Employee Survey Results

In March of 2020, CSP participated in The Chronicle of Higher Education’s Great Colleges to Work For survey, following participation in 2014 and 2017. In response to the results from the 2020 Great Colleges Survey, a follow up survey was recommended to further explore reasons for low satisfaction trends. The areas of Professional Development, Communication, Fairness, Respect and Appreciation, Collaboration, and COVID Response were surveyed. The initial survey saw a 25.6% participation rate and the 2021 survey response rate increased to 34%. Employees from all classifications were included equally in the follow-up survey request.

It’s important to note the local context that, at the time of both surveys, the University was mid-pandemic and navigating a Presidential change. In addition, the follow-up survey was offered during a time of significant social unrest. The follow up survey had fewer questions, a broader ranking scale, and was intended to ask questions specifically targeting areas with low satisfaction rates from the 2020 survey. Therefore, it was expected that overall satisfaction rates would be lower throughout the survey.

Results

Overall, the responses on the initial survey from 2020 were more positive in each category than they were in 2017 and indicated CSP employees’ satisfaction to be on par with other similar institutions. In most categories on the survey, CSP’s overall positive response average fell between the 2020 Honor Roll institutions and our peers in the Carnegie Master’s group (CSP’s designation). In the 2020 Survey, Full-Time Faculty and Hourly Staff evidenced similar levels of satisfaction as did Salaried Staff and Contracted Faculty of Practice. In the 2021 survey, Salaried Staff and Full-Time Faculty responses were more aligned to one another as were those of Hourly Staff and Contracted Faculty of Practice.

In the 2020 survey, the category with most positive responses across all groups was Supervisor/Department Chairs. Overall responses were indicative of employees being satisfied with interactions within their department and with their direct supervisor. In addition, comments regarding communication and collaboration within their teams lifted up mid-level leadership. Positive short-answer comments centered around themes of Christian values, being student-centric, camaraderie and teamwork, and the opportunity to work for an innovative team and University.

Conversely, the categories with the lowest levels of satisfaction across all groups were in the areas of Communication and Governance. Trends attributing to the lower response rates included a desire for more flexibility and inclusion in decision-making, more development opportunities, a need for increased infrastructure to match increased enrollment, and a focus on rewards, recognition, and growth or promotional opportunities. It’s interesting to note that Communication was the category with the lowest level of positive responses for the Honor Roll institutions (70), suggesting that communication across units and down hierarchies is a challenge for most institutions, even those that are designated “Great Places to Work For.”

The 2021 survey was written to generate a greater understanding of reasons for low-ranking areas in the 2020 survey. In the 2021 survey, the category with the most positive responses across all groups
was Communication, an unexpected improvement from being the least satisfied category for nearly all employees on the 2020 survey. There were marked improvements in this area and the overall responses evidence trends of continued transparency, an enhanced awareness of university challenges and initiatives through increased communication and strong interdepartmental communication. While there was a marked increase in this area, it’s important to note that continued growth and development is critical for moving forward. In addition, a need for improved cross-departmental communication and a desire for employees to have greater involvement in decisions that impact their role and responsibility persists.

To better understand usage of the current university communication channels, respondents were asked to select all responses to the question, “I utilize the following communication tools, distributed through various CSP channels.” The top channels receiving ranks at 50% or above included:

1. Campus-wide CSP Digest (82%)
2. Monthly HR Advisor Updates (75%)
3. Team Meetings (66%)
4. One-on-One Meetings w/Supervisor (65%)
5. Annual State of the University Address (57%)
6. Department Meetings with Peers (51%)

Due to the nature of the survey, it was expected that the results from the 2021 Survey may yield higher levels of disagreement, both in quality and quantity. We were pleased to note that the overall average for low disagreement responses fell from 18.2% in 2020 to 15.50% in 2021.

Recommended areas for continued focus from the 2021 survey are as follows:

- Continued examination of current communication channels and ensuring stakeholders are involved in discussions that are appropriate to their role and responsibility.
- Development of cross-departmental communication strategies and structured avenues for contributing to inclusive decision-making (where warranted).
- Enhanced transparency of University structure and decision-making processes align with position roles and responsibilities.
- Continued emphasis on employees to stay informed and mid-level managers to include frontline employees in discussion of items pertaining directly to their role.
- Building programs centered around leadership development, heightened engagement of hourly employees and contracted faculty of practice, empowerment of university leaders to make appropriate department-level decisions, and effective flow of communication for mid-level managers.
- Where possible a creation of clear and transparent promotional and development plans for employees that are mutually-beneficial to the organization and the employee.
- Further examination of meaningful reward and recognition programs across all employee populations.
- Consistent with the current challenges of recruiting and attracting employees, all areas indicated a need to examine the personnel resources across the university to ensure staffing needs are met.

Diversity Efforts

A benefit of the university is its urban environment and the diversity of our student body. While civil unrest at the time of the 2021 survey may have had an impact on the survey results, one cannot ignore
high marks of disagreement with CSP placing sufficient emphasis on diversity initiatives. In addition, there were several open-ended responses regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives regarding employees.

While the diversity statistics of University employees and contracted partners is at or above the five county area from which the majority of our students are recruited, increased transparency, awareness, and programs regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion will enhance the student and employee experience. With the hiring of a new Chief Diversity Officer and Diversity Center Director, HR is excited for increased collaboration and focus on this element of our strategic plan.

**COVID Response**

As the follow-up survey was issued while the University was preparing to return to a heightened physical presence on campus, questions regarding the COVID response were included and received the highest level of agreement (81%) across the University. While the pandemic created many challenges that persist, it also seems to have brought people together through strong leadership and forthcoming, transparent communication.

While the initiating factor of participating in the Great Colleges to Work For survey has been to provide evidence and data for accreditation purposes, the additional feedback received from the follow-up survey is invaluable. We recognize the importance of employees having an ongoing opportunity to provide confidential feedback through surveys and assessments. Future tools for assessing areas for celebration and growth will continue to be provided as needed.