets a goal to achieve a minimum of a 50% response rate on this employee survey each year. On the Friday of each week during the data collection period, the Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness generates a chart with the response rates and targeted response rate goal, and then distributes the chart to the leadership team via e-mail.

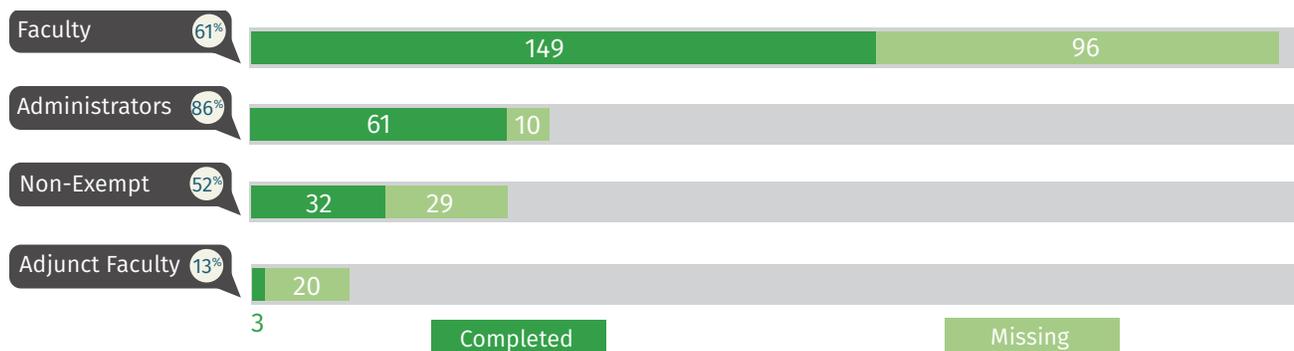
### ModernThink Great Colleges to Work For Survey Overall Response Rate Chart

Updated weekly and distributed during the collection period



### ModernThink Great Colleges to Work For Survey Response Rate Chart by Job Category\*

Updated weekly and distributed during the collection period



\* Response rates reflect job categories as defined by MS Gulf Coast CC.

## 2. Communication and Dissemination of Results

There is a time element associated with this program and given the amount of time and resources invested, it is very important to disseminate the information and use the results to develop workforce optimization strategies. Upon receiving the results, at MGCCC the information is disseminated to internal and external stakeholders of the institution. The results are communicated by the President's Office to a broad base of stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- MGCCC employees at our Staff and Faculty Convocation
- New personnel at our New Employee Orientation
- Board of Trustees at their regular meeting
- K-12 partners and employees at counselor's retreat
- Community-based groups
- Business groups such as Chamber of Commerce, Business Council, etc.



“Any survey dimension that falls below the ‘very good to excellent’ mark, is viewed as an area of opportunity, and the question that gets asked is, ‘what variables do we have direct control over and/or what strategic initiatives can be implemented to improve satisfaction for the dimension?’ ”

In an effort to promote transparency, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness is also working on designing an interactive visualization using Tableau to showcase the results from the Great Colleges to Work For survey.

## 3. Integrating the Results of the Great Colleges to Work For Survey into the IE Planning Process



The results of the survey are tracked and analyzed within our internal planning system on an annual basis. For instance, the Office of Human Resources monitors employee satisfaction for multiple dimensions of the survey. The results of the survey are split out by work dimensions (e.g. job satisfaction, professional development, etc.) and each dimension has an associated employee satisfaction score: poor (0-44%), warrants attention (45-54%), fair to mediocre (55-64%), good (65-74%) and very good to excellent (75-100%). Any survey dimension that falls below the ‘very good to excellent’ mark, is viewed as an area of opportunity, and the question that gets asked is, “what variables do we have direct control over and/or what strategic initiatives can be implemented to improve satisfaction for the dimension?” The actual survey results and strategies for improvement are documented within the system. The plan of improvement is implemented and then the results are evaluated that following year to assess the effectiveness of the implemented strategy.

This approach to participating in the program allows us to not only track and measure progress, but it also helps to further strategic initiatives.

## In Their Own Words

2 Year

### Small

"I'm appreciative of everything that I've been able to learn, the people that I've worked with, and the relationships that I've been able to form."

"The overall environment is the best in which I have worked. The flexibility is worth tens of thousands of dollars. I am not only allowed to take necessary time to manage my family and personal life, I am actually encouraged to do so."

"I appreciate the guidance and expertise of senior leadership... They truly understand their roles and are very good at what they do. I appreciate that expectations are made known to me and then I am given the freedom to achieve those expectations in a way that is appropriate for myself and my program."

### Medium

"The administration is faculty friendly and appreciates an appropriate balance between work and personal time. The faculty and staff work well together and have the students' best interests in mind when making decisions."

"I most appreciate the open lines of communication, from executive council to the campus level. I appreciate the focus on student welfare and the support staff receives to provide excellent customer service."

"Each and every conversation, no matter the level (from staff to faculty to administration) ends with: 'Is this decision best for our students?' This is how I know I'm right where I'm supposed to be."

### Large

"My time is very flexible, and I am allowed the freedom to both get my work done without micromanagement and also to initiate new projects. Largely, I am able to determine my own work, workflow, and the budgeting of my time. I also feel I have ample resources to accomplish what I need, and the investment in professional development in some areas is astounding. As opposed to my last workplace, I feel like I am treated more as a capable, intelligent human being."

"I would have to say the frank and open dialogue that exists in this institution, staff and faculty and their respect for diversity, national origin and cultures making it an exceptionally democratic place for expressing ideas and pushing forward positive changes."

"I enjoy our willingness to think outside the box, to go the extra mile for students, and to be able to laugh while doing so. We are a strongly compassionate, motivated and young at heart campus."

4 Year

### Small

"I appreciate the respect everyone shows toward each other. It feels like a comfortable safe place. There is some flexibility in schedule to work well with family and volunteer life. I am free to share my ideas and have the opportunity to try out most of them."

"I love working here. I am given clear direction but there are also high expectations for me to perform. I feel I am given the flexibility to manage in my own personal leadership style and this is very satisfying. While I am in senior leadership I have plenty of opportunity to get my hands dirty. That balance is important."

"I appreciate the level of skill others bring to the institution and how well everyone's talents and skills work together. There is an overall feeling of a team approach at this institution."

### Medium

"I feel that our university has shared goals with the community and region and that we make a difference, not just in our students' lives, but in the lives of our community. By educating students in an area of disadvantage, we actively contribute to a rise in community standards."

"The institution is run effectively. The president excels at budgetary matters and works well with political leaders in the state to effect change. Everyone shares a commitment to working with our students and helping them to improve their education and, consequently, their socioeconomic status."

"I like working with colleagues who really care about students and the quality of their teaching. It is also inspiring to see colleagues who devote time to their writing and research in order to be more effective and informed teachers."

### Large

"I appreciate the diverse students who keep the institution open-minded and innovative. I also appreciate that the institution expresses value for diversity on a regular basis and in many ways."

"I appreciate the culture of change, adaptation and flexibility that this institution fosters. Employees are encouraged to address issues or problems with their supervisor, director, or Staff Senate representative. Departments regularly communicate with faculty, staff and students about upcoming changes or events so that we are informed and prepared for changes."

"I appreciate the transparency of leadership and the movement toward more collaboration among departments. We are working on tearing down the silos that create obstacles in serving students. I am very happy to be a part of that change."

## Why Compensation Isn't the End-All and Be-All of Employee Engagement

By Karen Kukulka

Of all the statements asked on the ModernThink Higher Education Insight Survey,<sup>®</sup> administered for the Great Colleges program, there is one that seems to scare clients most. Statement 11, *I am paid fairly for my work*, is, on average, among the lowest scoring statements across all Great Colleges participants. This one survey item can be so daunting that it prevents colleges from participating in the program at all. Colleges know it's a best practice to follow up on survey findings - if your employees tell you there's something wrong, you ought to try to do something about it - but compensation is tricky to address. Whether you've got budgetary constraints (and who doesn't) or your hands are tied because compensation is decided at the system or state level for your institution, you may know that you're not in a position to do much about these complaints, even though you know it's an issue.

Well there's good news for you. Compensation is not the only driver of employee engagement! Of course your employees want to make more money - you probably do, too - but to say that compensation is the end-all and be-all of engagement is to believe that your employees **ONLY** work for money, and neither common sense nor the data support that.

We can identify which factors are more critical to employee engagement than compensation by looking at our Honor Roll institutions. The Honor Roll comprises colleges named most frequently across 12 recognition categories, including Compensation & Benefits. But when we rank those recognition categories by the most Honor Roll colleges named to the least, Compensation & Benefits falls in the bottom 25% in each of the past three years.



\* The job categories referenced in this article are "pre-loaded," meaning respondents were tagged with these demographics, irrespective of the job category selections they might have made while taking the survey.

## Recognition Categories Ranked By Most To Least Honor Roll Colleges Named

2016	2017	2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respect and Appreciation</li> <li>Professional / Career Development Programs</li> <li>Collaborative Governance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respect and Appreciation</li> <li>Collaborative Governance</li> <li>Professional / Career Development Programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respect and Appreciation</li> <li>Collaborative Governance</li> <li>Professional / Career Development Programs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job Satisfaction</li> <li>Supervisor / Department Chair Relationship</li> <li>Confidence in Senior Leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job Satisfaction</li> <li>Teaching Environment</li> <li>Supervisor / Department Chair Relationship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job Satisfaction</li> <li>Supervisor / Department Chair Relationship</li> <li>Confidence in Senior Leadership</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work / Life Balance</li> <li>Teaching Environment</li> <li>Facilities, Workspace &amp; Security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confidence in Senior Leadership</li> <li>Work / Life Balance</li> <li>Facilities, Workspace &amp; Security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities, Workspace &amp; Security</li> <li>Work / Life Balance</li> <li>Teaching Environment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Compensation &amp; Benefits</b></li> <li>Tenure Clarity &amp; Process</li> <li>Diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Compensation &amp; Benefits</b></li> <li>Tenure Clarity &amp; Process</li> <li>Diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Compensation &amp; Benefits</b></li> <li>Tenure Clarity &amp; Process</li> <li>Diversity</li> </ul>

Fewer Honor Roll colleges being recognized for Compensation & Benefits indicates that even institutions with the strongest employee engagement aren't getting very positive feedback about their compensation structure. But that isn't stopping them from being great places to work. Most of the Honor Roll colleges have the same budgetary constraints as everyone else, but they are focusing their engagement efforts on other proven drivers of engagement.

### Statement 11: *I Am Paid Fairly For My Work.*

2018			2017			2016		
Overall	Honor Roll	Difference	Overall	Honor Roll	Difference	Overall	Honor Roll	Difference
50%	63%	13 points	51%	62%	11 points	51%	65%	14 points

The ModernThink Higher Education Insight Survey® contains 60 statements divided into 15 core dimensions, or engagement drivers. Looking more closely at the data for statement 11, *I am paid fairly for my work*, over the last three years, we can see there is a sizeable gap between the overall percent positive data for the annual applicant pool as a whole and the Honor Roll colleges. But there is an average of 22 OTHER survey items where the gap is even more pronounced over the last three years. Those statements are concentrated among the following three key areas, where Honor Roll colleges are successfully and particularly distinguishing themselves from the rest of the applicant pool:

\* The job categories referenced in this article are "pre-loaded," meaning respondents were tagged with these demographics, irrespective of the job category selections they might have made while taking the survey.

- Senior Leadership
- Policies, Resources & Efficiency
- Collaborative Teamwork

Data points marked with the following symbol ► denote the largest percentage point difference between the average percent positive score of the applicant pool in a given year and the Honor Roll of that same year.

The Senior Leadership dimension contains six survey statements, and the Honor Roll has outpaced the entirety of the applicant pool by double-digits across all six statements for 2016, 2017 and 2018. In 2018, the largest spread between the Honor Roll and everyone else was 18 percentage points, and one of the three statements that meets that threshold, statement 27, *Senior leadership provides a clear direction for this institution's future*, is also found in this dimension.

## Senior Leadership

2018			2017			2016		
Overall	Honor Roll	Difference	Overall	Honor Roll	Difference	Overall	Honor Roll	Difference
○ 27. Senior leadership provides a clear direction for this institution's future.								
58%	76%	► 18 points	59%	75%	16 points	59%	78%	19 points
○ 37. Senior leadership shows a genuine interest in the well-being of faculty, administration and staff.								
61%	78%	17 points	63%	78%	15 points	62%	79%	17 points
○ 41. Senior leadership communicates openly about important matters.								
56%	72%	16 points	58%	73%	15 points	57%	74%	17 points
○ 32. Our senior leadership has the knowledge, skills and experience necessary for institutional success.								
67%	82%	15 points	69%	83%	14 points	68%	84%	16 points
○ 48. Senior leadership regularly models this institution's values.								
69%	84%	15 points	71%	84%	13 points	70%	85%	15 points
○ 56. I believe what I am told by senior leadership.								
62%	76%	14 points	64%	78%	14 points	62%	78%	16 points

Of the six Senior Leadership statements, statement 27 mentioned above, plus statements 37 (*Senior leadership shows a genuine interest in the well-being of faculty, administration and staff*) and 41 (*Senior leadership communicates openly about important matters*), show the greatest spread between Honor Roll colleges and all other applicants. Each also surpasses the point difference between the Honor Roll and the applicant pool for statement 11 (the compensation satisfaction statement) in each respective year by between three and five percentage points.

Each of these three statements comes back to communication. Providing direction for the future, expressing a genuine investment in the well-being of employees, and conveying important information are all practices that employees at Honor Roll colleges report seeing and personally experiencing more than everyone else in the pool. In fact, the greatest spread between the 2018 applicant pool and the 2018 Honor Roll for Faculty and Exempt Professionals was 21 points and 18 points on statement 27, respectively.\*

This doesn't mean that the senior leadership at non-Honor Roll colleges aren't communicating, it just means that their communication strategies aren't effectively reaching all constituents. Some of the best practices exercised by senior leadership at Honor Roll institutions include:

\* The job categories referenced in this article are "pre-loaded," meaning respondents were tagged with these demographics, irrespective of the job category selections they might have made while taking the survey.

- Scheduling monthly discussions where faculty and staff are invited to hear updates from the President, as well as ask questions.
- Holding town hall meetings after every board meeting to share what was decided and what is under discussion.
- Inviting every single faculty and staff member for a one-on-one meeting with the President once a year to talk through individual concerns or feedback.

Further incentive to work on the communication practices of your senior leadership lies in the percentage of neutral, “*Sometimes Agree/Sometimes Disagree*” respondents. This tells us what percentage of respondents is most likely to be swayed to respond positively in the future, and it’s in the double digits for every statement in the Senior Leadership dimension, across all three years. It’s also often above 20%, representing a very promising opportunity for converting the opinions of respondents, particularly among Faculty and Exempt Professionals for this dimension.\*

### 2018 Neutral Responses Under Senior Leadership

	Overall	Pre-Loaded Faculty	Pre-Loaded Exempt Professionals
○ 27. Senior leadership provides a clear direction for this institution’s future.	23%	24%	24%
○ 32. Our senior leadership has the knowledge, skills and experience necessary for institutional success.	20%	23%	19%
○ 37. Senior leadership shows a genuine interest in the well-being of faculty, administration and staff.	21%	22%	22%
○ 41. Senior leadership communicates openly about important matters.	26%	27%	27%
○ 48. Senior leadership regularly models this institution’s values.	19%	21%	19%
○ 56. I believe what I am told by senior leadership.	23%	24%	23%

The Policies, Resources & Efficiency dimension of the Great Colleges survey sounds like it would have the least impact on engagement, since there is nothing in the title that directly speaks to people, but its impact is underrated. The factors in this dimension define the foundations on which employee engagement is built, and without a strong foundation, the overall structure will falter.

### Policies, Resources & Efficiency

The most significant spread between Honor Roll colleges and the applicant pools of the last three years are among statements 57, 30 and 28 for this dimension of the survey. Statement 57, *This institution is well run*, has the second 18-point spread for 2018’s overall data, which is the largest gap for the year. It also holds the second 21-point gap for 2018 faculty-specific data, which is the largest gap for that group this year as well.\* This statement speaks to how well faculty and staff understand the business of how the college works, as well as their perception of senior leadership competency. If your institution is operationally sound, but you are doing poorly on this statement (as most colleges are), it might be an indication that there just isn’t enough transparency in the operations. In the absence of clarity, that vacuum will be filled, most likely with unfavorable if not altogether inaccurate information. A simple but effective best practice for addressing this issue is to publicly post the kinds of decisions that different strata of leadership make, from Boards to Presidents to Provosts, and what decisions have been made recently. Providing employees with a better understanding of the decision-making structure at their institution lets them know where responsibility truly lies, and where they fit into that hierarchy.

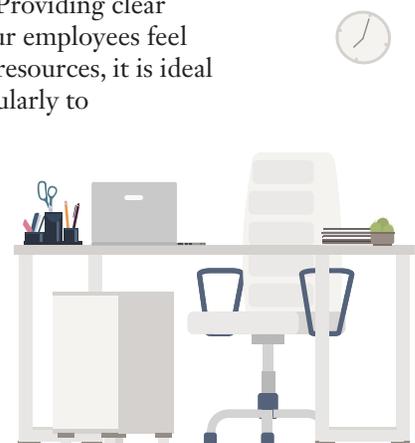
\* The job categories referenced in this article are “pre-loaded,” meaning respondents were tagged with these demographics, irrespective of the job category selections they might have made while taking the survey.

2018			2017			2016		
Overall	Honor Roll	Difference	Overall	Honor Roll	Difference	Overall	Honor Roll	Difference
57. This institution is well run.								
61%	79%	▶ 18 points	62%	79%	17 points	62%	82%	20 points
30. Our orientation program prepares new faculty, administration and staff to be effective.								
54%	70%	16 points	56%	72%	16 points	55%	71%	16 points
28. My department has adequate faculty/staff to achieve our goals.								
44%	57%	13 points	45%	58%	13 points	44%	59%	15 points
17. Our review process accurately measures my job performance.								
58%	70%	12 points	59%	71%	12 points	59%	71%	12 points
50. This institution places sufficient emphasis on having diverse faculty, administration and staff.								
72%	81%	9 points	74%	83%	9 points	72%	82%	10 points
49. This institution actively contributes to the community.								
85%	92%	7 points	86%	93%	7 points	86%	93%	7 points

Statement 30, *Our orientation program prepares new faculty, administration and staff to be effective*, addresses faculty and staff orientation, which is critical to retention. It's ironic in higher education that incredible amounts of time and resources are committed to student onboarding, because we KNOW how important it is, but that same level of attention is not consistently paid to employee onboarding. It's disheartening to note that, among the 2018 submissions of the ModernThink Institution Questionnaire®, there is a difference of 74 hours between the highest reported number of orientation hours for Faculty in 2018 (89 hours) and the highest reported number of orientation hours for Adjuncts in 2018 (15 hours). A simple best practice to introduce to your orientation process is to involve the President and/or Cabinet. Senior leadership should have a role for onboarding to be effective.

Finally, statement 28, *My department has adequate faculty/staff to achieve our goals*, actually holds the lowest percent positive overall score for each of the last three years. (Not the compensation statement!) This statement is usually causally related to the compensation statement, in that when resources are low, employees have to do more to pick up the slack, and when they have to do more, they feel they should be better compensated. A best practice for improving this score is better defining job roles and responsibilities. Providing clear expectations isn't the same as hiring additional faculty or staff, but it will help your employees feel like their workload is more manageable. Also, if there is a plan to expand human resources, it is ideal for the details of that plan, including a specific timeline, to be communicated regularly to employees to build confidence that managers are acknowledging and responding to the reported need, and to reassure that change is coming.

Other engagement drivers where the Honor Roll has consistently distanced itself from the rest of the applicant pool fall under the heading of "Collaborative Teamwork." These statements are concentrated within the Faculty, Administration & Staff Relations dimension, as well as the Collaboration dimension.



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## Collaboration

2018			2017			2016		
Overall	Honor Roll	Difference	Overall	Honor Roll	Difference	Overall	Honor Roll	Difference
○ 58. There's a sense that we're all on the same team at this institution.								
54%	73%	19 points	57%	75%	▶ 18 points	55%	76%	▶ 21 points

## Faculty, Administration & Staff Relations

2018			2017			2016		
Overall	Honor Roll	Difference	Overall	Honor Roll	Difference	Overall	Honor Roll	Difference
○ 46. Faculty, administration and staff work together to ensure the success of institution programs and initiatives.								
68%	84%	16 points	70%	84%	14 points	69%	85%	16 points
○ 55. There is regular and open communication among faculty, administration and staff.								
55%	73%	▶ 18 points	57%	74%	17 points	56%	74%	18 points

Two of the three statements contained in this grouping hold the highest spread between Honor Roll institutions and the applicant pools for each year – 21 and 18 percentage points for statement 58 (*There's a sense that we're all on the same team at this institution*) for 2016 and 2017, respectively, and 18 percentage points for statement 55 (*There is regular and open communication among faculty, administration and staff*) for 2018. The gap between Honor Roll and the applicant pool on these statements is between 4 and 11 percentage points higher than the compensation statement in each respective year. Again, the 11- to 14-point gap for 2016, 2017 and 2018 between the Honor Roll and applicant pools for statement 11 is not insignificant, but Honor Roll colleges are outpacing their fellow program participants on collaborative teamwork statements as well, an area that can be improved irrespective of budget.

Parsing the 2018 data more finely, we see collaborative teamwork as a particular pain point for Exempt Professionals and Non-exempt Staff.\* The largest spread between the 2018 Honor Roll and the 2018 applicant pool was 18 percentage points for statement 55 under both job categories, as well as 18 percentage points for statement 58 under the Exempt Professionals. Both job categories show a sky high percentage of employees who selected “*Sometimes Agree/Sometimes Disagree*,” reinforcing that collaborative teamwork is an area of focus with a lot of potential for dramatic improvement.



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## 2018 Positive And Neutral Responses

	% Positive	Honor Roll % Positive	Difference	% Neutral
Exempt Professional Staff				
46. Faculty, administration and staff work together to ensure the success of institution programs and initiatives.	69%	84%	15 points	24%
55. There is regular and open communication among faculty, administration and staff.	54%	72%	▶ 18 points	30%
58. There's a sense that we're all on the same team at this institution.	55%	73%	▶ 18 points	27%
Non-Exempt Staff				
46. Faculty, administration and staff work together to ensure the success of institution programs and initiatives.	70%	84%	14 points	22%
55. There is regular and open communication among faculty, administration and staff.	54%	72%	▶ 18 points	29%
58. There's a sense that we're all on the same team at this institution.	53%	69%	16 points	27%

Statement 58 is among a handful of statements on the survey that are highly indicative of strong engagement in the workplace. For this reason, regardless of what your individual data might show, facilitating a sense of unity and team is a smart strategy for shoring up your retention. Working toward a team-centered culture can start as simply as educating the community about roles and responsibilities. Helping faculty and staff to understand the nature of each other's work, and how the contributions of each affect the overall institution can foster appreciation and respect among colleagues, as well as a feeling of camaraderie.

Of course compensation is an important facet of employee engagement. Until we can start buying groceries and paying our mortgages in passion and fulfillment, it's ridiculous to argue otherwise. But compensation isn't EVERYTHING - not to your employees and probably not to you either. There are many other ways to engage your faculty and staff along deeper and more lasting lines like effective senior leadership, efficient policies and practices, and collaborative teamwork that are at least as impactful as simply increasing compensation across the board. Our Honor Roll colleges have already figured this out and capitalized on it...now that you have your data back from the program, you have a chance to do the same.



\* The job categories referenced in this article are "pre-loaded," meaning respondents were tagged with these demographics, irrespective of the job category selections they might have made while taking the survey.

## The 2018 Honor Roll

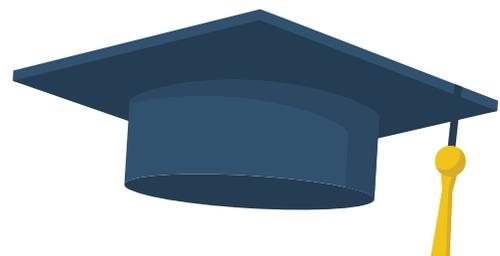
While recognition in any category is indeed noteworthy, a special distinction is awarded to those institutions that are cited most often across all of the recognition categories. This Honor Roll recognition was given to ten four-year institutions in each size, and four two-year institutions in each size:

### The 2018 Honor Roll for two-year colleges:

Small (500-2,999 Students)	Medium (3,000-9,999 Students)	Large (10,000 or more Students)
Arkansas State University Mid-South	Copiah-Lincoln Community College	John Tyler Community College
North Florida Community College	Lord Fairfax Community College	Lone Star College
Panola College	Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College	Miami Dade College
Western Dakota Technical Institute	Victoria College	Santiago Canyon College

### The 2018 Honor Roll for four-year colleges:

Small (500-2,999 Students)	Medium (3,000-9,999 Students)	Large (10,000 or more Students)
College of the Ozarks	Angelo State University	Baylor University
John Brown University	Eastern Connecticut State University	Florida International University
Lake Forest Graduate School of Management	Endicott College	Hofstra University
Lubbock Christian University	Francis Marion University	Illinois State University
Lynn University	Loma Linda University	Mississippi State University
McPherson College	Quinnipiac University	Southern New Hampshire University
Mississippi University for Women	Robert Morris University Illinois	Texas Christian University
Roberts Wesleyan College	Rollins College	University of Central Oklahoma
Texas Lutheran University	The College of New Jersey	University of Maryland, Baltimore County
West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine	University of the Incarnate Word	University of Notre Dame



The logo for ModernThink, featuring the word "ModernThink" in a white, sans-serif font. The letter "i" in "Think" has a small white circle above it, resembling a dot-matrix cursor or a stylized eye. The logo is set against a dark blue horizontal band.

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