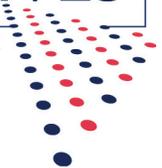


2007/2008 SERIES: ENABLING CAMPUS GROWTH & OPTIMIZATION

# Attracting and Retaining Faculty and Staff

**PRESIDENTIAL  
PERSPECTIVES**

a higher education presidential essay series





# ATTRACTING AND RETAINING FACULTY AND STAFF

BRAD L. JANIS, PRESIDENT AT THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHARLOTTE

**A**ttracting and retaining well-qualified faculty and staff should be of the highest priority for colleges and universities. Keeping employees satisfied with their jobs is the right thing to do, contributes significantly toward improving student retention, and is a cost-effective way to conduct business.

One of the best ways to ensure faculty and staff retention is to improve the professionalism, education, and training of its faculty and staff through the creation of sound policies and assurance that those policies are practiced.

Colleges and universities must believe strongly in their mission to:

- Deliver learner-centered instruction by faculty who exhibit excellence in teaching, possess appropriate academic credentials, and have industry-related experience.
- Champion a culture of learning by continuous personal and professional development of students, alumni, and employees.
- Cultivate partnerships to meet the needs of students and employees.

Those of us in higher education are unique, having responded to a higher calling. Other businesses are often bottom-line driven, seeking to be the best in their fields or interested in being the first to deliver a new product to the market. In proprietary education, we believe that if we follow our mission to deliver learner-focused education to our students, the bottom line will take care of itself.

At The Art Institute, our philosophy is to hire industry professionals with the necessary academic credentials to teach in the classroom. In nearly every interview when salary enters the discussion, the applicant's response is the same: "I'm entering education for reasons other than compensation." In the countless discussions I have held during my tenure at three institutions during the past 13 years, this theme has held true. Qualified faculty and staff seek employment for reasons beyond compensation. The job of a college

*"The job of a college president and his or her administration is to remind faculty and staff of their higher calling and to keep them focused. This one concept more than any other drives faculty and staff to get out of bed in the morning and come to work."*

## PRESIDENTIAL PERSPECTIVES

president and his or her administration is to remind faculty and staff of their higher calling and to keep them focused. This one concept more than any other drives faculty and staff to get out of bed in the morning and come to work. Offering frequent reminders to our faculty and staff about why we have made this commitment to higher education assists with their retention.

When conducting a final interview with a candidate, I often ask what the applicant feels he or she will be able to accomplish for the organization. Once hired, and when the appropriate time has passed, reminding employees of what they said they would do is a powerful tool when considering faculty and staff retention.

During performance management, reminding employees they are held accountable for their commitment carries more weight than disciplining them for not meeting the expectations of key elements listed in a job description. By reminding employees of why they came to you, even during difficult performance management situations, makes the request for a behavior change more palatable because the objective came from them in the first place. Obviously, it is easier to hold employees accountable for their own philosophy than to hold them accountable for yours.

To enhance the work experience and improve the retention rate of employees, a college should also:

- Encourage its employees to apply for promotions. Faculty and personal development plans should be common practice and reviewed biannually to assess progress towards pre-stated goals. Department heads should announce vacancies in each department and post them in common areas.

- Encourage staff and faculty to participate in continuing education and provide tuition reimbursement programs annually. Colleges should require in-house training and educational programs as ongoing development opportunities and should consider adding professional development requirements as a part of the annual review process.

Colleges strive to provide the optimum environment for the learning, growth, and success of all students through quality in faculty performance, among other goals. Quality performance does not happen spontaneously; rather, a culture of learning is created and retention of high-quality performers is increased by continuous personal and professional development.

Examples include:

- Providing faculty members with assistance by creating individual faculty development plans for learning and growth in both their professional skills and their curriculum and instruction skills.
- Assessing faculty development needs through reviews of individual faculty development plans, student evaluation results, and a faculty survey of perceived needs.
- Holding regular faculty in-service training to evaluate the past term and prepare for the upcoming term. This is an opportunity for faculty to expand their skills and expertise in a variety of areas, ranging from personality types and learning styles to the relevance and utilization of course syllabi. In addition, training on library use; computer software programs for college instruction, grading, and preparation; and other workshops based on expressed faculty needs should be offered. Whenever possible, use a train-the-trainer model to tap into the expertise of existing faculty.
- Forming faculty roundtable discussion groups that meet regularly as an informal opportunity for discussion, questions, and sharing of best practices. They meetings give the faculty an opportunity to speak frankly about their concerns in areas of classroom management, classroom and school policies, and other topics.

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- Offering online faculty development courses and ancillary materials to encourage and refine course development.
- Charging a faculty development coordinator with responsibility for designing, building, and directing the faculty development program. Among the responsibilities could be:
  - Assessing needs.
  - Planning and implementing opportunities.
  - Directing new faculty orientation and follow-up orientation.
  - Directing the creation, revision, and implementation of faculty development plans.
  - Reviewing course surveys and partnering with faculty to create plans for improvement.
  - Ensuring that faculty participate in appropriate meetings, training sessions, and school functions.
- Providing faculty mentoring partnerships as an additional means of communication and support, and assigning new faculty mentors from among existing faculty members. In this manner, new faculty get to know their colleagues, giving them a constant source to consult for information and expertise. It also creates a more relaxed work environment.
- Providing opportunities for faculty to participate in travel grants and sabbaticals. Faculty should be afforded the opportunity to expand their research and course preparation beyond the walls of the campus. Opportunities for travel abroad should be afforded to those willing to do so as a means of retooling and recharging their passion for teaching. Allowing faculty to write coursework specific to the travel experience and encouraging them to share the experience with other faculty through department meetings and similar faculty forums will bring further benefit.
- Affording faculty and front-line staff the opportunity to formulate policy and present the policy to administration. Faculty development is a prime example of policy making. Often, accrediting bodies do not specify the frequency of developmental activities for faculty; however, they do specify the type of developmental activity. Therefore,

universities and colleges would be wise to form a faculty development committee with a primary focus of driving the development process. Suggested components for a basic development plan might include:

- Individual development
- In-service development
- Community service development

Similarly, staff could be afforded the opportunity to participate in a process improvement committee or institutional effectiveness committee. Again, most accrediting bodies stipulate that regular institutional improvement processes be a part of every healthy campus, and the institutional effectiveness committee fulfills that requirement while allowing buy-in through policy formulation by all levels of the institution.

Once the policy is formed, it is important to share it with new faculty and staff, and promote it among existing employees. The importance of sharing these expectations cannot be overstated. Our employees are busy people, and letting them know up front the expectations of the position they hold is an important part of the retention of quality faculty and staff.

One final topic worth highlighting is that of succession planning for faculty and staff. Higher education in the United States is a growth industry. With that growth comes opportunity for our employees. Succession planning will fuel that growth and help retain quality employees.

Having experienced four promotions in the first five years of my career with The Art Institute, I can tell you that succession planning is important. Knowing that my manager was always pushing me to succeed and looking for opportunities for me were vital parts of my success, as well as others I know. Employees want to know that the possibility of their upward mobility exists.

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By creating a solid succession planning model and promoting it within your organization, you accomplish two things. First, you secure a winning future for the school by learning the strengths and weaknesses of employees, then setting them on a plan for success. Second, you gain valuable buy-in from employees who are interested in moving up by recognizing their contributions and strengths as desirable.

The well-designed succession planning model illustrates that management is monitoring current performance and is looking for future stars. Morale is raised and retention increased because administration demonstrates its active interest not only in what employees are doing now, but also in their future aspirations.

Faculty and staff retention requires a college to focus on the individual's needs as a contributor to the mission of the school. It requires asking faculty and staff frequently what they will do for the organization, then holding them accountable to do so. It also creates many opportunities for employees to provide input on matters of policy and procedure.

If colleges are to succeed in employee retention, they must work continuously through their policies and practices, and they must expect their employees to do the same.



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