

Council of **University of California**
Staff Assemblies

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**Early Career Staff
Retention and Advancement
Workgroup Report**

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Executive Summary

The University of California is the world's leading public research university and consists of a vibrant community of close to 200,000 employees, which includes nearly 60,000 faculty and over 138,000 staff employees. The workforce is diverse and continually changing and UC needs to develop strategies to maintain and strengthen its workforce for continued success, recognizing that it is our people that make UC great.

This report focuses on retention and career advancement of early career staff, who are under the age of thirty and have less than five years of UC experience. The workgroup explores the needs of this population, which helps us understand what is needed to retain them and what are their expectations for advancement. The workgroup then provides recommendations on actions that can be taken on either a system-wide or local level.

It is likely that 35% of the UC workforce will retire in the next decade. UC will also have more difficulty filling these vacancies from within as employees in the 40-49 age range continues to diminish. Historical turnover rate patterns suggest an increase in overall turnover rates in the UC workforce as the economy continues to recover. Temporary hires have steadily increased over the last several years, which could lead to issues such as longer learning curves, maintaining corporate knowledge, and increasing costs for external hires. These key findings suggest a need to retain staff and provide advancement opportunities.

The full implementation of Career Tracks is recommended. Currently the implementation of Career Tracks has focused on uniform job classifications and salary market alignment. The remaining steps are to clearly articulate career path opportunities and to provide development programs to help employees progress on their specific track or transition to a new track. Early career staff need to know what their career path opportunities are and where they need to develop in order to progress through their track.

In addition to Career Tracks, UC needs to enhance new employee programs to ensure new staff become connected to the UC community and see what is available. First, there needs to be a strong and consistent on-boarding of new staff. This is so important that it is the subject of another CUCSA workgroup. After on-boarding, we need to enhance early career staff programs to continually provide staff with development opportunities.

We surveyed the UC system for best practices and the following programs are suggested:

- Mentoring – encourages employee engagement, creates a culture of learning and sharing.
- Affinity Groups – provides expertise in a shared interest (budget, IT, HR) that cuts across divisions.
- Apprenticeships – creates a system for staff to rotate into other areas of interest on the premise of over time finding the best job fit for the employee.

- Education and Training – encourages use of individual development plans with more robust financial support for conferencing and certification programs, and providing release time.

In addition to these programs, we need to continue to strengthen our supervisors. One of the top reasons employees leave a job is due to having a real or perceived “bad” supervisor. A good supervisor is essential to retaining our youngest and brightest staff. And finally we need to enhance flexibility into the UC workplace, whether it is allowing for alternative work schedules to allow time for development or returning to school, or telecommuting so parents of young children can continue to work. These efforts must be promoted and supported by senior leadership.

Background

The University of California operates on ten campuses, five medical centers, a national lab, agricultural extension offices in nearly every county, and many other programs up and down the state. UC is the world's leading public research university and consists of a vibrant community of close to 200,000 employees, which includes nearly 60,000 faculty and over 138,000 staff employees. The workforce is diverse and continually changing and UC needs to develop strategies to maintain and strengthen its workforce for continued success, recognizing that it is our people that make UC great.

Objective

This report focuses on retention and career advancement for a specific segment of our staff workforce – early career staff, who are under the age of thirty and have less than five years of UC experience. The workgroup explores the needs of this population which helps us understand what is needed to retain them and what are their expectations for advancement. The workgroup then provides recommendations on actions to be taken on either a system-wide or local level.

Project Scope

The CUCSA Early Career Retention and Advancement Workgroup project launched in September 2014 and concluded in June 2015. We first framed our work toward the healthy workplace, articulating the importance of retention with advancement opportunities playing a key role to retaining employees. We then looked at understanding early career employees by:

- Reviewing system-wide statistical information;
- Taking a look at separation data from a campus;
- Conducting an attitude and assumption exercise with a focus group of CUCSA delegates; and
- Understanding the characteristics of millennials.

With this understanding we then discuss ideas gathered from various sources and look at best practices in the UC system. We surveyed our various UC locations and found that there is a lot of good work being done in the area of retention and advancement of early career employees. However this work is fragmented and inconsistent not only throughout the system but also at the local level.

Psychologically Healthy Workplace¹

The practices that help create a healthy work environment include employee involvement, health and safety, employee growth and development, work-life balance and employee recognition. All these categories foster employee satisfaction while enhancing organizational performance.

Employee Involvement

Employee involvement efforts lead to empower employees, involve them in decision making and give them increased job independence. This can lead to increased job satisfaction by connecting the employee to the organizational mission. For our early career employees, this means relating their work to the mission of the university, connecting their work to research, instruction and service. As it is important to connect students to the university for their educational success, the same is true in connecting early career staff to the mission of the university for their professional success.

Health and Safety

UC has done well in promoting a safe workplace and encouraging healthy lifestyles. Health and safety efforts include a wide variety of workplace practices that can help employees improve their physical and mental health, reduce health risks and manage stress effectively. For early career staff, these elements are critical as it provides programs of interest to them, especially programs promoting a healthy lifestyle. They expect a work environment that promotes health and safety.

Employee Growth and Development

Opportunities for growth and development help employees expand their knowledge, skills and abilities. Employee motivation and job satisfaction are greatly enhanced by the opportunity to acquire new skills and experiences. These growth programs need to also translate into advancement opportunities. New career staff want these growth opportunities and take advantage of them. But they also need to see how they can advancement in their career.

Work-Life Balance

Like health and safety, UC has done well in promoting work-life balance. These efforts include diminishing conflict between work and other life responsibilities, resulting in improved morale, increased job satisfaction and strengthened employee commitment. This balance is important to all staff, including early career staff. It is most meaningful to employees who have been in the private sector at high pressure positions. These new employees, usually mid-managers, sacrifice a higher salary for a balanced work-life.

Employee Recognition

Recognition for employee efforts is critical to making employees feel valued and appreciated. This recognition provides for greater employee engagement and productivity and result in lower turnover and higher retention of top-quality employees.

All these practices work in concert in providing a work environment to optimize employee well-being while allowing the workplace to thrive. And for early career employees, a positive work environment sets the stage for retaining them and providing opportunities for advancement.

Understanding Early Career Staff

In order to provide retention and advancement program recommendations for early career staff, we began by first looking at information to help us understand the wants and needs of early career staff. We first reviewed the “University of California Staff Workforce Profile 2013” report. We then looked at separation data from a specific campus. In a focus group exercise, we looked at attitudes and assumptions of CUCSA delegates. And finally, we reviewed the characteristics of millennials.

UC Staff Workforce Profile 2013²

This document presents a statistical snapshot of UC’s staff workforce as of October 2013. We extract data on the early career staff, which we define as both under the age of 30 and with less than five UC service years.

With the average age at 44, the age distribution of staff are:

Under 30	17,091	17%
30-39	26,661	24%
40-49	24,991	24%
50-59	24,915	24%
60+	9,864	10%

Representing 17% of our staff workforce, staff under the age of 30 represents the highest percentage of new staff, as represented below:

Age of New Hires

20-29	3,382	41%
30-39	2,381	29%
40-49	1,450	18%
50-59	879	11%
60+	175	2%

With this large number of new hires, it is important that we have strong programs in place to retain these employees. With the average length of service at 9 years, the average length of service is about 2 years for staff under the age of 30.

The UC Staff Workforce Profile presented key findings, three of which are of importance to looking at our early career staff.

1. It is likely that 35% of the UC workforce will retire in the next decade. UC will also have more difficulty filling these vacancies from within as employees in the 40-49 age range continues to diminish.

2. Historical turnover rate patterns suggest an increase in overall turnover rates in the UC workforce as the economy continues to recover.
3. Temporary hires have steadily increased over the last several years, which could lead to issues such as longer learning curves, maintaining corporate knowledge, and increasing costs for external hires.

These findings suggest a critical need to retain staff and provide advancement opportunities.

Separations Case Study – UC Riverside

We worked with the UC Riverside campus Human Resources department to provide us with separation data for staff with less than 5 years of service. Below is five years of separation data, excluding layoffs.

Employees with <5 Years of Service	5 Year		
	Total	Rank	
Another Job	188	1	37.15%
Release probationary	66	2	13.04%
Other	45	3	8.89%
Resigned, no reason	44	4	8.70%
Attend School	40	5	7.91%
Resigned, moved out of area	35	6	6.92%
Family/Childcare	16	7	3.16%
Grant/Contract expired	13	8	2.57%
Misconduct	13	9	2.57%
Performance	11	10	2.17%

Leaving UCR for another job accounts for more than one-third of early career staff leaving UCR during the last 5 years. Release for probation, misconduct and performance reasons account for 17.78% of early career staff separations. Leaving to attend school was at 7.91% and leaving for family/childcare reasons accounts for 3.16%. Separation for “other” and “resigned, no reason” account for 17.59%.

Comparing staff with less than 5 years of service to all employees separated from UCR in the last 5 years show that early career employees have higher separation rates for the reasons of:

- Leaving for another job, 43% higher;
- Leaving to attend school, 90% higher; and
- Leaving for not passing probation/misconduct/performance, 91% higher.

This information suggests that attention is needed to promote:

- Job satisfaction programs and advancement opportunities to reduce the number of employees leaving UC for another job;
- Educational support and programs for those employees wishing to attend school; and
- Onboarding, job development and training programs, and supervisor training to increase employees passing probation and help decrease performance issues.

As this information is specific to UCR, we think it would benefit UC to gather and compile all detail separation data from all UC locations. This would help UC better understand the specifics to our separations and provide for better retention strategies.

CUCSA Focus Group

In this exercise, we separated the CUCSA Delegates into two groups: those over 35 years of age and those under the age of 35. We asked three questions to understand the attitudes of the younger staff compared to the assumptions of the older staff.

1. What do early career staff want?

Assumptions by Older Employees	Attitudes of Newer Employees	
x	x	Challenging / Stimulating work
x	x	Flexibility
x	x	Money
x	x	Valued, recognized, acknowledged
x	x	Work life Balance
x		Instant gratification
x		Meaningful work
x		Move up quickly
x		Variety / Choices
	x	Personal success
	x	Professional development
	x	Upward mobility

Challenging work, flexibility, money, recognition and work-life balance are both valued by early career staff and also assumed to of value to younger staff by older staff. In discussions on the different responses, it was determined that the differing responses were a matter of degree. Early career staff want upward mobility but can be patient as long as there is an identifiable pathway. Personal success is important to early career staff but can take time. And professional development valued by early career staff is a way to move up and provide variety at work.

2. Why do early career staff leave?

Assumptions by Older Employees	Attitudes of Newer Employees	
x	x	Better opportunities
x	x	Lack of flexibility / too restrictive
x	x	Money / benefits
x	x	No opportunities
x	x	Supervisors
x		UC is stop gap, 1st job
	x	Bored

For this question, there was mostly consensus in the two group’s responses. Better or no opportunities was a disheartening reason for leaving, considering the size and breadth of UC. Poor supervisors was another troubling response.

3. What does UC offer early career staff?

Assumptions by Older Employees	Attitudes of Newer Employees	
x	x	Being among peers
x	x	Being on campus / resources
x	x	Good benefits
x	x	Meaningful mission
x	x	Security
x	x	Work life balance
x		1st opportunity / a job
x		Innovative, dynamic environment
	x	Community
	x	Optimism / hope

For this question, there was again mostly consensus between the two groups. Meaningful mission, security and work-life balance provide for a healthy working environment, as discussed earlier. Community is much desired by the early career staff.

Characteristics of Millennials³

Millennials are defined as being born between 1982 to 2002. As Millennials, our early career staff exhibit specific characteristics that need attention in the workplace. Millennials need to:

- Stay connected. While they are connected via multiple social media platforms, they crave physical connections in the work place. They can actually thrive in the new “no office” office environment.
- Have meaningful jobs. Connecting their jobs to the greater mission is important to them.
- Create goals together. They want to be a part of goal-setting and again be part of the greater group.
- Have flexibility. Flexibility in work schedules, dress and office environment are important and should be considered when possible.
- Be challenged to learn new skills. And these new skills need to relate to advancement opportunities.
- Work in teams. This promotes connections and opportunities to be challenged.
- Be recognized. They grew up with ample rewards, so recognition is very important to them.

Recommendations

In reviewing all the materials gathered to better understand our early career staff we recommend the following:

- Full implementation of Career Tracks
 - Career Paths
 - Employee Development
- Enhance New Employee Programs from Best Practices
 - On-Boarding
 - Mentoring
 - Staff Development
 - Affinity Groups
 - Apprenticeships
 - Flexibility

Career Tracks⁴

Career Tracks is the name of a system-wide compensation and classification system that is currently being developed by all the UC campuses. UC Berkeley was the first campus to implement Career Tracks, with UC Office of the President following its lead in 2012. It is a framework and job architecture that aligns jobs to respective labor markets by occupation and allows for better market alignment for similar jobs. Career Tracks supports visible career paths and is intended to replace the Series Concepts and Classification Specifications for non-represented jobs.

Career Tracks potentially has many benefits for employees and managers, including:

- Giving employees better-defined career paths within their job functions;
- Allowing employees to see how they can advance their careers at other UC locations, in addition to their current campus or location;
- Providing job titles that reflect primary job responsibilities, which can help to support efforts to recruit and retain qualified employees, and are aligned with pay practices in the local labor market; and
- With salary ranges reflecting the local market, managers can make better pay decisions.

While Career Tracks continues to be implemented at the various locations, the next steps need to include providing a clear articulation to staff on the career path opportunities they may have. They should know what tracks are available for them in their job family and job function. Along with knowing what career paths are available to them, there also needs to be a clear articulation of what they need to do to develop in order to progress through their track. Also, development programs need to be provided to help employees progress along their specific track or transition to a new track.

These clear pathways and programs are critically important to our early career staff. It shows them that there are ways to grow and develop at UC.

New Employee Programs from Best Practices

We surveyed the UC system for best practices and these programs are what we consider required to retain early career staff.

Mentoring

Provide early career staff the opportunity to mentor with senior-level leaders. The mentoring relationship allows for a more personal approach for staff to gain institutional insights, to understand the university culture, and learn about possible career paths from a seasoned administrator. Mentors can potentially identify stressors that may lead young employees to leave UC. These leaders oftentimes have the ability to affect positive change in the University environment.

Education and Training

Employees on all levels have continually expressed the desire to learn, to build new skills, and to take on new challenges. Understanding that full tuition reimbursement is unlikely, the UC system can consider exploring other mechanisms for staff to develop expertise and receive recognition for significant achievements through certification programs; perhaps even basing raises, promotions, and reclassifications that are tied to approved coursework. Integration with Career Tracks would be ideal. University Extensions (internal to the UC System) and Lynda.com offer possible solutions.

Most extension programs in the UC offer staff discounts (ranging from 10% - 50%) for courses. UC can consider developing certification programs that identify the core skills associated with a particular job function or job description. UC can identify the skills gaps or skillsets that are desirable and/or most critical to UC needs, and then provide the appropriate training for staff to learn these skills and apply them in their work environment. UC can also recognize and reward employees for these certifications.

Most campuses have subscription to Lynda.com, an online training service. Lynda.com offers over 3,500 online video courses on technology, business, project management, and much more. Rather than each campus negotiating its own licensing model, UC can come up with an agreement that leverages all of its campuses to make this useful subscription service available to all employees.

Affinity Groups

Encourage staff to create affinity groups based on shared interest. This is a great way for early career employees to feel connected and provides another outlet for them to collaborate. Volunteers can kick off an event like an “unconference” where the participants drive the agenda, come up with the issues, and engage in the dialogue. The campus can support these unofficial groups by providing web hosting through a simple content management system (WordPress) and basic mailing list service (ListServ). Affinity groups centered around business,

finance, account, technology, policies, etc. offer members exceptional networking opportunity, but most importantly, the chance to learn directly from peers working in the similar areas or addressing common problems. Birds-of-a-feather, properly motivated, can come together to solve campus-wide issues for the greater good. Championing a cause and finding solutions can alleviate some of the doldrums associated with the daily grind in an employee's home department. There have been some grassroots projects focusing on sustainability, green IT, cloud computing, etc.

Apprenticeship

Create a system for staff to rotate into other areas, departments, or campuses to develop new skills and network with peers. Local implementations are possible, particularly in large organizations or divisions. In many departments, staff perform many of the same tasks day in and day out. Allowing staff to transfer temporarily to another area can help broaden skill sets, promote collaboration, and enhance cross training. This experience can potentially give an early career staff more stimulating work and paint a clearer picture of possible career paths.

Supervisor Training

One of the top reasons employees, including early career staff, leave a job is having a real or perceived bad supervisor. The rise in millennials in the workplace changes certain dynamics in the workplace. Everyone must adapt, but supervisors in particular must receive updated training if the UC system wants to continue retaining our youngest and brightest employees. Explore options for 360 degree evaluations so that supervisors can have the opportunity to see themselves through the lenses of their subordinates. Good two-way communication and feedback is key to work satisfaction.

Flexibility

Consider formalizing a set of UC recommendations to enhance flexibility in the workplace. Make it easier for managers and employees alike to explore options with telecommuting, flexible hours, alternate work schedules (9/80), or offsite work locations. Provide sample guidelines, schedules, and work agreements. Describe best practices and the technology that can make telecommuting successful in an organization. Market this to staff at all levels because there needs to be a significant culture change in the UC system for widespread adoption. There remains a population of managers who adhere to the traditional mindset of an 8 – 5pm work day. Options are available, but barriers need to be removed.

Professional Development

Continue to promote existing career development programs on each campus. Ensure that high-level administrator and senior managers support a culture of professional development for staff. Clearly identify how professional development can lead to career advancement in the UC system and offer a clearer picture of upward career paths for early career employees.

References

1. APA Center for Organizational Excellence: "Creating a Psychologically Healthy Workplace"
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4. <http://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/working-at-uc/your-career/career-tracks/index.html>