University of Houston 2012 Staff Morale Survey: Summary Report

University of Houston Staff Council Staff Affairs Subcommittee

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In the summer of 2012, the UH Staff Council commissioned a follow-up to the 2011 Staff Morale Survey for Fall 2012 with the following objectives:

1. Examine staff attitudes regarding their jobs and UH.
2. Identify aspects of the work environment that drive staff attitudes.
3. Examine potential consequences of staff attitudes.

Based on the results of the 2011 Survey and staff feedback, several changes were made to the 2012 Survey.

- Demographic questions were eliminated to better ensure staff anonymity.
- The survey length was reduced by 42%.
- New items were added to gather more detailed information about two issues that staff identified as important in the 2011 Survey:
  - Communication quality
  - Staff perceptions of fairness

1,169 staff attempted the online survey, and 932 completed the entire online survey. 63 staff completed a paper version of the survey.

Results of the 2012 Survey are presented in the following slides, and where appropriate, displayed alongside the 2011 Survey results for comparison.
As in the 2011 survey, staff attitudes **about their jobs and UH in general** were positive.
Staff Attitudes

- However, staff satisfaction with **specific aspects of their jobs** was less positive.
Work Conditions: Fairness

- Staff rated the perceived fairness of various aspects of their work experience.
- Results indicate that fairness perceptions were lowest when they concerned the distribution of rewards (e.g., pay & promotions).
Work Conditions: Communication Quality

- Staff also rated the quality of communication received from 4 sources in terms of its timeliness, accuracy, and usefulness.
- Ratings of communication quality were lowest when considering the timeliness of information received from each source.

![Bar chart showing communication quality ratings for different sources](chart.png)
Staff Attitudes – Why are They Important?

- Staff attitudes are important because they are related to important performance-related outcomes that impact UH’s success.

- Specifically, staff who are satisfied with their pay and promotion opportunities AND staff who believe that rewards and procedures are administered fairly:
  - Are more engaged in their work.
  - Take fewer sick days.
  - Are less likely to turn over.

- Staff attitudes were lowest and thus of greatest concern with regard to satisfaction with pay and promotions, as well as perceptions of reward fairness.

- Therefore, additional analyses were conducted to identify the most important drivers of those attitudes.
Our results indicate that staff perceptions of reward fairness, and hence pay satisfaction, are primarily a function of:

- Staff perceptions that their Division values their contribution and cares about their well-being.
- Supervisors’ use of procedures that are applied consistently, based on accurate information, and allow for staff input or voice.
- Supervisors being candid, thorough, and reasonable in communicating decisions to employees.
Identifying Drivers of Staff Attitudes

- Similar drivers were identified for staff promotion satisfaction. Specifically, staff satisfaction with promotion opportunities appears to be driven primarily by:
  - Staff perceptions that their Division values their contribution and cares about their well-being.
  - Receipt of timely, useful, and accurate information from Upper Administration.
  - Supervisors being candid, thorough, and reasonable in communicating decisions to employees.
Staff Attitudes by Job Category

• The attitudes of staff working in different job categories were examined separately in order to determine if there were specific morale concerns shared among staff working in different roles.

• Unlike in 2011, staff attitudes towards various aspects of their jobs did not differ greatly across job categories.

• Notably, overall attitudes of staff working in Technical & Service Craft positions appear to have improved from 2011.

• The only difference found between staff in different job categories concerned the frequency that staff experience obstacles to performance (see next slide).
Frequency of Experienced Obstacles to Performance

- Staff working in Business Administrator roles found it difficult to perform their jobs due to obstacles more frequently than staff in other positions.
- The frequency of obstacles for Business Administrators was also higher in 2012 compared to 2011, whereas it was less for staff in Technical & Service Craft.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Administrator</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin/Clerical</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical &amp; Service Craft</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- Blue: 2011
- Red: 2012

Frequency of obstacles:
- Several times a day
- 1-2x a day
- 1-2x a week
- < 1x a month
- or never
Results Summary

• In general, UH staff are a highly engaged workforce who enjoy their jobs, but are less satisfied with pay, promotion opportunities, and perceptions of fairness at UH.

• These attitudes are important because they are related to important performance-related outcomes including engagement, absenteeism, and turnover intentions.

• In particular, low staff satisfaction with pay and promotions appears to be driven primarily by:
  – The level of support and quality of communication received from upper administration.
  – The use of fair procedures and communication strategies by supervisors.
Recommendations

• Together, these results suggest that the primary issue regarding staff morale is one of feeling underappreciated.

• The primary mechanisms through which the University demonstrates appreciation (i.e., pay and promotions) are frequently constrained by forces largely outside the control of supervisors and upper administration.

• Thus, we suggest that supervisors and upper administration focus on factors that are within their control, namely the quality and nature of communication to staff.
Recommendations for Upper Administration

- Communicate important information that affects staff to them in a clear and timely manner.

- Be open and candid in all communications with staff, particularly with information that pertains to merit raises and promotion opportunities.

- Have a “conversation” with staff regarding what role they play in helping UH solidify its status as a Tier 1 research university and how staff can become a bigger part of that effort (e.g., “Tier 1 Staff”).
Recommendations for Supervisors (all levels)

• Be open and candid in all communications with staff, particularly with information that pertains to merit raises and promotion opportunities.

• Performance expectations should be communicated to staff in clear, unambiguous terms.

• Procedures and standards for pay and promotion decisions should be explained thoroughly and in clear, unambiguous terms.

• Provide staff with accurate performance feedback year-round so that they know where they stand.
Recommendations for Supervisors (all levels)

- Demonstrate concern for staff well-being and appreciation for their contributions to the University community by:
  - Providing support for and nominating staff for the Staff Excellence Awards
  - Using the Cougar Cudos program
  - Providing verbal praise or saying “thank you”
  - Developing your own informal rewards system (e.g., Staff of the Month)
  - Acknowledging the obstacles that staff face in their jobs, and when possible take action to remove obstacles and provide assistance and other resources (equipment, tools) needed by staff.