



A *Higher Education* CHRO's
guide to thriving post-pandemic

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged institutions of higher education to rethink nearly every aspect of their operations over a very short period, placing many new pressures on employees to adapt and innovate. As a result, higher education employees are questioning their old ways of working and elevating the expectations they carry for their employers. Across the higher education landscape, long-time employees are now leaving their universities in what has colloquially been dubbed the “Great Resignation,” either to pursue jobs outside the industry, retire entirely, or seek out a pay or title increase at a competitor institution. This threat of job-shifting often puts pressure on higher education HR departments to rapidly adapt to these new playing fields. Now more than ever, the higher education industry is looking to its Human Resources departments (HR) to solve some of the market’s most pressing challenges and to deliver a revolutionized experience for higher education employees. This new focus on and emphasis for HR is occurring even as many institutions lack cabinet-level HR leaders who can work

with university leadership to plan, prioritize, and ultimately implement critical HR strategies. In university ecosystems where there is a senior HR leader named, many still lack the institutional power to propose and actualize a thoughtful and strategic long-term HR strategy.

HR can no longer serve solely as a transactional arm of the university; instead, HR teams now must become a strategic hub through which the university empowers its talent and evolves its operations, all in support of the overall mission of the university. Even though many university employees have returned to campus, their work and expectations may never go back to pre-pandemic norms. The pandemic has opened the eyes of university leaders as well as faculty and staff to the possibilities of a different future for work in higher education. Failing to learn from the pandemic and missing the opportunity to adapt the work experience to its future state could undermine the mission of the university ecosystem and potentially foster a debilitating sense of resistance within institutions.

To support the development of an HR strategy that meets this pivotal moment and addresses these critical issues, Deloitte has identified eight key areas for HR and university leadership to consider for institutions to emerge from the pandemic with greater agility, strength, and resiliency:

“HR staff has been at the forefront of faculty and staff expressing their frustrations regarding their challenges, all while they are experiencing many of the same challenges themselves.”

— Michelle Piekutowski,
Associate Vice President and
Chief Human Resources Officer
at Carnegie Mellon University

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1 Reimagine the Talent, Learning, and Organizational Development Experience

Higher education institutions are responding in real time to the demands and expectations of a pandemic-tested workforce. Employees have discovered the possibilities of digital collaboration, as well as a newfound productivity in the time that may otherwise be swallowed up by long commutes. They have new ideas on the purpose of work, and refreshed expectations for their relationship with their employers. With the definition of hybrid work still underway, university leadership must recognize the opportunity at hand for defining the future talent experience of their employees.

This reevaluation process begins with identifying the skillsets required – both for incoming and existing talent – to thrive in a collaboratively digital-and-physical world. Then, HR departments should use these identified skillsets to begin preparing a workforce for the future of work by leveraging a coordinated, technology-enabled, and human-centered design approach from talent acquisition to learning and development and more. When built on the foundation of a strong job architecture – and integrated with Total Rewards, DEI, and culture strategies – these aspects of talent management create the integrated talent experience that will be discussed later in this playbook. Through this ecosystem, HR leadership can put forth an employee value proposition of a mission-driven institutional culture, benefits, growth, and autonomy that withstands the test of the turbulent market and the “Great Resignation.” Below is an example of the four-part approach that can help higher education HR leaders reimagine their integrated talent experience.

1. Job Architecture and Organizational Design

The talent experience is rooted in a well-planned and thoughtful job architecture and organization design. Without such structures in place, the pathways for employee growth and opportunity within an organization are unclear or limited at best. As most universities grow or change, so do the jobs necessary to meet the evolving demand.

For faculty and staff to excel at an institution, human resources leadership must establish a talent strategy that (1) supports clear career paths, (2) defines expectations by level and function, and (3) promotes opportunities for internal mobility. This is where job architecture comes in: re-defining job levels, structuring and aligning job titles, utilizing competency frameworks, and modernizing job descriptions will equip an institution with the tools to enhance its talent management process, hire the best talent, and develop the right skills across the institution.

2. Attract and Hire

Talent acquisition practices at many universities are manual, overly prescribed, and often disconnected from specific, measurable, or reportable criteria. In a market that requires institutions of higher education to be agile, to build sustainably passive sourcing pools, and to embed DEI into all hiring practices, the responsibilities of a talent acquisition team can pile up quickly when it comes to attracting and retaining talent. To address these talent acquisition challenges, HR leadership can:

- Distinctly define the institutional brand and employee value proposition that the university represents.
- Continuously develop and/or strengthen community and organizational partnerships to attract diverse talent.
- Strategically engage technologies that leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI) for sourcing to build both active and passive candidate pools.
- Consistently encourage improvement and process redesign methods to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy around the recruiting process and reduce the overall time-to-hire.
- Consider the broader university as a source for talent.

3. Train and Inspire

One of the key drivers to inspiring staff and keeping employees motivated is ensuring they have access to the right development opportunities at the right moments in their careers. This can be difficult to do, especially given the vast cross-section of employees on a university campus, from recent college grads to staff that have spent their entire careers in one department or one school. In the past two years, it has become easier than ever to find out-of-the-box trainings that will help upskill university staff. The problem, however, is determining which trainings, at what time, and in what format will yield the greatest results. HR leadership can amplify their learning and development offerings by exploring the following steps:

- Determining the Moments that Matter (MTM); highlighting which training, when conducted at the right time, will make the longest-lasting impact. These moments often include major career milestones such as the onboarding period, promotion intervals, and instances of great organizational change.
- Establishing the channels by which employees can request training, both via selfservice courses and external professional opportunities that are relevant to their work at hand.
- Working across departments to recommend learning pathways based on functional areas.
- Working with various administrative functions to utilize the resources and relationships available through higher education professional organizations like CUPA-HR, AACRAO, EDUCAUSE, and NACUBO.

4. Retain and Promote

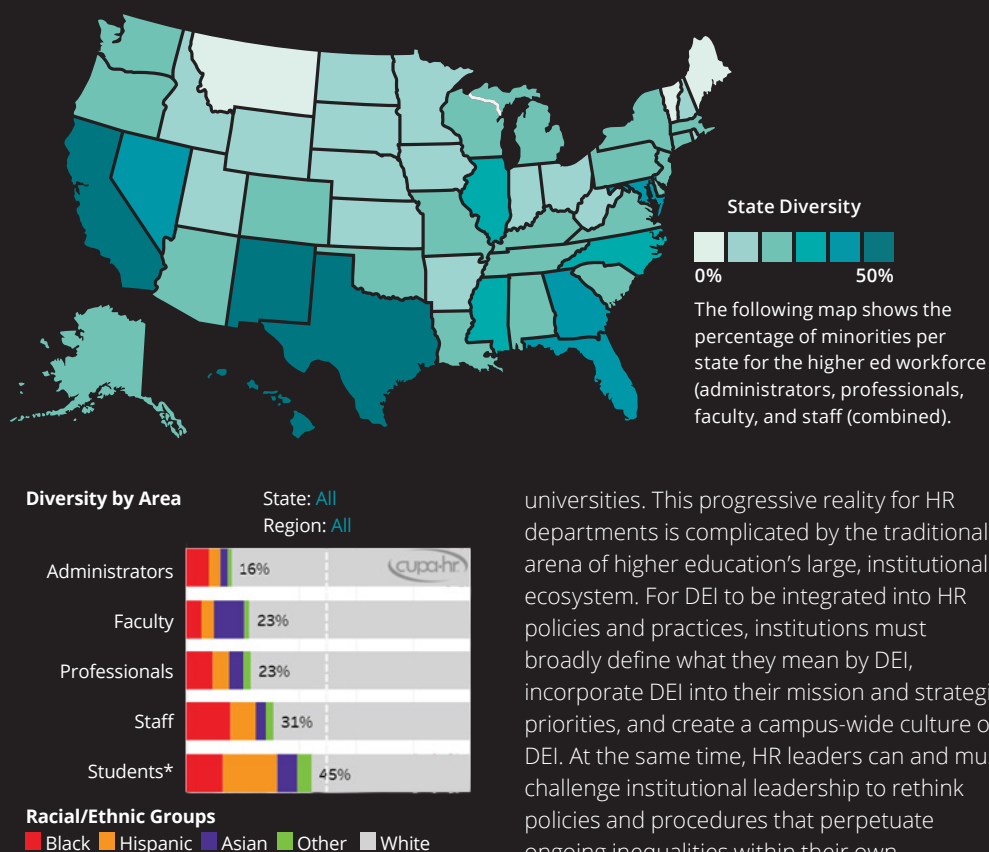
A major theme in modern talent management is the opportunity for staff to grow their careers within an organization. The flexibility to move from project to project within or across departments is a proven driver of employee retention and accelerated development. Universities often struggle to achieve a specific talent model that is grounded in internal mobility; the vast structure of the university and the extensive field of departments and roles within often cloud the process of employee progression. According to Deloitte's 2019 report on internal advancement, the lack of information available for open roles, the lack of an internal identification process for talented employees, and the cultural resistance to internal promotion are all impediments to employee retention and promotion.¹ To fully realize the advantages of retention and advancement available to the university HR leadership must systematically remove these apparent roadblocks for employees. To take advantage of the talent already available within an organization, HR leadership should consider opportunities to map employee skills to strategic initiatives and priorities. By identifying top performers and developing their aligned skills accordingly, university HR teams will be able to develop succession planning and retainment with greater clarity.

Given the impacts of the Great Resignation, it is more imperative than ever for university leaders to look at their school's integrated talent experience and evaluate whether it bolsters or hinders the institution's ability to attract and retain new employees. Potential and current employees alike are not only looking for the job with the highest salary or best benefits. Skilled employees are drawn to a talent management culture that prioritizes diversity, equity, and inclusion and that provides opportunities for long-term careers and development.

2 Be Intentional about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts

In higher education, an increasingly diverse student body – the “consumers” of education – has made clear its desire to see this same level of multi-dimensional diversity of background reflected in the faculty and staff on campus.² Yet diversity as a standalone metric is not enough; efforts to diversify an organization's employer base must be paired with the intention to then create inclusive cultures as well.³

Figure 1. Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Higher Education Workforce from CUPA-HR⁴



The COVID-19 pandemic forced Human Resource leaders at institutions of higher education to balance rapidly evolving staffing needs with pressures to manage labor costs. A 2020 EAB survey found that HR leaders overwhelmingly recognized the importance of focusing on DEI challenges, but felt limited in enacting policy shifts by the ongoing budget constraints and difficulties of a remote work environment.⁵ Moreover, the heightened global attention on inequity and the Black Lives Matter movement throughout the pandemic elevated the importance of progress on DEI initiatives and forced HR leaders into a pivotal and strategic culture-creating role for

universities. This progressive reality for HR departments is complicated by the traditional arena of higher education's large, institutional ecosystem. For DEI to be integrated into HR policies and practices, institutions must broadly define what they mean by DEI, incorporate DEI into their mission and strategic priorities, and create a campus-wide culture of DEI. At the same time, HR leaders can and must challenge institutional leadership to rethink policies and procedures that perpetuate ongoing inequalities within their own organizational systems and break down the barriers to inclusivity for all campus stakeholders. The first arena for HR to influence the DEI efforts of a school is in the university's talent management. There are three key moments along the talent management lifecycle for university HR leaders to focus these efforts: talent acquisition; development and support; and tenure and promotion. Deloitte has equipped clients with – and published eminence for – its equity solutions across the talent management lifecycle; below are abbreviated snapshots of this redesign process, with more granular detail and recommendations upon request.

“Be sure that you are in sync/fully aligned with the Chancellor and executive leadership so that DEI is not an HR initiative; it is an organizational initiative. And then listen to what your workforce is telling you and tackle low-hanging fruit.”

— Sherri Enright, Chief Human Resources Officer, Dallas College

Talent Acquisition

Due to remarkably stable faculty and staff retention rates, much of campus HR leaders' talent work is centered on acquisition, which offers a tremendous opportunity for incorporating DEI immediately into a university's system.⁶ There are several considerations within the talent acquisition cycle where campus HR leaders can implement diversity, equity, and inclusion solutions. Below are some high-level considerations for each step along the way:

- Advertise and communicate your diversity goals (both internally and externally) and use your resources to proactively seek out diverse talent.
- Highlight the institution's commitment to DEI with specifics in each job description and required listings on diverse talent sources.
- Establish and enforce objectivity in assessment; consider unconscious biases on an ongoing basis.
- Standardize the interview approach and provide ample resources to candidates.
- Uniformize selection criteria and reassess minimum historical data of minimum requirements for each role.
- Ensure equity and foster immediate connections with tenured employees.
- Clearly communicate with common language the norms of DEI at the institution.

Development and Support

Once new staff and faculty are hired into an institution, HR leaders must then work to create equitable training and support systems to help ensure that new hires are welcomed into the community, understand how to be successful, and feel supported in reaching various career goals at the institution. There are several training and support equity solutions that HR leaders can consider in cultivating this pipeline:

- Promote faculty and staff-identification of diversity attributes to enhance understanding of representation across departments.
- Formalize mentoring programs across departments and create metrics to evaluate mentoring program effectiveness.
- Encourage and incentivize sponsorship of individuals from underrepresented groups, including but not limited to women and faculty and staff of color.
- Provide mandatory Inclusive Leadership and Unconscious Bias training and coaching to all faculty and staff.
- Review data to understand the rationale for any resignation by gender and race/ethnicity and create a “retention equity program” for cohorts whose attrition rates are above average.

Tenure and Promotion

Unspoken rules and vague expectations have contributed to holding down and pushing out scholars who have been historically marginalized in academia.⁷ HR leaders must work to demystify the tenure and promotion process and make career growth and trajectory more equitable for all faculty and staff by considering the following strategies:

- Analyze the tenure and promotion process to identify and mitigate points of potential bias, and then enhance the process based on findings.
- Create clear rubrics, prompts, and checks into the evaluation process to promote objectivity and fairness.
- Establish objective definitions for expectations throughout the tenure and promotion process.
- Tie DEI goals within departments to leadership's tenure and promotion processes to ensure accountability and to codify DEI practices and values.

The main goal of incorporating DEI into all aspects of an institution and specifically across HR policies, systems, and procedures is to ensure a more equitable and inclusive environment for all members of the institution's community. Creating the sense and feeling of belonging around universal DEI values can produce a culture that will help improve faculty and staff engagement and drive overall performance. While HR leaders across institutions will certainly be starting from different places in their modification or creation of policies and procedures to ensure equity along the talent management lifecycle, the most important thing is to get started.

3 Tie Culture to University's Mission and Values

DEI goes hand in hand with building a strong and inclusive university culture, which is increasingly an expectation of the modern workforce. Culture starts at the top, and higher education HR professionals are uniquely positioned to drive this culture shift. Defining how work will be done in the future has landed itself as an HR responsibility, but so has determining how to maintain culture in a hybrid-located and diversely composed workforce. The “new normal” period at hand presents an excellent opportunity to rethink the culture at higher education institutions.

Peter Drucker, often dubbed as the “founder of modern management” once famously quipped that, at any large institution, “culture eats strategy for breakfast.”⁸ Every organization of any size — whether a commercial enterprise, a government agency, or a university — operates and cultivates its own distinct culture. Thus, organizational strategy is a byproduct of the culture of an organization, not the inverse. An organization's culture is recognized as a singular determinant of effectiveness and can be an arbiter or, at the very least, an important factor in long-term success or failure.

Culture is the system of beliefs, values, and behaviors that drive how work gets done within an organization.⁹ Culture manifests itself in leadership styles, decision-making processes, systems, structures, rituals and routines, and symbols. Understanding the kind of culture that a campus will want to shape and maintain in the “new normal” will be an accelerator in helping guide HR leadership on where and how to tackle the tough problems of the future.

Figure 2



Deloitte has spent 20 years conducting research across industries to understand how changing the way people think changes the way they behave; this research proves that, universally, the ability to change the culture that people operate in can change the way people operate. Out of this research, Deloitte has developed tried and tested methodologies that can serve as an institution's culture blueprint. [CulturePath™](#), which measures eight key indicators critical to achieving an institution's most critical outcomes, and [EngagePath™](#), which measures an institution's employee engagement, are two of the proprietary tools that Deloitte has produced to help guide organizations' cultivation of culture.

Thousands of institutions across the country are reassessing their culture through the lens of DEI efforts, hybrid and remote staff and faculty balances, and the well-being norms of the university.

The higher education work experience has traditionally been in-person and on-campus. While this tradition may still appeal to target student applicants, gone are the days of attracting or retaining staff solely on the notion of an on-campus culture. While an on-campus experience is still important, there are also cultural benefits of allowing work flexibility and hybrid/remote options to better support employees. The are some examples on the next page.

The pandemic has forced everyone to adapt in unprecedented ways and has ushered institutions to re-think the way work can be done. As the “new normal” continues to be defined, HR is uniquely positioned to focus on the people that make up the institution and to shape the culture of the institution at large to meet the needs of the campus.

Figure 3

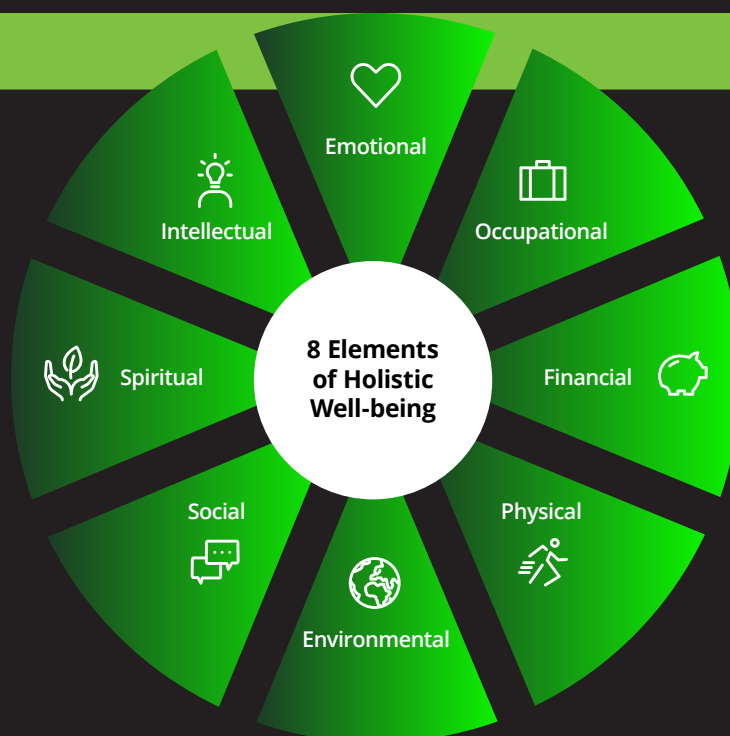
Traditional	Future
<i>"I have to be present from 8am – 5pm to show I am working"</i>	<i>"I am available during core working hours so my team can collaborate and have meetings, but I am most productive at night, when I am able to work with less interruptions"</i>
<i>"I only meet with students during standard office hours"</i>	<i>"I am able to flex my schedule to meet the needs of students who need access to an advisor earlier in the morning or later in evening due to class and work conflicts"</i>
<i>"No one can be productive working from home"</i>	<i>"My colleagues and I can be productive together in a variety of settings, whether we choose to be on campus or at home"</i>
<i>"Faculty need to see us to know our jobs are necessary"</i>	<i>"Faculty appreciate that we are able to meet both virtually and in-person since they may not be on-campus as frequently"</i>
<i>"I have to be in front of my boss all the time, so I have a chance to take on larger projects or more responsibilities"</i>	<i>"My work is measured on my outcomes, which makes me feel much more confident that I am doing my job well"</i>
<i>"My boss is never available because she is in meetings and people are always popping into her office during the day"</i>	<i>"My supervisor is more accessible in a virtual environment, so I know I can ask questions when needed and that she trusts me to complete my work autonomously otherwise"</i>

4 Prioritize Employee Well-being

Culture and DEI strategy efforts go hand in hand with instilling strong well-being practices across campus as leaders try to create psychologically safe environments and help instill purpose into their employees' work. Campus communities experienced a collective disruption to their pursuits of well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic, and HR leadership has been tasked with creating a strategic path forward for their communities.

Challenges will vary based on policies, procedures, and leadership, but HR must be a strategic leader at helping the university embed the 8 elements of holistic well-being (see Figure 4) into a university's culture, from hiring to talent management and more. Below are three challenges HR leaders should focus on when it comes to championing well-being.

Figure 4





1. Reintegration into the campus community

Across many institutions, the struggle to accommodate both employee and student expectations in the return to campus has led to a disconnect in which employees felt unheard by their administration.¹⁰ Oftentimes, the devaluation of faculty and staff needs transpires because of a “student-first” mindset that universities have strategically adopted overtime. To retain students and ensure profitability and sustainability, employee needs that conflicted with students’ desires were de-prioritized, consequently creating a sense of disconnect and making reintegration a challenge. This has led to decreased engagement from employees in the campus community and atrophied investment in the workplace.



2. Changes in the workplace

Overnight, the COVID-19 pandemic forced higher education institutions to shift and rethink how and where education would be delivered. Employees were propelled unexpectedly into the future of work where their traditional, physical workplaces abruptly changed and necessitated new technology competencies and, in some cases, structural reconsiderations. Challenges associated with

this shift to a primarily virtual classroom and meeting space were compounded by the expectation placed on employees to support (often with limited to no training) a student body that was also experiencing pandemic-related stress/distress. Many faculty and staff employees felt ill-prepared to address students’ needs and, as a result, have experienced their own levels of increased stress and helplessness.



3. Mindful In-Person Collaboration

Returning to campus amidst the COVID-19 pandemic created a situation where employees felt they were risking their health and safety to come into the office all while continuing to work in the same virtual ways they had for the past year. The lack of purpose felt from being in the office led to feelings of frustration and in some cases burnout.

As the COVID environment relaxes, many employees want to use their time in the office to reconnect and build relationships in a way that was not possible during the pandemic. Universities can engage with and provide opportunities for all employees to have meaningful interactions and develop mindful connections with colleagues on campus to avoid disconnection, fatigue, and burnout. Rather than taking the traditional top-down approach to implementing these shifts, this

unique moment presents a tremendous opportunity for collaboration between employees and administration. HR leadership must play a key role in advocating for the well-being of the university’s employees by encouraging mindful collaboration.

COVID-19 has shown that “organizations that integrate well-being into the design of work at the individual, team, and organizational levels will build a sustainable future where workers can feel and perform at their best.”¹¹ Higher education leaders can better embed well-being into the fabric of their organizations by looking at well-being through the three lenses: organizational, team, and individual. Figure 5 shows a sample matrix that can help leaders plot their well-being initiatives through these lenses. One simple starting point could be to build a well-being norms playbook for a portion of an organization and build training elements to encourage teams and managers to model its guidance. Another way to address employee well-being could be to develop a strategy for meaningful in-person work and allow employees to work remotely, cutting down on the challenges presented by a commute and being onsite just to sit in an individual office all day with limited to no in-person interaction. Overall, the most important takeaway for a CHRO is to connect the importance of well-being to the success of their institution and to get started.

Figure 5

	Organizational	Team	Individual
 Cultural Building well-being into social behaviors and norms		Model well-being behaviors such as taking microbreaks or only making certain meetings videofocused	Be proactive and vocal about well-being needs
 Relational Fostering well-being in relationships among colleagues	Form teams based on worker preferences, working styles, and personal needs		Check in frequently, proactively, and consistently with colleagues on their well-being needs and preferences
 Operational Including well-being in management policies, processes, and programs	Embed well-being criteria in work scheduling, performance management processes, leadership evaluations, and rewards and recognition programs	Enable team agency and choice by allowing teams to adopt well-being practices best suited to them	
 Physical Designing the physical workspace to facilitate well-being	Design work environments to support workers' physical, mental, and emotional health needs	Leverage physical workspaces that promote team collaboration and performance	
 Virtual Designing new technologies and virtual workspaces for well-being		Use new technologies, like virtual reality, to train team members to navigate stressful situations (e.g., interacting with a frustrated customer)	Leverage wearable technologies and apps to help master distractions, increase mindfulness, and reduce anxiety

5 Provide Total Rewards that Meet All Employees' Needs

The total rewards that institutions provide employees present yet another opportunity to support employee well-being by ensuring stressors outside of the workplace are supported. Many of the challenges that higher education institutions face regarding rewards, benefits, and compensation often predate the pandemic.

Universities are massive, self-sustaining ecosystems, more like cities than corporations. They have highly stratified talent pools, as discussed in the Talent section of this playbook. Higher education institutions consist of a diverse set of professionals, ranging from professors, staff, and lawyers to hospitality workers, gardeners, cooks, and doctors. Consequently, benefits programs are highly complex and costly, yet often still have difficulty meeting the needs of these various workforce cohorts.

While COVID-19 did not create many of the challenges associated with managing a robust

total rewards program, it highlighted and even exacerbated existing issues, from program equity gaps and effective cost management to inconsistent and underutilized well-being programs. Pre-pandemic, workers who could not visit a campus mental health clinic during the workday may not have been available to do so after hours either. Employees seeking virtual telehealth options for care may have found them to be unavailable. For working parents, the availability of affordable and reliable childcare became increasingly important throughout the pandemic and the lack of options left many to fend for themselves.

Employee well-being is now top of mind as the pandemic has generated new levels of stress and burnout from the blurring of work boundaries in a virtual environment to staffing shortages and health risks experienced by front-line workers. Additionally, higher education institutions faced greater pressure throughout the pandemic to control costs due

to pandemic-induced enrollment shortfalls while still aiming towards their goal to remain competitive destinations for elite faculty.

The pandemic has forced HR leaders to rethink their approaches to total rewards programs. While more organizations look to embed employee well-being into their total rewards, the talent landscape has become more competitive and employee expectations are also rapidly rising. To stay competitive, organizations are taking inventory of their offerings and then reviewing them against employee sentiment analyses and industry best practices to create more robust programs. A holistic total rewards program enhances the employee experience, fosters a culture of well-being, supports DEI efforts, and builds organizational trust, all of which extends beyond employees and into the students they serve.

Deloitte's Rewards Optimization tool can help institutions identify the biggest drivers of influence when considering potential program changes. The tool allows HR leaders to leverage trade-offs to determine the most efficient ways to combine program features with workforce preferences and delivery costs. The tool can be tailored to client needs and the results can be aggregated in a variety of ways, including by worker type, age, pay band, or gender, which can be incisive when determining which programs best suit the needs of various employee segments.

Potential uses of the tool include:

- Generating cost savings by shedding underutilized or undervalued programs.
- Aligning rewards with changing talent needs/preferences.
- Addressing equity gaps between population segments.
- Designing a benefits package geared toward the retention of a certain population (e.g., working parents).
- Ensuring program affordability across a diverse workforce.
- Optimizing plan designs for health and welfare programs.
- Embedding well-being into your employee benefits.

Benefit programs touch on highly personal areas in workers' lives and can be subject to scrutiny by employees when changes are being considered. As institutions of higher education navigate this "new normal" of hybrid work and instruction with a large segment of their student and talent populations back on campus, they need to adopt more innovative approaches to the reward systems they use to retain top talent. What is being called the "Great Resignation" could instead be considered as an opportunity for a great realignment of talent management with rewards optimization.

6 Conduct Strategic, Data-driven Workforce Planning

Workforce planning is a key building block in reimagining an organization's Talent and Learning and Organizational Development (L&OD) experience. It takes into consideration all the focus areas of this playbook and coalesces them to deliver a toptier employee experience. This effort to realize workforce planning strategies must be led by HR in partnership with senior leaders across administrative and academic functions. To begin processing these strategies, leaders must look at the job architecture and functions that define an employee's day-to-day responsibilities and experiences. By combining these data points with a strategy that balances worker preference and student/faculty need, leaders will be able to better support – and grow – their workforce in a positive, sustainable manner.

One question plaguing HR organizations at universities around the globe is: how and where will our faculty and staff work in the future? To address this critical question, Deloitte has worked with clients to create individualized, 3-year strategic workforce planning roadmaps. The goal of undertaking these workforce planning sessions originated as a desire to understand the optimal workforce mix/skillset, codify it into a long-term strategy, and subsequently heighten a university's competitive advantage in the market. By embarking on a strategic workforce planning journey, HR and university leaders can look to gain the following:

Figure 6

- 1 An established Future of Work vision**
Articulate a vision for the future that highlights where, when, and how the department will work in the future to accomplish its strategic objectives.
- 2 A strategic workforce roadmap**
Develop a three-year strategic roadmap of prioritized talent initiatives that will support workforce optimization and strategies that support remote work.
- 3 A process and tools**
Learn a new process for planning that upends mental fixedness and unlocks new ways of thinking or new opportunities for creative analysis.
- 4 A deeper understanding of the Department's work and workforce**
Gain access to Department-specific data outlining possible future disruptions to work and workforce mix and determine employee preferences on remote work.

Workforce planning in higher education has never been more important. First, the HR organization must possess the infrastructure to enable and encourage agility, growth, and a positive talent experience across all schools and departments. Second, it must be able to translate these same elements of agility, growth, and positivity into the campus workforce at large. In doing so, HR leaders must cultivate a positive employee experience while also imposing realistic expectations of job requirements. Additional changes to technological capabilities and expectations around well-being, workplace diversity, and culture require significant modernization in HR. As the walls of the higher education workplace have expanded exponentially, institutions with national and global talent pools must, in turn, introduce untapped strength in innovation to the campus community.

"In many ways, through the pandemic and subsequent talent shortages, higher education is entering the contemporary world of workforce management, forced to be creative, innovative and nimble. Some will embrace this change and advance and others will suffer and get dragged along eventually."

— Bryan Garey, Vice President for Human Resources at Virginia Tech University

7 Deliver Supportive Compliance to the Workforce

A significant factor in strategic workforce planning and implementing hybrid and remote work options is the impact these shifts have on HR and compliance. HR must be a leader in this space, encouraging the entire institution to conduct topdown reviews of current and future talent strategies to develop workplace policies that meet the operational needs of their employees and their institutions. Such policies must consider risk and compliance while also continuing to attract, retain, and support the workforce in lockstep. As these dramatic changes can be complex and pervasive, institutions may find themselves seeking assistance to develop solutions that address the challenges of a post-pandemic, hybrid campus.

Deloitte's offerings in **Workforce Governance & Risk ("WGR")**, **Tax & Payroll Compliance** and **Institutional Compliance** areas can assist higher education institutions on their workforce journey by evaluating policies and strategies that consider the future requirements necessary to implement customized, compliant, and effective workforce policies.

1. Workforce Governance & Risk (WGR)

As universities assess their current policies and strategies to develop their work adaptations, there are several topic areas to consider:

- **Wage & Hour:** Understand any applicable minimum wage and overtime regulations that the university is now subject to in the remote-working environment.
- **Benefits & Compensation:** Evaluate whether the university should implement a geographic pay differential strategy. Additionally, universities should understand whether remote workers who may be spread across multiple locations will have the same level of access to healthcare coverage as onsite workers do.
- **Expense Reimbursements:** Determine whether the university has expense reimbursement obligations based on the employee's geographic footprint (i.g., various U.S. states have requirements related to reimbursing work-from-home expenses). Additionally, the university should determine

how it will handle any required travel to/from the primary place of business for meetings, events, etc.

- **Talent & Performance:** Determine how employee performance will be monitored from a remote environment and what guardrails managers will need to avoid proximity-bias and discrimination issues.

2. Tax & Payroll Compliance

COVID-19 gave many employees more flexibility in how they perform work as a response to the disruptions caused by the pandemic. Given the potentially hefty increase in the number of employees that choose to work in a hybrid and remote setting, employer tax departments must be aware of, and prepared to address a range of new taxes that the university might be exposed to, some of which may not recognize the institution's traditionally tax-exempt status:

- **State and Local Taxes:** Expansion of hybrid and remote workers will likely expose the employing entity to various state and local taxing regimes including employment taxes (as well as State Unemployment Insurance) and various other state and local taxes.
 - **Tax Exempt Status Implications (Unrelated Business Income Taxation):** Remote working employees may establish filing obligations in additional states which may impose taxation on unrelated business income and may potentially require other information for reporting requirements.
 - **COVID-19 Specific Guidance:** Some states have issued guidance regarding the impact of an increased remote workforce necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Such guidance is likely limited and temporary, however, and may not be reliable when setting long-term hybrid and remote work policy and strategy.
- Employer tax and payroll departments have a critical role to play in developing remote work policies and processes and in helping shape the geographic footprint and flexibility of the remote work program.
- **Shifting Tax Costs:** Potential change in effective payroll and unemployment tax rates as employees work in new states and jurisdictions.

"The challenges are multi-dimensional. A remote workforce is not something higher education or academic medicine organizations are used to managing. Most are not registered to work in multi-states. We are losing people to other institutions who are increasingly being more flexible with remote work strategies."

— Kyle Cavanaugh,
Vice President of Administration
at Duke University

- **Tax Risk Management:** State tax withholding thresholds need to be understood and monitored and the ability to track where employees are performing services is key to managing an organization's tax risk.
- **Tax Compliance Costs:** The cost of complying with the filing requirements of multiple new jurisdictions, even if overall tax liabilities do not increase.

3. Institutional Compliance

Institutional compliance encompasses policies and regulations across numerous audiences such as faculty, students, staff, and a variety of topics such as research and Title IX. Maintaining institutional compliance is a tremendous effort - from developing infrastructure and governance to upholding compliance and implementing required actions when necessary, it seems as though every individual on a higher education campus needs to be compliance-fluent. Higher education's evolution over the last decade has created the opportunity for improvement in the following key areas:

- **Single point of entry:** There is a broad spectrum of personas and activities at higher education institutions. Complaints come from a variety of audiences and into various intake channels. For complaints to be better captured and addressed, a single point of entry needs to be established. Therefore, no matter where or how the complaint is received, there is a governing body that can review and triage complaints and track them through to resolution. With these structures in place, individuals are more inclined to report and as a result, institutions will have stronger resolution of complaints related to Title IX, conflict of interest, and academic misconduct.

- **Specialty areas and governance:** Compliance must be woven into the fabric of the institution for it to be successful. It is imperative to develop an overarching governance structure to drive accountability and reporting while balancing the need to maintain pockets of deep expertise within specialty areas (e.g., student, research, information technology).

- **Mission-driven and culture:** Workforce compliance is a complex issue. Compliance functions have traditionally been surrounded by negative stigma. It is critical that an institution identifies measures that can incentivize reporting and maintain compliance standards to be proactive instead of reactive when issues inevitably arise. By setting compliance as an institutional goal and creating incentives for the workforce to uphold a compliant culture, the function changes from reactive and punishment-focused to a proactive promotion of cultural accountability that strengthens the university.

COVID-19 and its impacts have caused nearly everyone to adjust. There is no single solution that can be applied to all higher education institutions; a tailored compliance playbook, however, can increase success. This effort should be led by HR and done in partnership with a university's finance and general counsel's office.

8 Modernize and Streamline Technology

Higher education HR leadership is under pressure to reduce costs, maintain compliance, contend with an aging workforce, foster critical talent, and modernize Human Capital Management (HCM) systems and processes. While higher education HR leadership may be used to contending with challenges associated with creating efficiencies through automation and providing reliable human capital data, the challenges of today can look different than they have in the past. In the 21st century, where upgrades to the cloud and abandoning legacy mainframe systems are commonplace, it is helpful to take a step back and determine where an organization envisions its technological future before undertaking a technology modernization program. Below are three steps HR higher education leaders should consider before or during a large-scale HR application modernization implementation.



1. Employee Experience with HR

In this era of ever-changing policies, procedures, and benefits, the need for a positive employee experience in interactions with the HR department is more critical than ever. Employee value comes from the time spent doing the job for which the individual was hired, not the effort it requires to complete the administrative activities required to maintain employment. The average employee may interact with HR a handful of times throughout their tenure and each interaction may be regarding very different matters. Expecting employees to understand HR language, policies, or procedures is unrealistic; instead, HR departments must help employees navigate their needs in layman's terms. To help reduce administrative overhead associated with supporting employees, HR teams should introduce technical solutions to manage employee questions and issues; these solutions will likely yield significantly higher levels of operational efficiency as well as employee satisfaction. Examples of such technical solutions may include employee portals that allow employees to find information quickly and easily and/or provide employees with the ability to submit questions

that can be routed to the appropriate HR teams automatically, eliminating the burden from the employee of navigating the HR department for the proper point of contact. Additionally, these HR solutions can internally support HR teams in a variety of ways from managing workloads to automating processes through workflows to real time data reports that help track activities.

Providing only one HR solution may not cover the needs of all employees. It is necessary that HR is integrated with all other university administrative functions to adequately engage and solve for stakeholder frustrations across the board. Ultimately, intersection and collaboration of HR, finance, and IT is paramount to developing and implementing solutions that provide a positive employee experience while creating administrative efficiencies universally.



2. Business Process Redesign is Paramount

Many legacy HCM systems are loaded with intricate business processes that vary widely depending on function and user. There are often many reports that serve the same purpose, and the governance management of which employees have access to what information can be untenable. During HCM implementations, many HR and implementation teams will embark on mapping out the institution's current state business process only to get pushback from users and stakeholders portending that "that's not how we do things here."

Instead, HR leadership should take a step back and strategize first on how to simplify and streamline business processes with new technology. How can making simple changes to policy and procedure create a seamless user experience for both the HR staff member and the end user? Ultimately, technology is an enabler. Absent of strategic leadership, transparent and accountable governance, redesigned operating models, and phased roadmaps, HR leadership and higher education institutions may fail to see a return on the investment



3. Build Tools for Easy and Secure Data Access

Increasingly, HR leadership is being asked to provide real-time data around their university's workforce. From hybrid and remote work locations to division demographics and more, easy-to-access, accurate data has never been more important to higher education leaders. To conduct the job architecture analysis mentioned earlier in the Talent and L&OD and Workforce Planning sections of this playbook, HR leadership must first have strong data management governance, easy access, and easy-to-read reports. By embedding these principles into a HCM implementation or upgrade, HR leaders can gain more respect from their academic and administrative peers who seek access to data to make these quick, informed decisions.

Conclusion

People are a university's greatest asset. As the world experiences many shifts in the gradual emergence from a global pandemic, confronts enormous advances in technology, and engages with a unique talent market, the role of HR in a university setting is more crucial than ever.

These worldly circumstances put HR departments squarely in the driver seat to transform the higher education ecosystem for the future. HR teams need to bring attention, dedication, and significant investment to create and foster a human capital strategy that meets the needs of its individuals. Every higher education institution is unique in how it operates, in its mission and values, in its process of returning to campus, and in handling the effects of the "Great Resignation". As we think about the areas mentioned in this playbook, there are five final, employee-centric, key themes that we believe are at the core of the future of higher education institutions:

1

HR needs a seat at the leadership table

Advancing the way the university manages and retains its employees will only progress if HR has the necessary influence and authority across campus.

2

HR is a strategic partner

The strategy of HR should align to and support the mission and values of the university.

3

Employee experience is mission critical

Employees interact with HR teams when they have a need, often in moments of crisis. If HR fails to serve the employees of the institution with adequate attention and investment, retention and engagement will likely suffer.

4

Employees require flexibility

The pandemic opened our eyes to the possibilities of work flexibility, something that has rarely been a consideration in higher education before. It is increasingly being shown that flexibility of workplace and workforce can be achieved without damaging institutional culture and cohesion. Strategies in support of this focus on flexibility must be driven by HR to build on the benefits that have already been realized.

5

Employees need engagement

Meeting employees where they are and celebrating differences are essential in today's world. HR must design approaches to build and maintain a culture of engagement, diversity, and inclusion that will enhance the mission of the university.

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Endnotes

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