



Executive Summary

OUR UC STORY: Impacts of 2020 and Recommendations to Advance UC Leadership in Supporting the Success and Well-Being of 21st Century Staff

2020 UC-Coro Systemwide Leadership Collaborative
- Southern Cohort

This executive summary is brought to you by the 2020 UC-Coro Systemwide Leadership Collaborative - Southern Cohort.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Confidently looking forward to enhancing leadership skills, fostering relationships and networking with colleagues across the system, the 2020 UC-CORO Leadership Collaborative Southern California Cohort held its first in-person meeting on January 16, 2020. Then in March, the team met virtually for the first time one week prior to the declaration of a global pandemic. When the team gathered again virtually in late August in the midst of the multiple crises of the COVID-19 pandemic; social unrest resulting from systemic racism; and the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, we were determined to develop a capstone project addressing the University's immediate need to examine its programs in support of staff when the situation is critical, the environment is uncertain, and the information is imperfect.

Project Scope and Core Questions

Unlike prior capstone projects, the team had no executive sponsor since developing and implementing the University's COVID-19 response was all-consuming. Staff experiences with COVID-19; social unrest resulting from systemic racism; and financial uncertainty vary widely and include differential impacts on women, people of color, essential employees, people with disabilities, and many others. Some of these disproportionate impacts are connected to longstanding issues in the University of California that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. During the course of preparing this report, the team was called upon to navigate our own experiences while simultaneously developing and implementing the University's programs and policies in response to these crises. This collaborative project describes the impacts of the crises on the UC staff, and makes recommendations for creating a more engaging, equitable and inclusive work environment for staff. This report identifies gaps and best practices in engaging and supporting staff during these crises and provides focused recommendations to UC senior leaders in response to two core questions:

1. What have been the impacts on the University of California staff members resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing economic crisis and social unrest in response to systemic racism?
2. What can the University of California do to identify, measure, and respond to the disparate impacts of multiple crises on staff, perform as an exemplary leader in higher education to support the needs and well-being of 21st-century employees, and maximize its beneficial effect on the environment and society?

Methodology

The team formed three workgroups to conduct comparative research. The workgroups reviewed and analyzed publicly available and accessible information to identify best practice

programs in support of staff that were quickly implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic by:

1. Industry (including leading technology-focused companies, health care corporations and not-for-profit organizations)
2. Comparable Higher Education Institutions
3. University of California campuses and health systems

After investigating these three sectors, the team obtained quantitative and qualitative data through three different methods:

1. The cohort reviewed University of California staff survey data to learn how staff evaluated the current University programs and practices.
2. The team performed a gap analysis to identify where University of California responses to the concurrent crises differed amongst one another; it also compared the University of California responses with those in private industry and peer higher education institutions to highlight exemplary University of California practices and pinpoint best practices that could be incorporated by UC.
3. Finally, the team interviewed a selection of 30 staff from UC's southern campuses to obtain and consider experiential feedback that could directly inform our evaluation of current practices and recommendations for desired future state practices in support of staff.

Recommendations

Our analysis explored staff experiences with respect to wellness and mental health; social and racial injustice; dependent care; returning to site; the financial crisis and assistance to staff; and communication and outreach to staff across the 20 University of California locations.

Recommendations are provided throughout this report with three key initiatives as follows:

Develop a systemwide staff engagement process and an accessible and consistent communication strategy

The University of California should establish digital communication and collaboration channels for staff and regularly disseminate campus-specific communications best practices throughout the UC system. All campuses and health systems should regularly deploy a standardized staff survey to solicit staff feedback by leveraging informal digital communication channels popular among employees to make it easy for them to ask questions and raise concerns.

Create and develop programs and structures that support UC telework and work-life balance

As we imagine work post-COVID-19, the University of California should support healthy work-life integration by institutionalizing important elements in supporting a remote workforce, which includes providing the technology, tech-support and equipment needed to be productive away from the campus work site. To achieve work-life balance, the University of California should provide wellness and mental health services for staff and their families in general and when the need arises.

Establish and strengthen structures and leadership that advance institutional equity, diversity and inclusion

To effectively address structural racism and inequality, the University of California must commit to providing sufficient funds to place Diversity, Equity and Inclusion faculty/staff/ student advisors at the campus level, administrative level and the department level. The University should expand systemwide training and research programs to dismantle systemic racism. Administrative units and departments must commit to improve faculty/staff/student diversity during recruitment and hiring as well as advocating for social justice for staff. The University of California should reinforce campus commitments in partnering with the local communities to address racism as a public health issue.

Leading through challenging times requires a willingness to act decisively and courage to recognize that unprecedented crises demand unprecedented actions. During the COVID-19 pandemic and concurrent crises staff have boldly demonstrated resiliency, flexibility and an impassioned commitment to mission. The University of California has a leadership opportunity to capitalize on staff engagement to fully harness their ingenuity, creativity and dedication. The 21st century workforce is diverse, with each member possessing different needs at different times of their lives and career with UC. No longer will one institutional solution work for every employee. Through reimagining the workforce and strategically allocating resources, the University can leverage these assets to emerge as an even stronger institution.
