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University Business Higher Education Workforce Management Survey

Executive Summary

University Business and Kronos partnered to develop this survey of higher education leaders exploring the trends and challenges in human resources and personnel management at their institutions. The 15-question survey was deployed on November 21, 2014 to the entire UB audience, and some 216 respondents participated.

Demographics of respondents

Respondents were fairly evenly distributed across both job title and size of institution. The most common title was “President/Vice president” at 24.5 percent, followed by “Finance/Business officer” (12 percent), “Human resources/Personnel management” (10.2 percent) and “CIO/CTO/Technology leadership” (7.4 percent). Another 45.8 percent of respondents chose “Other executive leadership.”

When asked about the size of their enrollment, the leading answer was “Under 5,000 students” at 47 percent, followed by “Over 15,000 students” (21.4 percent), “5,000 to 10,000 students” (19.1 percent) and “10,000 to 15,000 students” (12.6 percent).

Addressing challenges in personnel management

When asked if budget challenges have negatively affected staffing, human resources and personnel management at their institution over the past 12-18 months, a solid majority of respondents (74.9 percent) said Yes, and just 25.1 percent said No.

Respondents were then asked if their institution utilized outsourcing as a staffing strategy, using contractors for areas such as food service, facilities maintenance or other functions. A majority (61.1 percent) said Yes and 38.9 percent said No. For those that responded Yes, they were then asked if outsourcing had improved the quality, efficiency and/or cost effectiveness of service. A similar majority of respondents using outsourcing (69.5 percent) said Yes, while 30.5 percent said No.

The next two questions addressed adjunct faculty. Participants were asked if their institution had moved to a higher ratio of adjunct faculty in the past 5 years. A majority (57.1 percent) said Yes, while the other 42.9 percent said No. When asked if the requirements of the Affordable Care Act had caused their institution concern when it came to adjunct faculty,

responses were almost evenly split, with 55.1 percent saying Yes and 44.9 percent saying No.

When asked if they had to deal with resistance to change in implementing enterprise-wide technology at their institution, the leading answer was “Yes, there has been resistance but we have been able to overcome it” with 47.6 percent, followed by “No, our institution is generally not resistant to change when it comes to technology” at 35.8 percent. Just 16.5 percent said “Yes, resistance to change has prevented new technology solutions from being implemented.”

Number and complexity of systems

The following series of questions explored the number and complexity of personnel management systems in use at institutions. When asked how many workforce management systems they are using to manage various types of campus employees, responses were fairly evenly distributed, with 40.1 percent saying “0-1,” 38.6 percent saying “2-3” and 21.3 percent saying “4 or more.”

When asked how student workers with different campus jobs are managed, the leading statement selected was “Each job uses the same manual method, with separate timesheets from each job” with 34.3 percent, followed by “Each job may use a different method depending on the department” at 23.7 percent, as well as “Our workforce management system combines all jobs into single timesheet” at 17.9 percent and “Our workforce management system combines jobs for FLSA and ACA purposes, but maintains separate approvals for each job” at 16.9 percent. Just 7.2 percent of respondents said “We don’t have student workers.”

Respondents were then asked how they track employees’ time spent on specific projects, for budgeting and reporting purposes. The leading answer by a wide margin was “We don’t have a formal process for tracking time in this way, it’s up to the employee” at 57.7 percent, with another 20.2 percent saying “We developed our own process, using paperwork and/or general productivity software.” Just 13.1 percent said that their workforce management solution had this capability, and just 8.9 percent said they have a dedicated software solution specifically for this purpose.

When it came to whether their institution uses a workforce management solution to track a variety of types of employee absences, nearly all respondents (97.8 percent) said they did for vacation and sick time. Another 73.1 percent said they did for Family Medical Leave Act absences, 65.1 percent said they did for short term leave, 63.4 percent said they did for long term leave, and 44.6 percent said they used a workforce management solution for tracking sabbatical leave time.

When asked if they have a system for tracking the productivity of their project-based workforce, a majority (51.7 percent) said No, with 36.5 percent saying they were Unsure, and just 11.8 percent saying Yes.

The most respondents (40.6 percent) said they did not have a system enabling the use of data analytics in workforce management decision making, while 38.2 percent said they were Unsure, and 21.2 percent saying Yes they did have such a system.

Finally, respondents were asked to identify the critical issues in managing their institution's workforce. The most commonly selected answer was "Controlling labor costs" at 61.1 percent, followed closely by "Increasing productivity" at 53.7 percent and "Compliance issues" at 48.8 percent. Another 29.1 percent said "Preparedness for an audit," 24.1 percent said "Accurately tracking hours to tasks," 24.6 percent said "Better management of absences and leave liability" and 16.3 percent said "Minimizing risks related to collective bargaining agreements." Thirteen respondents chose the open-ended field to describe critical issues, which included "Trust and willingness to embrace change," "Healthcare costs," "Tracking hours for federal grants" and "Not having enough workers due to budget cuts."