



Institutional Research and Assessment Report

January 20, 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2008 UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO STAFF SURVEY

The 2008 University of Idaho Staff Survey was intended to help identify issues of concern among a broad spectrum of staff members and generate discussions to determine and meet the needs of staff. The survey includes questions on job satisfaction, working environment and conditions, and organizational communications. The Staff Survey is conducted every three to four years. Of the 1,607 staff members invited to complete the survey, 1,073 were completed. Approximately sixty-nine percent (69%) of staff responded, up considerably (14%) from the most recent previous survey in 2003. The survey was conducted in the fall of 2008, from late September through early November.

In one item staff were asked to review and rate certain aspects of their jobs related to employee benefits. In general, staff were more satisfied than in 2003 in all areas except three, "health benefits", "retirement benefits", and the "Employee Assistance Program." Only thirty-four percent (34%) of respondents reported they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their "health benefits", a forty-two percent (42%) decline from 2003 when it was rated in the top three areas of satisfaction. In addition, only sixty-one percent (61%) were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with "retirement benefits", a twenty-one percent (21%) decline from 2003. While satisfaction with retirement benefits dropped this year, it is actually closer to historical levels now than in 2003. In all other areas staff were more satisfied than in previous years.

Satisfaction with opportunities available to staff also increased since 2003, with over half of staff reporting they are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with "career advancement opportunities" (51%, up 2%), "professional development opportunities" (64%, up 5%), "personal development opportunities" (68%, up 1%), and "training opportunities" (62%, up 1%). Only "opportunities to influence UI governance" decreased, declining seven percent (7%) to thirty-five percent (35%).

Conversely, forty-six percent (46%) of respondents "disagree" or "strongly disagree" that "my work area is adequately staffed," a decrease of two percent (2%). Other areas with a high response rate of "disagree" or "strongly disagree" include "my evaluation is used to help plan my training and development and improve performance" (46%, up 13% from 2003), and "my supervisor treats all employees in my work area equitably," "my supervisor fosters good two-way communication," and "I receive clear explanations and instructions regarding my performance expectations" (all 23%).

UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO REPORT OF THE 2008 STAFF SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

The University of Idaho Staff Survey was designed in response to a variety of comments and concerns expressed during the 1995 and 1996 President's Forums for Staff, and was first administered in 1996. The survey was intended to help identify issues of concern among a broad spectrum of staff members; generate discussions to determine and meet the needs of staff; expand the university's insight into staff perceptions, attitudes and opinions in a variety of areas; and develop an information base to help the university set some goals and priorities for staff development. The survey includes questions on job satisfaction, working environment and conditions, and organizational communications. Data are used in the aggregate only.

The survey is web-based, and employees are notified, through personal emails from the President, of the web address for the survey. Once employees have logged on to the Vandal Web using their ID and PIN, they are offered the opportunity to complete and submit their survey. At the time employees complete their responses to the items, demographic data is gathered from Banner and submitted along with the survey responses. These data include sex, age, length of time at the UI, ethnic group, annual salary, and employee classification. When the employee submits the survey responses, the ID is separated from the survey results and sent to a special table, which prevents respondents from completing the survey more than once. Individuals' responses to the instrument and demographic data are sent to a separate data file. *At no time after submission are any individuals' ID numbers connected to their responses.* A pre-letter was sent from the President notifying staff of the upcoming survey as well as an initial letter inviting participation and one follow-up letter. A second follow-up letter was sent to employees from the Chair of the Staff Affairs Committee requesting their participation. All of these letters were sent via email.

Of the approximately 1,607 staff members invited to complete the survey, 1,073 were completed. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of staff responded, up considerably (14%) from 2003.

DEMOGRAPHICS

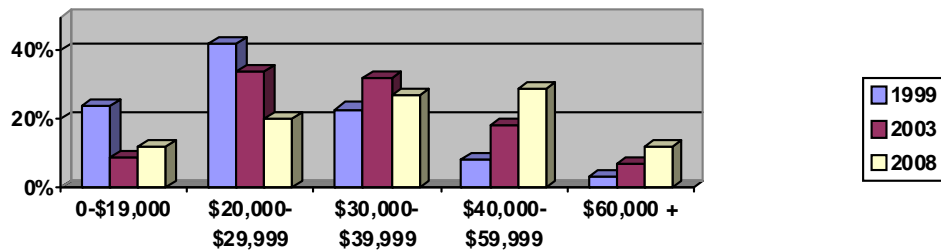
The following demographic data was gathered directly from Banner and collected in a file separate from the survey responses. As is typical of this type of survey, a greater number of women than men responded, sixty percent (60%) female compared to forty percent (40%) male. This is fairly reflective of the overall staff population of fifty-four percent (54%) women and forty-six percent (46%) men. Fifty-one percent (51%) are between the ages of 35 and 54, a decrease of eleven percent (11%) from 2003; while twenty-three percent (23%, up 9%) of respondents are age 55 or older. Eighty-eight percent (88%, down 5%) of respondents are "Caucasian", one percent (1%) "Asian American" and one percent (1%, down 1%) "Hispanic American." All remaining ethnic groups had less than 1% response

rates, including “African American/Black”, “American Indian/Alaskan Native”, “Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander,” “other”, and “unreported”.

Forty-two percent (42%) of staff respondents have been employed at the UI for five years or less (down 3%); the median length of time is 6-10 years, as it has been in the past. In addition, sixty-three percent (63%, down 7%) of respondents have been in their current position 5 years or less, with the median length of time in the position between 3 and 5 years, and the mode between one and two years.

The median salary range for UI staff is between \$35,000 and \$39,999, with fifty percent (50%) of all staff making between \$25,000 and \$49,999. The chart below represents the change in salary distribution since the 1999 staff survey was administered.

10 Year Change in Salary Distribution



Three percent (3%, up 1%) of respondents are classified as administrators or executives, with twenty-two percent (22%, down 5%) clerical and secretarial, twenty-nine percent (29%, up 3%) technical and paraprofessional, twenty-six percent (26%, a new category) as “other professional,” five percent (5%, up 1%) skilled crafts, four percent (4%, down 1%) service/maintenance, and thirteen percent (13%) classified as “other,” (including, for example, Temporary Help.) This is reasonably reflective of the total population with nearly fifty percent of each skill category responding. The outliers were service/maintenance where only about twenty-eight percent (28%) of the population responded, and clerical and secretarial where seventy-four percent (74%) of the population responded to the survey.

JOB SATISFACTION

The questions on job satisfaction focused around several factors, satisfaction with job benefits, opportunities, supervisors, and stress experienced over the last two years. In one item staff were asked to review and rate certain aspects of their jobs related to employee benefits. In general, staff were more satisfied than in 2003 in all areas except three: “health benefits”, “retirement benefits”, and the “Employee Assistance Program.” Only thirty-four percent (34%) of respondents reported they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their “health benefits”, a forty-two percent (42%) decline from 2003 where it was rated in the top three areas of satisfaction. We can speculate that satisfaction was particularly high in 2003 due to a change in vendor coupled with informational meetings for staff to learn more about benefits, and lower in the past two years when rates increased and option plans were significantly changed.

In addition, only sixty-one percent (61%) were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with “retirement benefits”, a twenty-one percent (21%) decline from 2003. While satisfaction with retirement benefits dropped this year, it is actually closer to historical levels now than in 2003. There was a thirteen percent decrease, to fifty-one percent (51%) in the “satisfied” and “very satisfied” responses regarding the “Employee Assistance Program.” However, 11% more reported the service was “not applicable” than in 2003. In all other areas staff were more satisfied than in previous years, including “salary” (53%, up 7%), “work load” (72%, up 3%), “working conditions (hours, location)” (86%, up 5%), and “job security” (78%, up 13%).

Satisfaction with opportunities available to staff also increased since 2003, with over half of staff reporting they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with “career advancement opportunities” (51%, up 2%), “professional development opportunities” (64%, up 5%), “personal development opportunities” (68%, up 1%), and “training opportunities” (62%, up 1%). Only “opportunities to influence UI governance” decreased, declining seven percent (7%) to thirty-five percent (35%).

In a series of questions about the general work environment, staff were asked to report how closely they agreed with statements involving their supervisors, departmental management processes, and performance evaluation processes. Those areas in which three quarters or more of respondents reported that they “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statements provided included:

- “My department is supportive of my needs to attend to my personal and family responsibilities” (93%, no change from 2003);
- “My supervisor treats me with consideration and respect” (88%, no change);
- “Usually my supervisor is fair when giving criticism” (83%, down 2%)
- “The environment in my work area encourages respect for equality and dignity for all employees (82%, up 3%);
- “My annual performance evaluation is important to me” (79%, down 6%)
- “My supervisor is an effective and competent leader” (77%, down 1%)
- “My supervisor fosters good two-way communication” (75%, down 1%);
- “My annual performance evaluation is conducted in a timely manner” (75%, down 3%); and,
- “I receive clear explanations and instructions regarding my performance expectations” (75%, down 2%).

Conversely, forty-six percent (46%) of respondents “disagree” or “strongly disagree” that “my work area is adequately staffed,” a decrease of two percent (2%). Other areas with a high response rate of “disagree” or “strongly disagree” include “my evaluation is used to help plan my training and development and improve performance” (46%, up 13% from 2003), and “my supervisor treats all employees in my work area equitably,” “my supervisor fosters good two-way communication,” and “I receive clear explanations and instructions regarding my performance expectations” (all 23%).

Thirty-eight percent (38%) of staff reported that they have experienced an extreme level of stress over the past two years, down again slightly (2%) since 2003. Fifty-four percent (54%, the same as in the two previous administrations of the survey) report experiencing a moderate amount of stress. The sources of stress listed most frequently as "extreme" or "somewhat" stressful were consistent with those reported in 2003: "work load" (78%, down 1%), "personal finances" (75%, down 2%), "finding a balance between work and home" (66%, down 2%), and "managing household responsibilities" (64%, down 2%). New in the top five stressors this year was "institutional policies and procedures", with fifty-nine percent (59%) of respondents reporting it had contributed to their stress. Other areas in which more than half of respondents reported feeling "extreme" or "somewhat" stressful were "personal relationships" (58%, down 4%), "my physical health" (52%, up 2%), and "concern about job security" (53%, down 18% from 2003.)

WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND CONDITIONS

In an attempt to understand the working environment and conditions within departments, as well as at the university level, the survey contains a series of elements specific to the organizational climate. Nearly nine out of ten staff members responding to the survey "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that "most faculty with whom I interact treat me with respect" (88%, up 1%), "most administrators with whom I interact treat me with respect" (89%, up 2%), "most staff with whom I interact treat me with respect" (94%, down 1%), and "my department provides me with adequate equipment and/or materials with which to do my job" (85%, up 3%). In addition, when adjusted for those who reported "not applicable", eighty-six percent (86%) of respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that "health and safety concerns I express are effectively resolved," and ninety-one percent (91%) that "my department gives attention to the needs of handicapped individuals in the workplace". Conversely, eighty-one percent (81%) "disagree" or "strongly disagree" that "I believe there are toxins in my work area that need to be removed (e.g. asbestos, chemicals, fumes)." Four percent (4%) agreed strongly with this statement, indicating a persistent even if low level of concern in this area.

When asked specifically about campus facilities, eighty-four percent (84%, up 8%) of respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that "my workspace is adequate", twenty-three percent (23%, down 3%) that "laboratory space is adequate," and sixty-three percent (63%, up 3%) that "lighting on campus is adequate." However, only forty-three percent (43%, down 3%) "agree" or "strongly agree" that "I am satisfied with my ability to park on campus", and only forty-percent (40%, down 2%) that "UI's staff promotion policies are fair."

In a series of items about discrimination on campus, several areas showed slight increases over the 2003 response rates. When asked if "minority staff members are treated fairly at UI", seventy-seven percent (78%, up 1%) reported they "agree" or "strongly agree," and seventy-eight percent (78%, up 2%) "agree" or "strongly agree" that "U of I provides a comfortable atmosphere for minority students, faculty, and staff". However, ten percent (10%, up 3%) "agree" or strong agree" that "at UI, I have been discriminated against because of my gender," and twelve percent (12%, up 4%) "because of my age." Nearly eight out of

ten respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that “women staff members are treated fairly at UI” (77%).

Conversely, only two percent (2%, no change since 2003) of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” they have been discriminated against “because of my ethnic status” or “because of my sexual orientation.” Likewise, only three percent (3%) “agree” or “strongly agree” that they have been discriminated against “because of my religious affiliation,” down one percent (1%).

As in previous years, employees were asked if they have been sexually harassed at the UI within the last five years. Again this year, and consistent with previous years, ninety-six percent (96%) responded that they have not been sexually harassed.

A section on technology asked staff to comment on whether or not they had access to a variety of technology in their workplace, and how much they agreed with certain statements about the technology used in their job. Nearly all staff have access to most of the technology listed in the survey:

	Yes %	Change from 2003 %
I have access to University email in my workplace.	99	+2
I have access to the University’s Web for Employees in my workplace.	98	0
I have access to a computer printer that I can use during my workday.	98	+1
I know how to access Web for employees.	95	-1
On average, I access the Web for Employees at least twice a month.	80	+5
My supervisor allows me to use University equipment (computer, printer) to look up my paycheck information on the Web for Employees.	91	-5

Ninety-six percent (97%, up 1%) of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that “I use a computer to do my job,” ninety-six percent (96%, up 4%) that “I have the necessary skills to use the computer effectively to complete my job,” eighty-five percent (85%, up 3%) that “my department keeps the work computer assigned to me adequately upgraded so I can do my job effectively,” and sixty-eight percent (68%, down 4%) that “my supervisor supports and encourages me to take computer training classes that are relevant for me to do my job.” In a new question this year, eighty-one percent (81%) “agree” or “strongly agree” that “the UI provides sufficient computer technical support for me to do my job.”

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Finally, in a series of statements regarding organizational communication at the UI, staff were asked to rate how strongly they agreed. Those areas with the highest response rates in “agreed” or “strongly agree” included:

- “My supervisor takes appropriate action on my problems and complaints” (80%, down 1%);

- “My supervisor take appropriate action on my problems and complaints” (77%, down 1%);
- “I feel my supervisor has been adequately trained to conduct my performance evaluations” (76%, down 2%);
- “There is a high degree of open, two-way communication in my work area” (73%, up 2%); and,
- “I have access to information about SAC such as subcommittees, representatives, and officers” (65%, down 2%).

In all other areas except one response rates for those who “agree” and “strongly agree” declined. Those areas included:

- “UI administration uses staff input and recommendations” (43%, down 3%);
- “I have adequate information about the staff ombudsman” (55%, down 1%);
- “I have adequate information about how to file a grievance” (54%, down 3%),
- “The Staff Affairs Committee (SAC) has been responsive to my input or inquiries” (21%, down 2%); and,
- “I am aware of the purpose and functions of the SAC” (59%, down 2%).

The one area in which the number of respondents who “agree” and “strongly agree” increased is “UI administrators are effective and competent leaders” (51%, up 2%).

COMMENTS

The remainder of the survey solicited, through open-ended comments, data on what the UI is doing well that should be continued and what needs improvement. An analysis of the open-ended comments yielded categories of responses for the both the positive and negative comments that included for the positive: quality of education, improving communication, flextime, and respected/respectful staff and faculty. The negative comments included: administrative performance, health and retiree benefits, salaries, and poor communication. Complete results of the survey, including the frequency distribution and open-ended comments can be found on the Institutional Research and Assessment website <http://www.webs.uidaho.edu/ira/assess/surveys.htm>.

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