

RESEARCH  
BRIEF



# The Staffing Crisis in Higher Ed

College Administrators' Views  
on Campus Employment

WITH  
SUPPORT  
FROM



THE CHRONICLE  
OF HIGHER EDUCATION.



## Huron and The Chronicle for Higher Education Release Study on Higher Ed Workforce

As we emerge from the pandemic, many colleges and universities continue to be challenged with an array of economic pressures, from record inflation and higher interest rates in the broader economy to historic declines in enrollment and the largest drop in endowments since 2009.

This is also a time of great promise and possibility as colleges and universities harness their cultures of innovation to reimagine what is possible and build from the lessons from the pandemic, from hybrid learning and teaching to flexible work arrangements and new research possibilities.

These surmounting pressures and opportunities come at the tightest labor market in a generation. Unemployment is at a 50-year low, and the U.S. economy has nearly twice as many job openings (11.5 million) as there are unemployed workers (6 million).

What does all of this mean for the higher education workforce? Where are we now and where are we headed? To explore these questions, Huron and The Chronicle for Higher Education partnered on a national survey of higher education leaders, hiring managers and administrators.

Among the themes: Leaders said they are finding it harder than ever to attract and retain talent, have more open positions, and are seeing fewer qualified applicants. Colleges and universities are emphasizing increased flexibility in recruitment and relying more on interim roles to fill gaps.

We hope the results of this survey will help institutions continue to think, plan and act differently to ensure that our nation's colleges and universities are better equipped to acquire and retain the best talent. What's at stake is the ability to continue to develop the next generation of leaders and workers to further advance higher education's profound impact.

- Laura Yaeger  
Managing Director  
Higher Education Client Services Leader

# The Staffing Crisis in Higher Ed:

College Administrators' Views  
on Campus Employment

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"The Staffing Crisis in Higher Ed: College Administrators' Views on Campus Employment," is based on a survey underwritten by Huron Consulting Group and conducted by *The Chronicle*. This report was written by Michael Anft. *Chronicle* cover image from iStock. *The Chronicle* is fully responsible for the report's editorial content. ©2022 by The Chronicle of Higher Education Inc. This material may not be reproduced without prior written permission of *The Chronicle*. For permission requests, contact us at [copyright@chronicle.com](mailto:copyright@chronicle.com).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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**T**he college job market has vastly changed in the past year — and hardly for the better. Hiring people to fill empty campus slots has become much more of a challenge. Institutions are drawing far fewer applicants, especially well-qualified ones, across a wide range of positions, both professional and nonprofessional.

What's more, the vast majority (77 percent) of college administrators who responded to a *Chronicle* survey conducted in June and July say that the appeal of working in higher education is lower than it was a year ago.

The survey results demonstrate how the unsettled labor landscape and a less-rosy view of college jobs have led institutions to begin making major changes in how they attract new candidates and work to keep the employees they already have.

Finding people to fill administrative and staff slots has become more difficult at most campuses (84 percent) in the past year, with nearly eight in 10 survey respondents reporting that their campuses have more open positions this year than last year. Nearly as large a proportion (78 percent) say that those jobs have attracted fewer applicants. And 84 percent report that positions have remained unfilled for a longer stretch than before the advent of Covid-19.

Qualified candidates have become particularly elusive. Eighty-two percent of those surveyed said their institution has had a hard time drawing applicants who meet their hiring requirements. Filling certain types of positions remains a headache for institutions. Nearly eight in 10 respondents say that hiring information-technology professionals has become a “serious” or “moderate” problem.

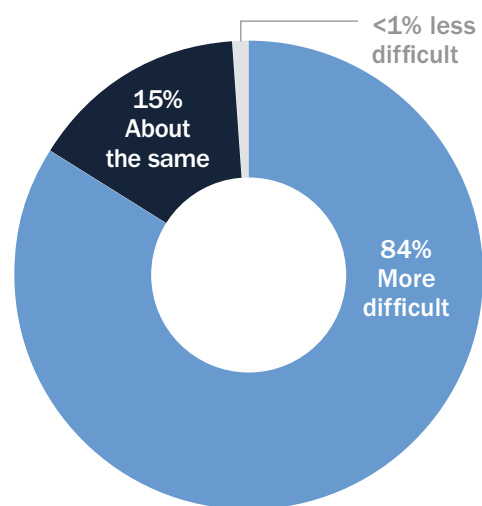
But bringing on enough nonprofessional support staffers has tested institutions’ leaders and hiring officers as well. Building services, cited by 71 percent of respondents as a hiring challenge, and dining services (70 percent) top a lengthy list of positions that have proved hard to fill.

Candidates who do seek jobs want more out of institutions. A strong majority (84 percent) of those surveyed agree that applicants have increased their salary demands within the last year.

Institutions are already taking action to deal with a tight, perhaps even hostile, labor market. About half (51 percent) of institutions have relied more on interim hires during the past year, while half have adjusted their job requirements for applicants.

#### IN THE LAST YEAR

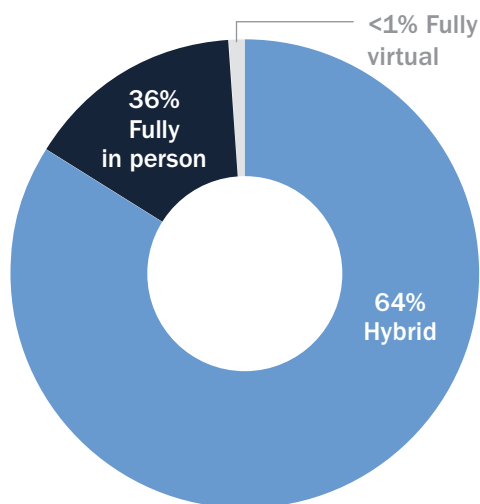
### Hiring for administrative and staff positions at my campus has become:



Source: Chronicle survey of 720 college administrators

And in a move to meet the demands of many staffers and would-be staffers who prefer doing their jobs remotely, many colleges are making work arrangements more flexible. A solid majority (64 percent) of institutions now feature hybrid operations, with employees working both in person and virtually.

### How is your work force operating?



Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.  
Source: *Chronicle* survey of 720 college administrators

Most colleges (60 percent) have changed their approaches to hiring, respondents said, by altering how they attract workers, increasing hybrid-work options, raising starting salaries, or other means. Slightly less than half (46 percent) have changed their employee-retention strategies.

Even as they pivot to face hiring challenges, colleges probably need to do more to attract and keep workers, respondents said. Only 4 percent strongly agreed that their institution had the right mix of salary, benefits, workplace culture, and mission to appeal to today's workers. And more disagreed (49 percent) than agreed (34 percent) that their institution had the right organizational structure to manage a modern work force.

The *Chronicle* survey, underwritten by Huron Consulting Group, as was this report, was designed to inquire about the challenges in the college labor market and how institutions are dealing with them. It was answered online by 720 employees at two-year and four-year institutions. Almost all (99 percent) work full time, with college administrators making up the bulk of those polled.

## INTRODUCTION



**J**ust one year ago, colleges could look back with pride at how they had responded to the threat of Covid-19. By transforming course catalogs in an instant — sometimes in just days or weeks — and maintaining teaching and learning along with some sense of a campus community, institutions demonstrated an admirable capacity for resiliency and change.

One year later, the other shoe has dropped. An unexpected consequence of the pandemic — the upended state of American labor — has created another test for college leaders: a job market in which staffers and prospective employees expect much more from their employers.

Fewer workers are willing to accept stagnant salaries and traditional working arrangements. The pandemic has forced them to reconsider how they should best spend their time, care for their families, and plot a professional future.

Colleges have been subject to some of the same forces as the rest of the U.S. economy. What has been called either “The Great Resignation” or “The Great Reshuffle” has reordered the labor market — both within and without higher ed — sending industries of all kinds into an organizational tizzy.

[A July report](#) from McKinsey Quarterly found that about 40 percent of 13,382 polled workers in a variety of industries were considering quitting their jobs within the next six months.

But colleges have issues of their own to contend with, including a perception by some outside the sector as politically suspect, as conduits to little more than staggering amounts of student debt, or as the province of the wealthy, as evidenced by the Varsity Blues scandal.

Meanwhile, the view from inside has soured. A college job, once seen as a meaningful and benefits-rich way to earn a paycheck — possibly for a career — isn’t what it once was. The pandemic’s extra demands on employees’ time and energy have resulted in employee burnout and [disengagement](#).

What’s more, institutional leaders have in recent decades made bottom-line decisions

**More than half of employees say they are at least somewhat likely to look for a new job within the next year.**

to cut or consolidate academic departments and eliminate positions. They have also chipped away at traditional shared-governance structures and practices, effectively diminishing the voices of faculty members and other staffers, observers say.

[Even as colleges have regained most of the jobs they lost during the pandemic](#), the business of hiring and keeping employees has become arduous for college administrators. One study by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources found that more than half of employees say they are at least somewhat likely to look for a new job within the next year. The [CUPA-HR study of 3,815 college staff members](#) also found that 76 percent of them cited a desire for higher salaries as a reason to seek a position elsewhere.

At the same time, workers often find themselves under “an accountability microscope.” They are expected to do more with less and, often, for less, as pay cuts and furloughs have become a regular part of the college landscape.



Clearly, the long-held idea of working for less to further a purposeful institutional mission is not as relevant as it was decades ago.

The advent of the Covid-19 pandemic amplified all those issues. About three-quarters of staffers represented in the CUPA-HR survey said that they had taken on more responsibilities during the pandemic, while 63 percent noted that they had assumed the duties of missing colleagues.

Covid-era furloughs and layoffs, as well as more reliance on contingent faculty members and interim staffers — during a time when institutions collectively received billions of dollars in pandemic-relief funds — have taken a toll on college staffers’ trust. (The fact that most of [those laid off were low-income or part-time employees](#) didn’t sit well with many workers, either.) Morale is low, observers agree.

Still, experts note that while the pandemic may have served as the spark to today’s labor problems, it isn’t responsible for the years of dry tinder that came before it.

“What we’ve seen is 30 years of degrading and devaluing the way we treat college workers,” says Adrianna Kezar, director of the Pullias Center for Higher Education at the University of Southern California. “People are really evaluating their jobs and what they’re worth now.”

The results of the *Chronicle* survey show that institutions now have a high

level of awareness of their problems with managing labor. Though the present is bleak, experts say that institutions can make reasonable changes to ensure a better and more motivated work force. Colleges may need to re-examine what they have to offer that other industries — with which they compete for talent — don’t.

**“What we’ve seen is 30 years of degrading and devaluing the way we treat college workers. People are really evaluating their jobs and what they’re worth now.”**

“A lot of people still love working in higher ed and are devoted to their institutions,” says Kevin McClure, an associate professor of higher education at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Independent research bears out that idea: Nearly two-thirds of respondents to the CUPA-HR study said they were satisfied with their jobs, while 77 percent said their work has purpose.

“But,” says McClure, “we need to do some healing to rebuild relationships that have suffered because of years of questionable campus decisions.”



# Challenges in Hiring

**A**s institutions continue to reopen campuses while the pandemic slowly abates, they have run into a major snag: Too few people want to come to work for them. The *Chronicle* survey found that filling administrative and staff positions has become more of a challenge for 84 percent of institutions in the past year. Nearly eight in 10 of those surveyed (79 percent) said that their campuses had more open positions than they did last year, while a nearly identical share reported that their institutions had received fewer applications. Most (84 percent) agreed that open jobs were remaining unfilled for longer than they did before the pandemic.

Qualified candidates are applying at a lesser rate than a year ago, according to 82 percent of respondents.

Besides a tight job market over all, would-be workers expect more from college employers, experts say. And usually that means money. A strong majority (83

percent) said that applicants had increased their salary demands.

“The most important independent variable behind all this, and what is driving the difficulty in recruitment and retention, is a long-standing and continuous lack of state funding to public institutions,” says Frederick Kowal,

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

**“My campus has more open positions this year than last.”**



**“My campus has received fewer applications for open jobs in the last year.”**



**“My campus has received fewer applications for open jobs from qualified candidates in the last year.”**



**“Positions on my campus have remained unfilled for a longer time than before the pandemic.”**



**“People applying for jobs on my campus have increased their salary demands in the last year.”**



Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.  
Source: *Chronicle* survey of 720 college administrators

president of United University Professions, a labor union that represents 34,000 higher-ed employees in the State University of New York system. “This has made it almost impossible for them to compete and hire more staff, including people of color.”

Cash-strapped and enrollment-challenged private institutions also have budget concerns that keep them from offering salaries that other industries can routinely deliver, observers say. Paying salaries that can give workers half a chance to keep up with inflation during a time of growth in wages for American workers will test institutional budgets.

Nowhere is the challenge more pressing than in college IT offices. At a time when institutions have increased the digital connections between themselves and student devices, offered more remote and hybrid education opportunities, and automated student services, good tech professionals remain hard to find.

Choosing from a list of college job categories, survey respondents chose information-technology workers as the most elusive, with 79 percent saying hiring them represents a serious or moderate problem. Finding both high-level tech leaders and lower-skilled staffers has been a problem in recent years — not just last year.

“We’ve seen this before during times of labor shortages. Let’s just face it: Colleges don’t pay as well as other sectors,” says Michael Zastrocky, executive director of the

Leadership Board of Chief Information Officers, a professional group that advocates for tech officials. “You have to be able to sell your prospects on the advantages you have, because you won’t be able to sell someone on salary.”

An inability to pay has led to a brain drain in IT officials at a pivotal time in higher-ed technology, he adds. “People are in demand for skills they developed in higher ed. They are taking jobs outside of higher ed.”

Finding enough dining-services workers is a moderate or serious hiring problem for 70 percent of the survey respondents. Building-services workers (71 percent) also present formidable challenges to human-resources officials, as does the hiring of admissions and recruitment staffers (68 percent), student-affairs employees (67 percent), and academic administrators (65 percent).

Officials who manage institutional purse strings worry that colleges may not be able to keep up with rising wages in the overall economy.

“I met a woman at an airport restaurant who was making \$25 an hour cleaning tables,” says Jim Hundrieser, vice president for consulting and business development at the National Association of College and University Business Officers. “I thought, ‘Is there any way most local colleges could pay that much?’”

Nevertheless, some colleges are now kicking up salaries to entice prospects to

**“Let’s just face it: Colleges don’t pay as well as other sectors. You have to be able to sell your prospects on the advantages you have, because you won’t be able to sell someone on salary.”**

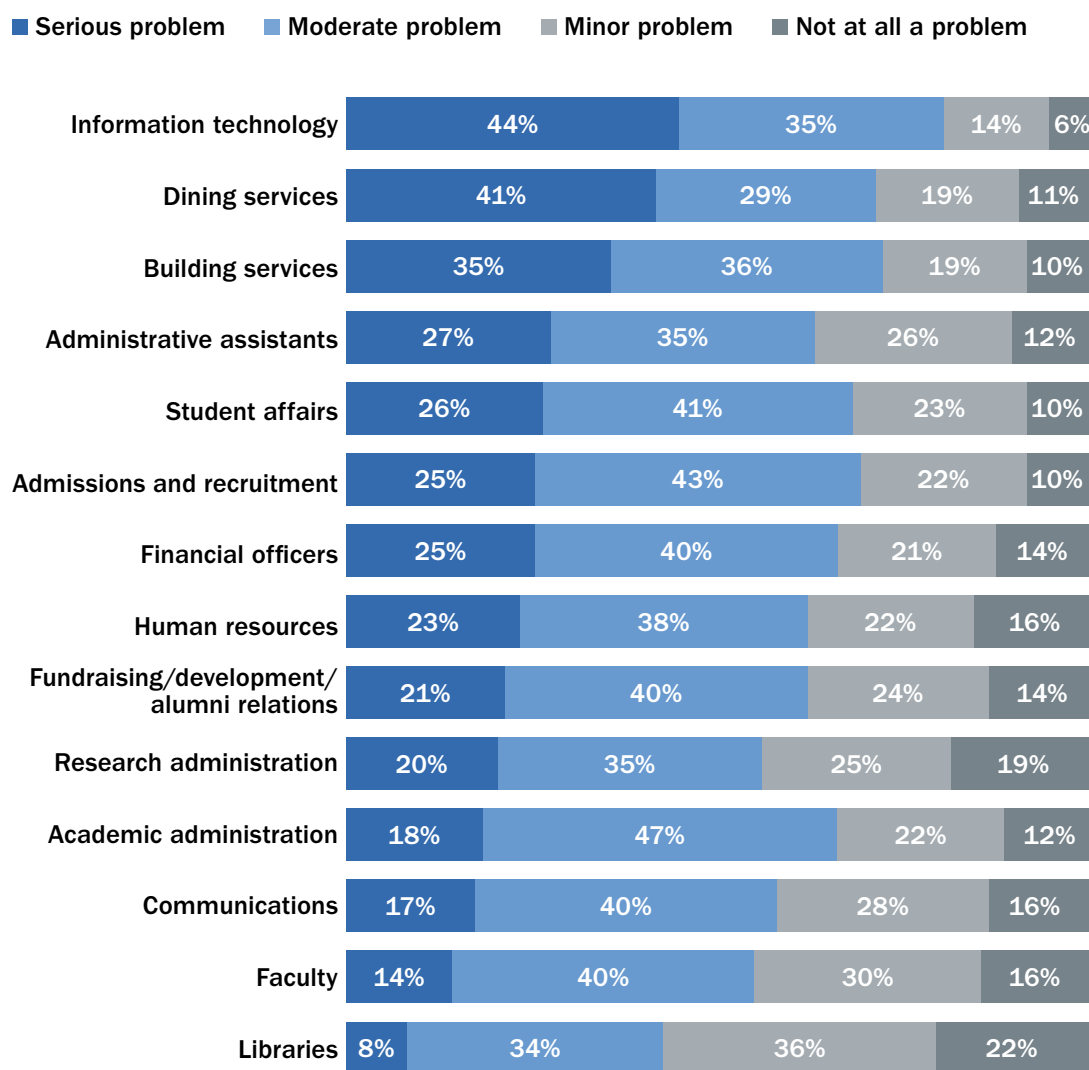
sign on. The California State University system has allowed some colleges, including its East Bay campus, to offer hiring bonuses to select candidates. Several survey respondents mentioned that their institution now offers more signing bonuses and higher starting salaries than it did a year ago.

Other institutions are selling would-be employees on work flexibility. Goucher

College now makes allowances for top candidates who prefer to work entirely remotely. Three-quarters of institutions that have tweaked their hiring requirements have added opportunities for new staffers to work partly or totally remotely. “We’ve encountered terrific applicants who are simply unwilling to move to Maryland,” says Kristi Yowell, associate vice president

#### IN THE LAST YEAR

### How problematic has it been to hire employees in the following areas?



Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.  
Source: *Chronicle* survey of 720 college administrators

for human resources at Goucher. “By making specific positions entirely remote, we have been able to hire some great people.”

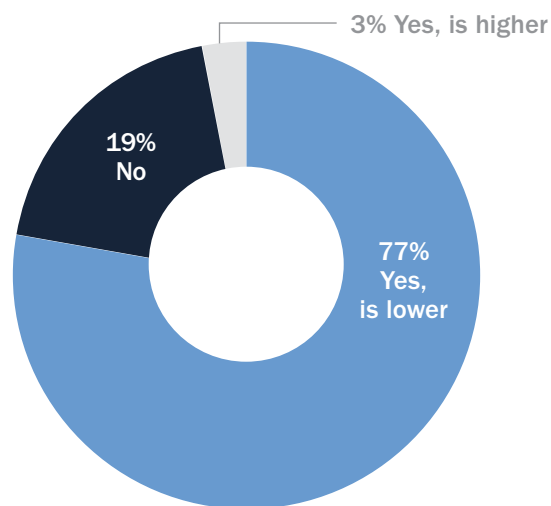
Though changes at those colleges and elsewhere give some college leaders cause for optimism, one statistic from the survey is particularly chilling: 77 percent said that a college job has less appeal than it did just a year ago.

To learn how to lower that number, more institutions are doing compensation studies to see how they stack up against other employers regionally and nationally, says Andy Brantley, president of CUPA-HR. By developing that kind of knowledge, college leaders can learn how much money will be required to maintain a talented work force.

“We need to get away from the post-and-pray mentality and be more intentional about what we offer people,” Brantley adds. “We have to be competitive at all levels.”

#### IN THE LAST YEAR

### Do you think the appeal of working in higher education has changed?



Source: *Chronicle* survey of 720 college administrators





# Creating More Work Flexibility

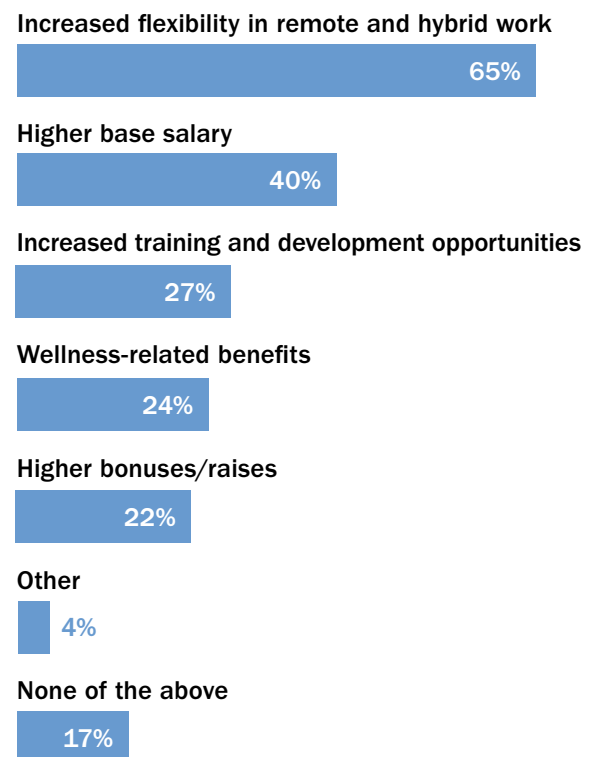
**C**olleges are creating more remote options for staff members, both to help attract more strong prospects and to retain more of their current workers.

A solid majority (64 percent) of institutions now include hybrid operations, with staffers working both in person and virtually. To keep more of their employees, a similar share (65 percent) of institutions have adopted remote-work flexibility programs within the past year — many more than have raised base salaries (40 percent) or increased training and development opportunities (27 percent).

At the University of California at Davis, human-resources and IT officials offer remote-work arrangements to 80 percent of their 400 staffers. “It absolutely is an inducement,” says Viji Murali, vice president for information and educational technology at Davis. “Our staff has told us that this means a lot to them as they deal with the challenge of child care and elder care.” Off-campus work opportunities will continue beyond the pandemic, she adds.

## IN THE LAST YEAR

**Which of the following changes have you adopted to retain your employees?**



Survey participants could choose more than one response.  
Source: *Chronicle* survey of 720 college administrators

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

## “My campus has changed how it approaches retaining employees in the last year”

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree



Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. Source: *Chronicle* survey of 720 college administrators

But that option is often unevenly distributed across campus, some observers worry. Nearly three-quarters of respondents said that 40 percent or fewer of workers do their campus jobs virtually. Without proper management of workplace arrangements, inequities can occur, such as when salaried workers receive more-flexible work options than hourly employees do.

“We’ve seen administrators run the gamut from those who want to keep that hybrid opportunity and others who don’t want to have anything to do with it,” says Kowal, from United University Professions. “Sometimes that discrepancy is even at the department-to-department level. That can create a real morale problem.”

While workplace flexibility was mentioned positively and as a strong response to labor-market pressures, many survey respondents said their institution was doing little, if anything, to keep staffers in their jobs. For many, morale is indeed poor.

“They are doing nothing to retain employees,” noted one respondent. “In the past they tried to retain employees, provided employee appreciation, a sunshine committee, etc. Now they are doing nothing, and we are hemorrhaging people.” Added another: “My campus is deeply committed to being as lean as possible. If someone leaves, they are not replaced.”

“We’ve seen administrators run the gamut from those who want to keep that hybrid opportunity and others who don’t want to have anything to do with it. Sometimes that discrepancy is even at the department-to-department level. That can create a real morale problem.”

Less than half (46 percent) of those surveyed said that their campus had changed how it works to keep employees.

To be more responsive and keep more staffers on the job, colleges should also offer retention bonuses, increase salaries, and reinstate tuition-reimbursement programs that were once a vital part of their benefits packages, several survey commentators noted.

Colleges should also ask employees how they are doing, what they need, and how their work lives could be improved.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

**“My campus prioritizes promoting and hiring from within over hiring external candidates.”**

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree



Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. Source: *Chronicle* survey of 720 college administrators

“Institutions won’t understand the people who work for them unless they talk to them,” says Rebecca Kolins Givan, an associate professor of labor studies and employment relations at Rutgers University, in New Brunswick. “These administrators who feel challenged by retention issues need to learn about the experiences of their employees and former employees.”

Monitoring employee attitudes and observations over time could help colleges create meaningful benchmarks for maintaining morale and performance. “We need to keep great data on employee experiences, and then do something with it,” adds McClure, at UNC-Wilmington.

Though 42 percent of survey respondents agreed that their campus made promoting and hiring from within a priority, several commentators noted a lack of professional-development programs for employees. About one-quarter (27 percent) of institutions have increased those opportunities in the past year.

That might not be enough when many staffers are looking to land higher-paying jobs elsewhere. If talented people leave, replacing them won’t be easy, especially in the current market.

**“Institutions won’t understand the people who work for them unless they talk to them.”**

“Higher ed really misses the boat when it comes to succession planning,” says Yowell, from Goucher. “You need people internally who can fill those gaps as they pop up. Colleges are big on doing wide and competitive searches to diversify their work forces, which I agree with. But I also believe in telling an employee, ‘I really value your skills. I want to develop you so you can take an even more important job here.’”

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# Adopting New Staffing Practices

**S**urvey results show that administrators have become aware of shortcomings in their institution's hiring and worker-management practices.

Only 4 percent of respondents strongly agreed that their college offered the right mix of salary, benefits, workplace culture, and mission to appeal to today's workers. More than six in 10 disagreed.

"We need to make some major changes," one survey respondent said. "The good news is we are working on it. Just not sure it will be quick enough since higher ed tends to move very slowly. Student expectations have changed, and we need

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

**“I’m confident that my college has the right mix of salary, benefits, workplace culture, and mission to appeal to today’s workers.”**

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree



Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. Source: *Chronicle* survey of 720 college administrators

to rethink how to best meet those in a world where employees now have the upper hand.”

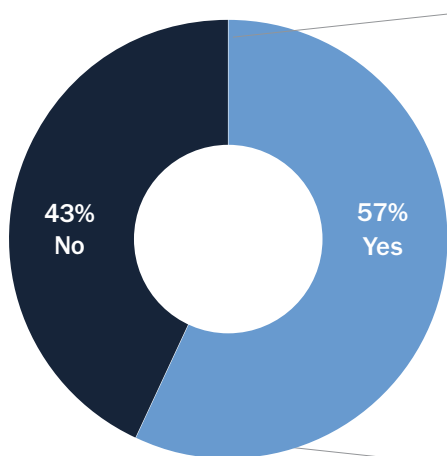
Survey results show that many institutions are indeed reworking their approaches. Six in 10 survey respondents agreed that their institution had changed how it hires employees in the past year. They cited a heightened emphasis on hybrid-work flexibility, staff diversity, and better salaries. More than half (57

percent) said their college advertises for positions differently than it did a year ago, with 24 percent saying their institution both changed the content of its ads and disseminated them more widely.

Though pay is a central issue in today’s labor market, only 26 percent of institutions emphasize base salary in their ads, while most (63 percent) tout the benefit of mission-driven work.

IN THE PAST YEAR

**Has your campus changed how it advertises for open positions?**



Yes, we have advertised open positions more widely

25%

Yes, we have changed the content/  
presentation of our advertisements

8%

Yes, we have advertised open positions more widely and  
changed the content/presentation of our advertisements

24%

Source: *Chronicle* survey of 720 college administrators

Focusing on the great work institutions do might not be the enticement it once was, some observers say. “There are many other companies and organizations now that are mission-driven,” says Cathy Sandeen, president of California State University-East Bay. “We don’t have that edge anymore. We really need to think about our value proposition. We’ve kind of been resting on our laurels.”

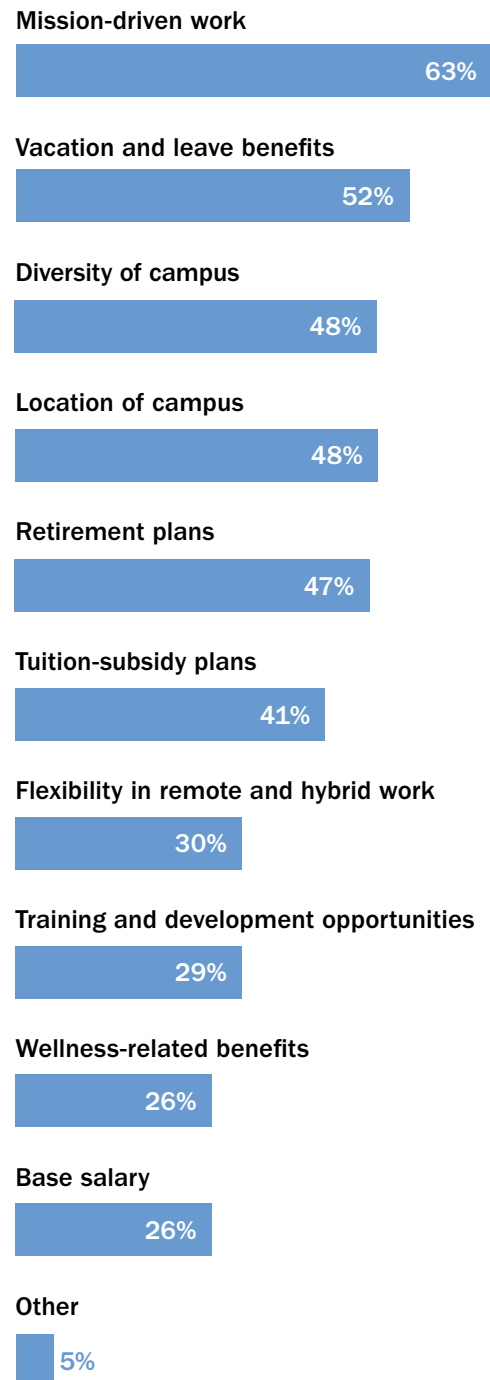
There is some irony in institutions touting their mission at a time when many have become driven largely by financial and existential concerns, others add. “There’s been a search for a mission at SUNY for 15 years,” says Kowal, from United University Professions. “This mission drift that we’ve seen at several campuses has made it impossible for me, as a department head, to tell potential hires which direction we’re going in. I just couldn’t answer them.”

Half of those surveyed said their institution has adjusted its job requirements, with 59 percent of that group saying that their college lowered the amount of education or work experience they require of applicants.

“There are many other companies and organizations now that are mission-driven. We don’t have that edge anymore. We really need to think about our value proposition. We’ve kind of been resting on our laurels.”

#### IN THE LAST YEAR

### Which of the following perks/benefits do you emphasize in your job ads?



Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.  
Source: *Chronicle* survey of 720 college administrators

But those personnel-related adjustments haven't resulted in a groundswell of confidence. Over all, survey respondents lacked faith in their institution's organizational structure to effectively manage a modern work force. Asked whether their college had the right systemic makeup, nearly half (49 percent) disagreed, while only 34 percent agreed.

Even fewer saw value in how their institution's administrators and managers oversee today's workers, with only 22 percent agreeing that they are capable. And only 24 percent agreed that their college had effective processes and practices in place to manage a modern work force.

"There's a pretty high amount of sentiment that those who are leading colleges now won't be the ones to make the necessary changes in hiring and retention," says McClure, at UNC-Wilmington.

Placing hiring decisions within the HR department has made the process less flexible and effective, some argue. "In the last 20 to 30 years, human-resources departments have taken on more management tasks from top administrators," says Zastrocky, from the Leadership Board of Chief Information Officers. "When you let HR do all the hiring and training, you end up with too much centralization and too little expertise about certain kinds of hires."

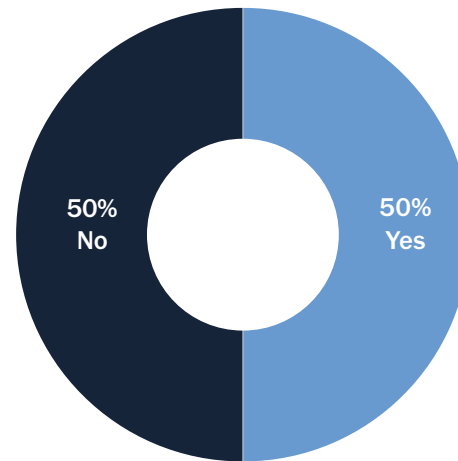
Relying on tried-and-true hiring formulas doesn't seem to be working, either. Department heads and others who adhere to a schedule based on a "hiring season," typically beginning at the start of the fall semester, limit colleges' ability to move fast on potential hires during the rest of the year, some experts say. Many strong candidates are often asked to wait months for a hiring decision to be made.

"Companies and other entities make their job offers first," says Yowell, at Goucher.

Putting together hiring committees — a

IN THE PAST YEAR

## Have you adjusted the requirements sought for certain jobs?



## Which of the following requirements have you changed?

Lowered minimum educational experience



Lowered minimum relevant work experience



Added option for partially remote work



Added option for totally remote work



Raised minimum relevant work experience



Raised minimum educational experience



Other



Source: Chronicle survey of 720 college administrators



common practice in searches for administrators and faculty members — also can turn the process into a slog. “I don’t think we’ve developed the infrastructure to be fluid on hiring,” says Hundrieser, from the college business officers’ group. “Those committees take time to line up. We’re stuck in a model that’s not flexible or intuitive.”

In part to cover a labor shortfall, about half of institutions relied more on interim hires in the past year, while 30 percent outsourced services more often and 28 percent enlisted more contractors.

For some, those numbers are a sign that colleges are leaning on contingent faculty members and other employees who are often underpaid and overworked.

“It’s true that you see more outsourcing as a result of the current labor market, but it’s also true that the degradation of full-time jobs with benefits over many

years plays a role in this,” says Givan, at Rutgers. “We think of the massive load colleges place on adjuncts, but the burden doesn’t end with the contingent employees. Tenured faculty and department heads often need to take on more responsibilities, such as managing adjuncts and meeting with students, as the number of full-time educators decreases. And that has a negative effect on morale.”

[Union drives are on the rise on campuses across the nation](#) — something that could pressure institutions into paying and treating employees better, Givan says, adding that union members tend to stay at their college jobs longer.

“Administrators might want to rethink their distaste with unions, but many of them would rather hold on to power than operate under a collective-bargaining agreement,” she adds.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

**“My college has the right organizational structure to manage a modern work force.”**



**“My college prepares administrators and managers to oversee a modern work force.”**



**“My college has effective processes and practices to manage a modern work force.”**



Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. Source: *Chronicle* survey of 720 college administrators

## CONCLUSION

**L**ike many industries, higher education is facing severe challenges in hiring and retaining workers. But colleges have their own unique set of problems to deal with.

College jobs hold less appeal for many than they did a year ago. The pandemic has placed a spotlight on the lower pay and diminished benefits many institutions offer, while a recent history filled with leadership decisions based mostly on bottom-line concerns has eroded the trust of many employees.

At the same time, workers in search of jobs are demanding more from employers — especially higher salaries, presenting budget-strapped institutions with a major challenge.

Very few college administrators believe their institution has the right mix of benefits, culture, mission, and pay to succeed in today's labor landscape.

A “doing it for the students” attitude, wrapped up in a high-minded institutional mission, may no longer be enough to draw the workers needed to comprehensively staff colleges.

Institutions have begun to make changes to help deal with the tight labor market, including more-flexible remote-work arrangements, broader advertising for open positions, and, though rarer, signing bonuses and higher salaries.

**The pandemic has placed a spotlight on the lower pay and diminished benefits many institutions offer.**

But they face continuing barriers to full staffing, including weighty organizational structures, hiring processes that move too slowly, and a lack of development of the employees they already have.

Finally, at the time this report went to press, questions about a prolonged downturn were clouding the economic picture. While a recession would probably cause a host of other problems for institutions, a cooled economy could also tighten the job market, keeping more college employees at their jobs and making higher-ed pay and benefits packages more attractive as the number of positions available in other sectors dwindles.

## METHODOLOGY

In the survey, conducted from June 14 to July 1, the 720 respondents spent an estimated total of eight to 10 minutes answering 26 questions on the challenges in the college labor market and how institutions are dealing with them.

Three in four respondents were general college administrators, with directors, at 30 percent, making up the largest group. Deans of all levels (16 percent), human-resources officials (13 percent), presidents/chancellors (11 percent), vice presidents (7 percent), finance officers (6 percent), and campus tech leaders (4 percent) also participated.

Nearly all (99 percent) of the respondents work full time. Forty-two percent of the total work at four-year public institutions, 41 percent at four-year private institutions, and 17 percent at two-year colleges.

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