

# Ohio University Modern Think 2014 Great Colleges Survey

## Campus Climate Task Force Report

### INTRODUCTION

The Ohio University Campus Climate Task Force committee is pleased to present the results of Ohio University's *Modern Think 2014 Great Colleges Survey*. The online survey administered from March 3, 2014 through April 14, 2014 is Ohio University's first institution-wide and nationally-benchmarked survey of work climate as perceived by full-time employees. The survey was undertaken to identify areas of climate where we should focus our attention, considering values important to Ohio University as well as comparison to results from nearly 300 other academic institutions that participated in the *Modern Think 2014 Great Colleges Survey*. A Benefit Satisfaction survey was taken in conjunction with the Great Colleges survey. At the time of this report, Ohio University's results from the *2014 Great Colleges Survey* are available on the web through Ohio University's Office of Institutional Research, <http://www.ohio.edu/institres/climate/index.html>. The Task Force reviewed the results in-depth, and a brief overview of the results as well as some guidelines for interpreting the results are presented in this report. However, the focus of this report is on Recommendations for Action.

### ABOUT THE SPONSORS

Ohio University's participation in the *Modern Think* survey was a collaborative effort of the leadership of the Faculty, Classified and Administrative Senates and of Executive Vice President and Provost, Dr. Pamela Benoit.

### ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

All full time employees were invited to participate in the survey. The overall response rate was 54%, which represents 1984 out of 3674 potential participants. Figure 1, below, provides information about the employees who participated categorized by broad job classification.

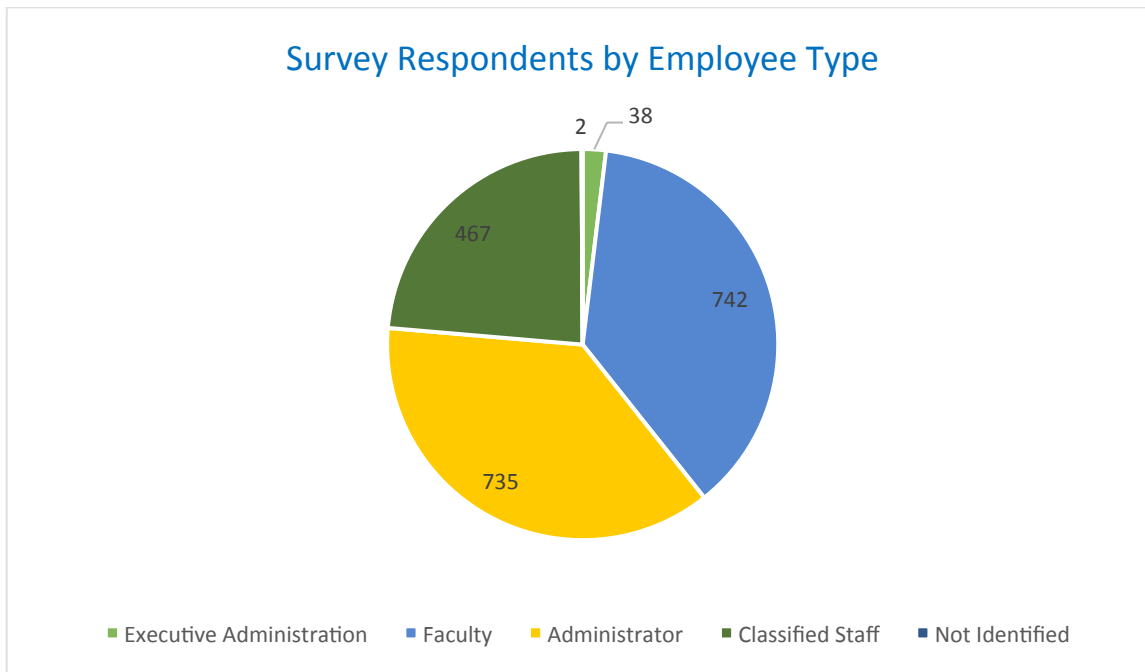
"Executive Administration" includes Deans, Associate and Assistant Vice Presidents, Associate and Assistant Vice Provosts and those to whom they report. The overall executive response rate was 86.4%.

"Classified Staff" includes both Bargaining Unit and Non-Bargaining Unit Employees. The combined response rate for this group was 43.9%. The Classified Non-Bargaining Unit employee response rate was 63%, however, the response rate for Classified Bargaining Unit employees was only 23.5%.

"Administrator" includes a broad range of job functions at Ohio University. They overall response rate for this category of employee was 55.4%. About 30 % of respondents in the Administrator category identified themselves as Director, Associate / Assistant Director, or Associate / Assistant Dean. About 15

% identified themselves as Analyst, Advisor, Counselor, or Specialist. About 15 % identified themselves as Manager; in some cases this may imply primarily an employee management role, while in others it may imply management of records or accounts. About 25 % were grouped as “Professionals” (Researcher / Librarian / Nurse / Administrative). Information about the number of full-time Ohio University employees in these self-identified subcategories is not readily available.

The response rate for “Faculty” overall was about 60 %. About 75 % of Faculty respondents were Group I (tenured and tenure-track), and about 25 % were Group II, continuing Group IV, or Clinical faculty. These correspond to the proportions of Group I, II, and IV faculty at Ohio University in 2014. *Modern Think* also reported data for Group I faculty in sub-categories Department Chair / School Director, Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor.



**Figure 1. Survey Respondents by Employee Type, as Reported by *Modern Think***

Respondents were categorized in a variety of ways for data analysis. To protect the identity of individual employees, *Modern Think* reported only aggregate data when there were a small number of respondents in a category, and provided no data for cross-referenced categories such as “Department Chairs / School Directors who are also female”. In most cases, when employees are categorized in different ways, the proportions of respondents reflect the proportions among Ohio University employees overall. For example, Regional Campus employees represent about 10 % of survey respondents and about 10 % of Ohio University employees.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ohio University participated in the Modern Think 2014 Great Colleges Survey through a collaborative effort of the leadership of the Faculty, Classified and Administrative Senates and the Executive Vice President and Provost, Dr. Pam Benoit. This was the first institution-wide and nationally-benchmarked survey of work climate Ohio University had participated in. The survey was conducted during the spring of 2014 to identify areas of climate where attention should be focused. All full time employees were invited to participate and an overall response rate of 54% representing 1984 out of 3674 potential participants was achieved. Survey respondents fell into one of the four broad job categories, Executive Administration, Classified Staff, Administrative and Faculty. The Executive administration category was comprised of Deans, Associate and Assistant Vice Presidents, Associate and Assistant Vice Provosts and those to whom they report. This group represented 2% of the total respondents. Classified Staff employees comprised 23.5% of the overall respondents. This group is comprised of Classified Non-Bargaining as well as Classified Bargaining employees. The Administrative category contains a broad range of jobs and represents 37% of the respondents. Employees in this group identify themselves as Directors, Associate/Assistant Directors or Associate/Assistant Deans, Analyst, Advisor, Counselor, Specialists, Managers, Researchers, Librarians or Nurses. Faculty encompassed 37.4% of the responses. The Faculty job category respondents were Group 1 (tenured and tenure-track) and Group II, continuing Group IV or Clinical Faculty.

In the fall of 2014, Ohio University Executive Vice President and Provost Pam Benoit established the Campus Climate Task Force to evaluate information resulting from the Modern Think 2014 Great Colleges Survey to formulate actionable recommendations. Dr. Valerie Young the Chair of the Department of Chemical and Bio molecular Engineering in the Russ College of Engineering and Technology and Chief Human Resource Officer Colleen Bendl Co-Chaired the Task Force. Other members of the Task Force included representatives from a range of job classifications, units, years of service at Ohio University and other categories.

The Task Force members reviewed the survey results with a Modern Think representative to gain an understanding of the overarching themes. There were 15 core dimensions contained within the survey which upon review revealed several areas where employees as a whole reported favorable results as well as areas of widespread concern. Core areas where employees reported favorably were having a strong sense of pride and understand how their positions contribute to the overall mission and success of the institution. They have a positive relationship with their supervisors and feel empowered to perform their jobs in an independent and autonomous way. Supervisors are supportive of and understand the need for work life balance. The responses also indicate employees feel diversity and inclusion are embraced as university values. Areas of widespread concern were also identified. One overarching noteworthy area was resource constraints. Many employees don't feel they are provided with the resources needed such as access to adequate facilities or technology to be effective in their jobs or that their areas have adequate faculty or staff to achieve their goals. Performance management is another key area for improvement noted in the survey. There is a sense that low performance is not adequately dealt with and the university's policies and practices may not be effective in ensuring fair treatment for faculty, administration and staff. Other themes requiring attention were communication & collaboration, respect & appreciation, shared governance and senior leadership. Using the overarching themes as a starting point and guided by their principles to act as a community guided by collaboration and respect to establish a culture of continuous improvement and to create a positive

workplace that will foster a climate that attracts, retains and develops all employees, the Task Force established four subcommittees and began an in depth analysis of the data. Goals were established to communicate openly and regularly through a variety of vehicles and to seek further information and input from the university community to enhance our understanding of the campus climate to guide any recommendations and to have a strong orientation towards action.

The recommendations of the Task Force focused on four key areas including the University-wide internal communications structure, professional development and department leadership, senior leadership/strategic direction and work environment and work life balance. The recommendations within these areas are broken down into three different categories correlating with timeframe for implementation and the likeliness they will positively impact the culture. Recommendations noted as High Potential could be tackled within a few months. Recommendations noted as Ongoing are currently underway. Recommendations identified as Consider may require more deliberation to better define an effective approach to assess whether the likely impact will be substantially positive.

The task force found three potential roadblocks to effective university wide internal communication. There is a perception that communication in general may miss the intended audience and may at times seem to lack continuity or follow up. There is a general sense that communication from senior leadership can come across as being framed to employees; however, for communications to be effective, there needs to be engagement and reciprocity by all parties. Employees should read and respond to communications provided, especially via COMPASS, and engage in the process.

Recommendations at a high level include the following:

- (High Potential) Increase employee recognition and use of the university-wide internal newsletter
- (High Potential) Rebuild the Faculty/Staff front page with an audience focus
- (Consider) Investigate the effectiveness of internal communications in reaching the intended audience
- (Ongoing) Units that offer internal services should continue to improve their avenues for receiving lateral communication
- (Ongoing) Continue to support the Alert!OHIO system
- (Ongoing) Continue to communicate for targeted and selected purposes via media other than e-mail
- (Consider) Consider how the online directory could be improved

Recommendations in the professional development and department leadership section discuss how employees develop in their job roles and receive feedback on their performance. Employees generally have trust in and maintain a positive relationship with their direct supervisor except in the area of performance management but would like to see improvements in how they are oriented and trained for current and potential future roles. Enhanced training and professional development of employees should address concerns that units do not have sufficient staffing to meet their workload as additional tools and training should increase the overall efficiency for employees. Recommendations at a high level include the following:

- (High Potential) Improve the orientation process for employees new to Ohio University and for employees changing jobs within the university

- (High Potential) Human Resources should work with units to improve annual employee evaluations so that they can be used to inform compensation and employment decisions
- (Continue) ongoing initiatives to ensure that pay for Ohio University employees is competitive with national benchmarks and equitable internally
- [Ongoing] Continue the HR Liaison program
- [Ongoing] Continue to identify and publicize opportunities for leadership, management, and supervisory training
- [Consider] Consider linking all training opportunities to a single Ohio University Employees' Professional Development website

Recommendations related to senior leadership and strategic direction are straightforward and focus on the areas of shared governance, the overall strategy and vision for OHIO's educational mission and a commitment to transparent, effective two way communications between senior leadership and employees to engender trust. There is recognition that a natural tension may exist in these areas between employees and senior leadership, especially during times of change. To mitigate this natural tension, efforts should be made by both employees and senior leadership to ensure communications are respectful and transparent and that all read and respond to communications and engage in the interactive process. Reciprocity is essential for meaningful change in this area. Recommendations at a high level include the following:

- (High Potential) Senior leadership should continue to communicate a consistent vision of how Ohio University furthers its education mission in this time of change. They should also continue to communicate in connection to a broadly recognized and frequently reinforced strategic plan
- (High Potential) Undertake a review of the web presence on strategic initiatives and update the pages to reflect progress and current status
- (Ongoing) Senior leadership and the Senates should clarify the pathways for shared governance to impact decision-making
- [High Potential] Senior leadership and the Senates should define a process to continue monitoring campus climate.
- (Ongoing) Senior leaders should continue to find avenues to interact directly with employees
- (Ongoing) Continue initiatives to ensure that pay for Ohio University employees is competitive with national benchmarks and equitable internally

(Recommendations regarding work environment and work life balance center primarily on benefits that are highly valued and motivate employees to perform and feel valued as well as enhancing existing or creating new recognition programs promoting employee engagement and satisfaction.

Recommendations at a high level include the following:

- (Ongoing) Evaluate the impact of the Sick Leave Donation Pilot and Paid Parental Leave Pilot
- (Ongoing) Continue to provide high quality benefits for employees and immediate family
- (Ongoing) Continue Healthy OHIO program

- (Consider) Consider implementing a “sabbatical” program for non-faculty to enable career development
- (Consider) Consider a recognition program to encourage groups to undertake community service projects to foster community engagement, collaboration and team spirit

The task force has completed its review of the Modern Think survey results and made several recommendations as a result of this review. The task force is recommending the formation of three new committees to focus on reviewing these recommendations and determining how to implement the suggestions giving priority to items denoted as “high potential” with a goal of making these changes within the next three months. The three new committees formed will focus on Professional Development, University Wide Internal Communications and Senior Leadership and Strategic Direction.

## THE CAMPUS CLIMATE TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Ohio University Executive Vice President and Provost Pam Benoit established the Campus Climate Task Force in fall 2014 to evaluate information resulting from the *Modern Think 2014 Great Colleges Survey* and formulate actionable recommendations. The Task Force worked through summer 2015. By design, the Campus Climate Task Force included representatives from a range of job classifications, units, years of service at Ohio University, and other categories. Co-chairs were Chair of the Department of Chemical and Bio molecular Engineering in the Russ College of Engineering and Technology, Dr. Valerie Young, and Chief Human Resources Officer Colleen Bendl. Other members of the Task Force included:

- Cynthia Anderson, Associate Professor, Sociology and Anthropology
- Inya Baiye, Director of Equity and Civil Rights Compliance
- Bonnie Behm-Geddes, Administrative Specialist, Engineering Technology and Management
- Christine Bhat, Associate Professor, Counseling and Higher Education
- Joshua Bodnar, Director of Access, Transaction, and Video Services
- Candace Boeninger, Assistant Vice Provost and Director of Undergraduate Admissions
- Dianne Bouvier, Director of Equal Opportunity and Accessibility
- Quiping Cao, Associate Professor, Early Childhood Education
- Shari Clarke, Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion
- Howard Dewald, Associate Provost for Faculty and Academic Planning
- Haley Haugen, Associate Professor, English
- Joseph Lalley, Senior Associate Vice President of Technologies & Administrative Services
- Maryann Lape, Administrative Specialist, Continuing Education - Lancaster
- Renee Mascari, Business Intelligence Analyst
- Laura Myers, Chief of Staff, Provost Office
- Elizabeth Sayrs, Dean of University College and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
- Beth Quitslund, Associate Professor, English, Chair Faculty Senate
- Jamie Patton, Assistant Dean of Students
- Gwyn Scott, Associate Vice President for Auxiliaries
- James Shonborn, Groundskeeper, Grounds Maintenance
- Cathleen Waller, Administrator, Child Development Center, Chair, Administrative Senate

## MODERN THINK SURVEY DATA RESULTS

*Modern Think* representative Richard Boyer came to campus on December 9<sup>th</sup> to review the survey data with the task force. Mr. Boyer presented the overarching themes and scoring guidelines for the survey. He also provided some context in terms of trends observed in large academic institutions as a group, and trends often seen when institutions initially conduct a survey of this type and when they continue to monitor campus climate over time. There were 15 core dimensions contained within the survey:

- Job satisfaction/support
- Teaching environment
- Professional development
- Compensation, benefits & work/life balance
- Facilities
- Policies, resources & efficiency
- Shared governance
- Pride
- Supervisors/department chairs
- Senior Leadership
- Faculty, administration and staff relations
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Fairness
- Respect & appreciation

The charts below depict Ohio University's response to these core dimension statements. Since scoring of the results is a bit counter intuitive to normal grading, the guidelines are provided here to aid in the interpretation of the results.

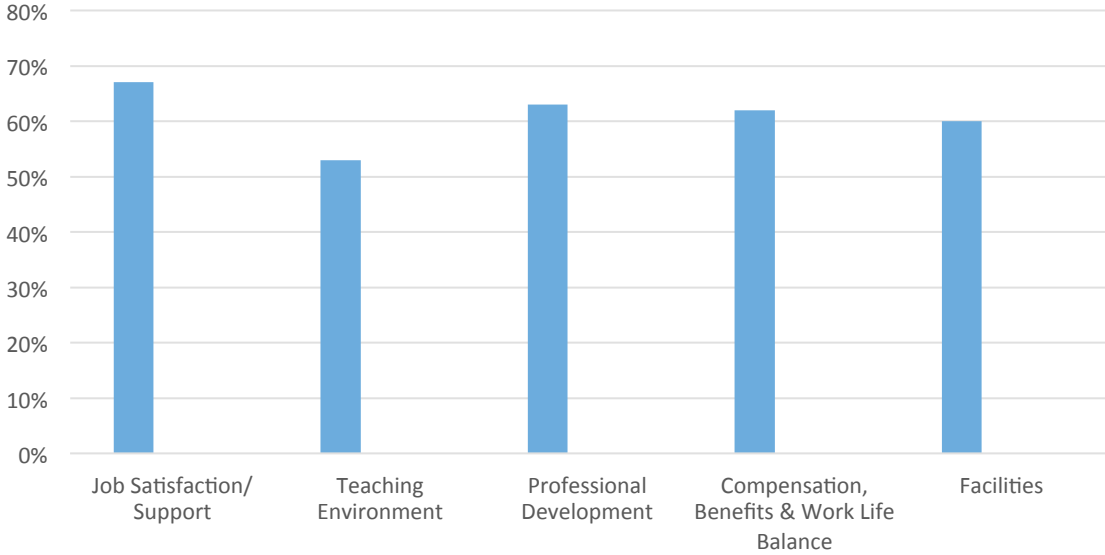
### Guidelines for Positive Responses:

75%+	Exceptional
65% - 74%	Good – Very Good
55% - 64%	Fair
45% - 54%	Yellow Flag
<45%	Red flag

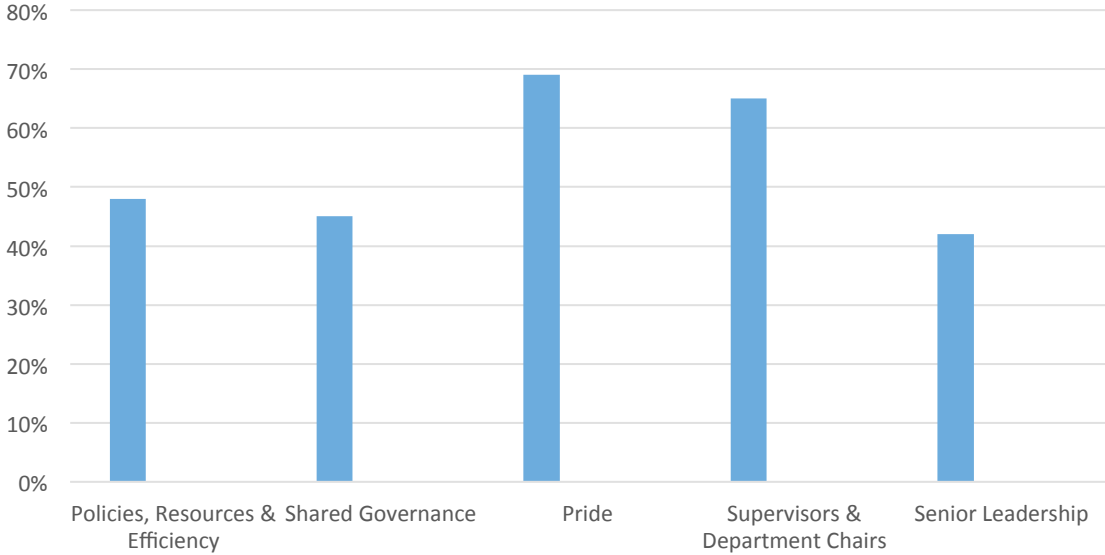
### Guidelines for Negative Responses:

< 10%	Excellent – Very Good
10% - 14%	Fair – Good
15% - 19%	Yellow Flag
20% - 29%	Red Flag
30%+	Acute

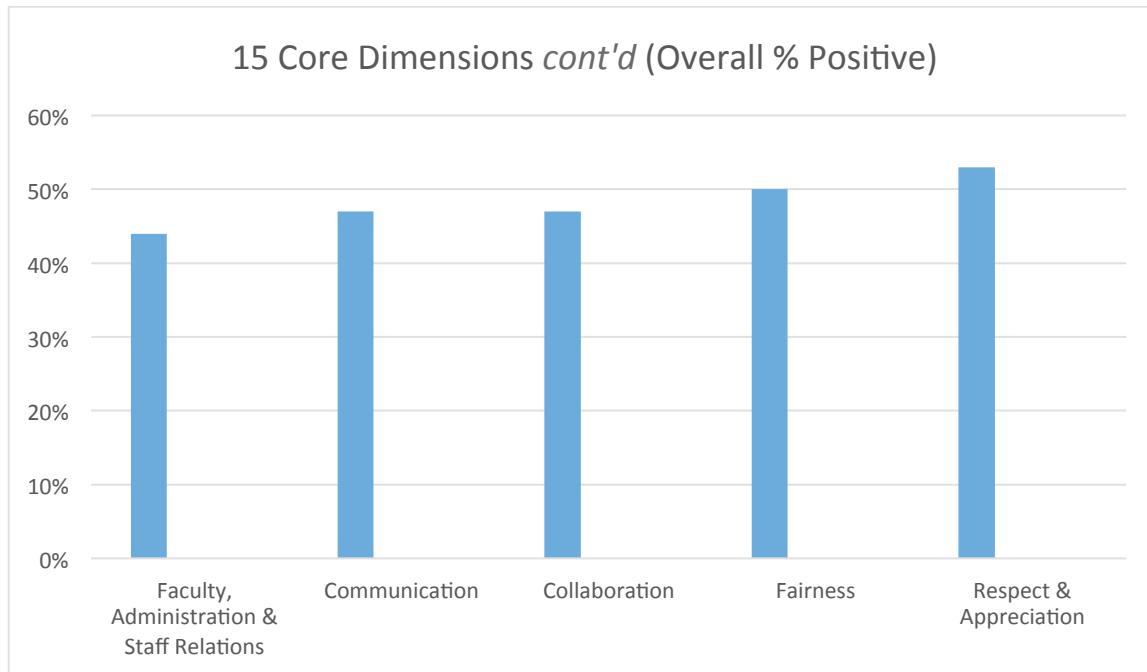
15 Core Dimensions (Overall % Positive)



15 Core Dimensions *cont'd* (Overall % Positive)







Complete survey results are archived by the Office of Institutional Research at Ohio University, and are available at the time of this report at <http://www.ohio.edu/instres/climate/>. In addition to quantitative results provided in fall 2014, in February 2015 *Modern Think* provided a thematic analysis and representative sampling of employee comments, with information that might individually identify employees redacted.

Review of the overall results (combining all employment groups) reveals many areas where Ohio University employees as a whole report favorable results.

- Pride in the mission of Ohio University.
- Positive assessment of job fit, flexibility and autonomy, and support for work-life balance.
- Strong sense of community within departments and positive relationships with direct supervisors.
- Recognition of the challenges and pace of change at Ohio University and in higher education as a whole.

On the other hand, there are several areas of widespread concern.

- Concern that individual employees often are not effectively evaluated on, rewarded for, or held accountable for their performance.
- Concern that the actions of faculty, staff, and administration and of different departments often are in conflict with or insensitive to one another.
- Concern that senior leadership, the Senates, and individual employees often do not have a shared understanding of the strategic direction of the university or a mutual respect for one another's roles in implementing it.

The Task Force agreed on principles and goals, and formed subcommittees to investigate underlying strengths and weaknesses and to identify actions.

## TASK FORCE GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS

The guiding principles and goals the subcommittees used to guide their work included:

### Principles

- Act as a community guided by collaboration and respect to establish a culture of continuous improvement.
- Create a positive workplace that will foster a climate that attracts, retains and develops all employees.

### Goals

- Seek further information and input from the university community to enhance our understanding of the campus climate and to guide our recommendations.
- Communicate openly and regularly with the university using a variety of vehicles and to use the established website to provide a record of our progress and to serve as repository for information.
- Have a strong orientation towards action, recommend specific actions with milestones to reinforce our commitment to continuous progress.

## ESTABLISHED FOUR SUBCOMMITTEES

*Modern Think's* interpretations of the data was a helpful starting point for identifying themes, but the members of the task force felt it was necessary and valuable to dig into the data ourselves. The Task Force reviewed the numerical results and identified four groups of related issues. Four subcommittees were formed and each one was assigned one of the areas identified during the review of the numerical results to analyze in more detail and to make recommendations back to the full Task Force. The four subcommittees and their areas of focus are detailed below.

### Individual Employee Climate

- support opportunities for professional development, training, and career advancement,
- improve mutual respect and appreciation for individual contributions,
- achieve effective two-way communication about opportunities, policies, and decisions that affect individuals' work environment
- cultivate the flexibility and autonomy that employees appreciate being afforded, which gives them pride and ownership in their work
- cultivate the support for work/life balance that employees value, which enables them to contribute to their families and communities

### Interdepartmental (Between) Climate

- understand and address the perceived lack of cooperation or collaboration across units
- ensure that policies and processes are transparent and support the work of other departments

- extend the strong existing sense of community within many departments to an interdepartmental sense of connection
- encourage individuals and departments to recognize that the strong sense of pride they feel in Ohio University's mission is widely felt across the university

### **Intradepartmental (Within) Climate**

- implement more consistent and meaningful performance management
- ensure that decision-making within departments is transparent
- achieve effective two-way communication within the department about how changes outside the department affect the work environment within
- cultivate the existing strong sense of community and shared purpose within departments

### **Senior Leadership and Strategic Direction Climate**

- understand and address the perceived lack of connection between the concerns of senior leadership and the efforts of individual employees
- build a more effective connection between University and department-level leadership, so that information flows consistently in both directions
- effectively communicate senior leadership's vision of how Ohio University continues its educational mission in this time of change
- clarify the pathways for shared governance to impact decision-making
- reinforce the sense of shared mission at Ohio University

The Task Force reached consensus quickly on how to group the survey questions and responses among these four areas. Those subcommittees then worked through quantitative and qualitative survey results, held informal interviews with other Ohio University employees, reviewed web-based documentation of Ohio University processes and procedures and utilized publically-available web-based documentation of how other institutions have responded to the survey. We spent considerable time considering how different categories of employees responded to different questions, and considering the factors that might underlie the survey responses. However, as we moved from identifying strengths and concerns to recommending actions, we found that often areas for action cut across multiple areas of concern. This suggests that some actions could have a positive impact on multiple facets of the campus climate.

## **THE TOP TEN LISTS**

To gain a better understanding of the survey results at a glance, we focused our attention on the top ten areas in the survey where the respondents indicated Ohio University was doing well and where respondents indicated improvements were needed. Of the statements that fell into the "top ten" list, 40% of them had positive ratings in the exceptional range and 60% positive ratings in the good to very good range. Only 90% of the negative responses fell into the excellent to very good range with the other 10% falling into the fair to good range. A similar analysis of the "bottom ten" list determined 100% of the positive responses fell into the red flag range. Fifty percent of the negative responses were in the acute range with the remaining fifty percent fell into the red flag category. The results of the "top ten" are listed under the specific headings below.

## The Top Ten Statements

As summarized in the chart below, Ohio University employees have a strong sense of how their positions contribute to the overall mission and success of the institution and are proud to be a part of the organization. They have a positive relationship with their supervisors and feel empowered to perform their jobs in an independent and autonomous way. Supervisors are supportive of and understand the need for work life balance and employees feel their employee fringe benefits are fair as a part of their total compensation package. The responses also indicate that employees feel diversity and inclusion are embraced as university values.

#	Survey Statement	% Positive	Positive Rating	% Negative	Negative Rating
5	I understand how my job contributes to this institution's mission.	85	Exceptional	3	Excellent Very good
2	I am given the responsibility and freedom to do my job	77	Exceptional	5	Excellent Very good
24	I have a good relationship with my supervisor / department chair	77	Exceptional	7	Excellent Very good
66	My benefits (such as insurance, educational benefits, etc.) are fair for the work that I do	75	Exceptional	8	Excellent Very good
45	At this institution, people are supportive of their colleagues regardless of their heritage or background.	74	Good Very good	6	Excellent Very good
1	My job makes good use of my skills and abilities	74	Good Very good	7	Excellent Very good
36	I am proud to be part of this institution	73	Good Very good	5	Excellent Very good
50	This institution places sufficient emphasis on having diverse faculty, administration and staff	73	Good Very good	7	Excellent Very good
47	My supervisor/department chair supports my efforts to balance my work and personal life.	72	Good Very good	11	Fair - Good

## The Bottom Ten Statements

In contrast to the "top ten" noted above, employees noted strong dissatisfaction in several areas. One overarching noteworthy areas is resource constraints. Many employees don't feel they are provided with the resources needed such as access to adequate facilities or technology to be effective in their jobs or that their areas have adequate faculty or staff to achieve their goals. Performance management is another key area for improvement noted in the survey. Many employees don't receive meaningful feedback from supervisors to enable them to maximize their contributions to the institution. They also report the need for a performance management process that accurately measures job performance and bases promotions on a person's abilities. There is a sense that low performance is not adequately dealt with and that the university's policies and practices may not be effective in ensuring fair treatment for faculty, administration and staff. Other themes in the bottom ten focused on communication & collaboration, respect & appreciation, shared governance & senior leadership. Concerns in these areas

overlap in many respects and show a deep need for better ways to communicate to foster respectful discourse, transparency in decisions, maintain the trust between senior leadership and the university community and imbue a sense that we are all on the same team working toward a shared goal.

#	Survey Statement	% Positive	Positive Rating	% Negative	Negative Rating
28	My department has adequate faculty/staff to achieve our goals.	27	Red Flag	44	Acute
58	There's a sense that we're all on the same team at this institution.	28	Red Flag	36	Acute
42	Faculty, administration and staff are meaningfully involved in institutional planning.	34	Red Flag	29	Red Flag
64	I expect that action will be taken based on the results of this survey.	35	Red Flag	38	Acute
35	Our recognition and awards programs are meaningful to me.	35	Red Flag	32	Acute
57	This institution is well run.	36	Red Flag	26	Red Flag
18	Issues of low performance are addressed in my department.	37	Red Flag	31	Acute
41	Senior leadership communicates openly about important matters.	37	Red Flag	26	Red Flag
55	There is regular and open communication among faculty, administration and staff	37	Red Flag	24	Red Flag
43	At this institution, we discuss and debate issues respectfully to get better results.	38	Red Flag	23	Red Flag

In keeping with our goal to be action-oriented, the remainder of this report focuses on areas and specific recommendation for action. Results from the survey and our other investigations are brought in to support the recommendations. Some actions will bear fruit quickly, while other will require considerable planning and ongoing effort before change is observable. We have focused on actions which we expect to have impact across the university community. ***We encourage individual units to investigate the results for opportunities for local initiatives that can have a positive impact.*** We are most mindful that only 35% of respondents believe that action will be taken in response to the Modern Think 2014 survey. (Question 64)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We have identified a recommendation as [High Potential] if we think that it can be tackled within a time frame of a few months and seems likely to have a positive impact, [Ongoing] if our research has indicated that it is already underway, and [Consider] if we think deliberation is needed to better define an effective approach and assess whether the likely impact will be substantially positive.

### University-Wide Internal Communication Structures

Here, we use “University-wide internal” to mean “among units within and employees of Ohio University while we use “University-wide external” to indicate stakeholders such as the citizens of Ohio, students, students’ families, alumni, donors, employers of our graduates, funding agencies, etc. The task force found three potential roadblocks in University-wide internal communication. (1) There is a sense that while communications are typically disseminated using multiple channels they may miss the intended audience. (2) Communication on initiatives appear to start off strong but taper off and seem to lack continuity or follow-up, especially for long duration or multiple year projects. (3) There is also a perception that communication from senior leadership seems to be framed to other employees. Our recommendations for improving University-wide internal communication structures are centered on the first of these potential roadblocks. The other two are addressed later in our recommendations related to Senior Leadership and Strategic Direction.

1. *Increase employee recognition and use of the University-wide internal newsletter.*

- a. *[High Potential] Provide the bi-weekly employee e-mail newsletter “Compass Points” with a distinctive name and visual identity so that it is readily distinguishable from “Compass.” Carry the distinct visual identity into an “Employee” section of “Compass” so immediate announcements do not need to wait for the employee publication.*  
“Compass” is the e-mail newsletter for the entire university community, and is seen as externally-focused. It is distributed by University Communications and Marketing (UCM) on Mondays and on alternate Thursdays. On alternate Thursdays, “Compass” is replaced by the employee e-mail newsletter “Compass Points”, which is also archived on the web as a sub-category of “Compass”. The status of “Compass Points” as a subsection of “Compass” leads to a variety of undesirable unintended consequences. There is a wide-spread perception among employees that Ohio University has no internally-focused newsletter, even though UCM maintains distinct content guidelines for Compass vs. Compass Points. Employees often ignore both publications because they expect mostly externally-focused content and because they expect that all of the content is “green-washed” (a term in wide informal use across campus). Units with only occasional internal communication seldom think of “Compass Points” as a potentially effective medium, or are unsure of its distribution schedule. The lack of a readily-identifiable internally-focused news source feeds perceptions that communication with employees is an after-thought at best, that communication from outside one’s own unit is crafted for external audiences and happens only after important decisions have already been made, and that there is inadequate open communication among units or with senior leadership.
- b. *[High Potential] Produce a 1 – 2 page “key headlines and announcements” print version of the employee newsletter, and implement a system for posting it near time-clocks and other key employee locations. Many employees’ work environments (e.g., many bargaining unit employees) include little or no opportunity for computer-based reading. Communication via e-mail or web often misses them, and gives the impression that communication with them is not valued. On the other hand, employees would rightfully condemn the expense, waste, and inefficiency of producing and distributing print copies of the full newsletter. A sheet listing key headlines from the bi-weekly newsletter, combined with an easy-to-remember web address for the publication, would alert*

employees to relevant information and enable them to look up the full story later. It should be posted in locations that are normally and regularly visited by employees but not high-traffic for students or other external stakeholders, for example, near time-clocks, where keys are stored, where employees receive daily work assignments. The distribution system should not depend on campus mail or on passing material through the supervisory chain. Someone in a communications role should speak to employees directly to identify locations. A student worker could visit designated locations to replace the “key headlines” sheets bi-weekly.

- c. *[High Potential] Continue to publish internally-focused Accolades and Announcements in the employee newsletter and to cross-publish on the employee front page. If a submitted Accolade does not merit university-wide publication, it should be forwarded directly to the employee.* Recognition and appreciation are important to job satisfaction. Recognition and appreciation by coworkers across units can be particularly meaningful.
  - d. *[Consider] Consider revising the “architecture” of the online newsletters to improve readability and navigation.* For example, The Chronicle of Higher Education daily electronic edition requires relatively few clicks to navigate.
  - e. *[Consider] Senior leadership should work with University Communications and Marketing (UCM) to consider the desirable allocation of resources to internal vs. external communications.* Internal communication should enable employees to be meaningfully involved in university planning, help them collaborate effectively across departments, inform them of resources available, and affirm the value of their contribution. UCM is tasked with University-wide communications both internal and external, however, there is a widespread perception among employees that UCM communications are entirely externally-targeted. The task force is concerned that developing a separate internal communications unit would exacerbate the sense of fragmentation in the University community, and are unsure that the replication of resources makes sense in this time of fiscal restraint. Still, the fact that many for-profit corporations fund an internal communications unit highlights the importance of intentionally allocating resources and attention to understanding and reaching the internal audience.
2. *[High Potential] Rebuild the Faculty/Staff front page with an audience focus.* It is challenging to serve the needs of a diverse internal audience, but the layout and navigation need intentional design. The task force heard suggestions such as a real-time news feed with crowd sourced news, direct links to need-to-know employee news locations and a revised layout. Employees looking to find an unfamiliar building on campus, or assist a visitor to do so, need ready access to the map, not to a virtual tour. Why is Bobcat Buy a button on the left, but Concur is a text link on the right? The topmost button asks employees to donate to Ohio University; apparently this is more important than registering for emergency notifications (bottom-most button, and off the screen on most browsers). Because most employees think of “Compass” as a publication for the external audience, anything behind the “Compass” link is effectively invisible. Prominent display of some key headlines is desirable. Links to submit Accolades and Announcements

should be considered for a “button” on the employee front page rather than buried under its “Compass” link.

3. *[Consider] Investigate the effectiveness of internal communications in reaching the intended audience, using “electronic media analytics” tools to quantify “total reach” for web-based media, coupled with a focus-groups to gain insight from particular units or employee groups.*  
We recommend against online surveys to gather information about audience reach, since they are obviously distributed via the same channels as the electronic newsletters themselves. With electronic communications, there are numerous analytics tools to gather basic information about how often content is viewed and the pattern of views over time, as well as more advanced information such as the nature of other content accessed by the same viewer, etc. Given the survey data on the current level of trust in senior leadership across the campus community, the Task Force recommends *AGAINST* analyzing internal communications by identifying individuals or their usage patterns. We suggest gathering data periodically on the number of views for stories in the employee newsletter, supplemented by focus groups to assess the familiarity of various employee groups with specific content. Regional Campus employees and bargaining unit employees should be targeted, since the *Modern Think* survey results indicate higher feelings of disconnection from the rest of the campus community within those groups. The following comment is telling: “Our department is a branch of the university that is off-campus so I have a hard time speaking about the ‘institution’ because I feel I’m not really part of it.”
4. *Units that offer internal services should continue to improve their avenues for receiving lateral communication.*
  - a. *[Ongoing] Continue to improve helpdesk and work order systems, so that employees feel valued and work is routed efficiently. As an example, look to OIT for some best practices.*  
At one time, all service requests at Ohio University involved direct human interaction. For attention to facilities, you visited or called your Zone Maintenance Manager. For a finance or information technology question, you called a specific person, and the directory helped you identify them if you didn’t already know who to call. The change to “call center” structures for these service units offers important potential advantages: coverage of duties during vacations or shifting employees to high-need areas during busy times, fewer calls misdirected. Unfortunately, these advantages were initially overwhelmed by poor implementation. Calls to the central number were often unanswered or unreturned or resulted in no follow up from a knowledgeable individual, and directories had been eliminated and individuals’ phone numbers changed so that direct communication paths were cut. For employees outside such units, it appeared that requests went into black holes. For employees inside such units, work assignments seemed to shift rapidly or be random, and communication channels within the unit and between units were disrupted. For everyone, workload and frustration mounted. Although improvements in recent years are notable, the intensity of the frustration was such that many employees have to be prompted to comment on their recent experience rather than their worst experience. The following features of OIT’s current system are appreciated by other employees. Help can be requested through multiple media. The initial acknowledgement is prompt. The request is promptly routed to a person with a



name, who nearly always has the appropriate expertise. The requestor is typically asked to fully explain the problem only once, occasionally twice. The work order closes when the *requestor* acknowledges that the problem has been addressed. Problem solutions are published and searchable, but people are not forced to search before receiving individual help. We recommend that personnel responsible for “call center” structures in OIT, Facilities, and Finance meet to share insight into how internal systems can be structured to provide these positive features.

- b. [Ongoing] Make appropriate use of surveys, focus groups, and continuously-active “feedback” links.* Surveys and focus groups should be conducted rarely and thoughtfully, to monitor progress over years. A survey can only address issues that the writer has anticipated, and response rates are low if employees receive many surveys or believe that the input they provide will be ignored. Focus groups gather responses from a limited number of people and require skilled moderation and recording, but can provide feedback on unanticipated topics, and participants feel immediately acknowledged. Both surveys and focus groups provide a “snapshot”. A “feedback” link on a website gives internal stakeholders a chance to provide input at any time; units without a “helpdesk” or “work order” system are encouraged to add a feedback link and assign someone to regularly monitor and acknowledge the feedback.
5. *[Ongoing] Continue to support the Alert!OHIO system.* This system of front-page notifications and e-mail and text message alerts is perceived as effective and valuable. On-going attention is needed to ensure that it continues to serve both regional and the Athens campuses.
6. *[Ongoing] Continue to communicate for targeted and selected purposes via media other than e-mail.* A poster or a “useful keepsake” such as a magnet or folder can be an ongoing reminder of the web address for up-to-date information on a specific topic, if the referenced webpages are maintained. These are appropriate for a resource that an employee may need on an occasional, recurring basis. Open-houses and topical “fairs” are useful to provide individualized information, and to renew “human” connections between units. However, such communication channels decline in effectiveness rapidly if they are used too often.
7. *[Consider] Consider how the online directory could be improved.* A smarter “search” algorithm that brings up similar names or can search by job title would be helpful. The ability to browse within more departments/units would be helpful. Perhaps some sections or entries can be restricted to internal users.

## **Professional Development and Department Leadership**

In this section, we discuss recommendations related to how employees develop in their job roles and receive feedback on their performance. In general, employees have trust in and a positive relationship with their direct supervisors except in the area of performance management. Employees are highly invested in their opportunity to help students and contribute to the region in their roles at Ohio University, but would like to see improvements in how they are oriented and trained for current and potential future roles. Enhanced training and professional development of employees should address

concerns that units do not have sufficient staffing to meet their workload as additional tools and training should increase the overall efficiency for employees.

1. *Improve the orientation process for employees new to Ohio University, and for employees changing jobs within Ohio University.* Orientation should be a process, not an event. Employees need an orientation to the University as a whole and to their department/unit. Often, they also need an orientation to the resources and responsibilities of their job type.
  - a. *[High Potential] A representative from Human Resources, the HR Liaisons, and a representative from each of the Senates should meet with one or two individuals responsible for the overall planning and execution of Bobcat Student Orientation to understand how that program identifies and addresses the multi-level orientation needs of new students, then consider structures to meet the multi-level needs of new employees.* Ohio University has an award-winning orientation program for new students that includes University-wide, college-specific, and curriculum-specific components, and provides information as well as developing a sense of pride as a member of the Ohio University community. Obviously, the two-day sleepaway experience for new students is not appropriate for employees; a series of 1 – 4 hour sessions early in the employment period seems more reasonable. But there needs to be a consideration of the overall orientation experience, clear identification of the role of each session, and thoughtful consideration of formats to make each session as informative, engaging, and brief as possible. In-person orientation is important. Resources can and should be available online for reference later, but interpersonal interaction is a hallmark of Ohio University's culture, and orientation should foster connectedness.
  - b. *[Ongoing] Continue to support and improve the University-wide New Faculty Orientation, under the direction of the Associate Provost for Faculty and Academic Planning.* This program is viewed positively by faculty who have participated. One advantage noted is the opportunity to connect early with colleagues in different colleges.
  - c. *[Consider] Classified and Administrative Senates should each consider developing an orientation session to cover resources and responsibilities common to most employees in these categories. Consider holding a session on each campus annually.* As examples, these employees should understand the roles of the Senates in shared governance and be aware of University-level expectations for performance reviews. Senate representatives can work with HR liaisons to ensure that units are aware of the sessions.
  - d. *[High Potential] Units should develop employee orientation programs.* Units should identify the systems that new employees will need and how they will be trained in them. HR Liaisons should assist units by reminding them of the need for local orientation, helping them identify specific orientation needs for employees in the unit, and keeping them aware of other orientation events.
  - e. *[Consider] Consider tasking University Communications and Marketing to develop a "message vehicle" to inform new and prospective employees about Ohio University's culture, mission, and vision.* Utilize the results of the Modern Think 2014 survey that

define what employees' value about working at Ohio University and living in the Athens area; include brief videos of employees discussing what they value. Include messages from senior leaders discussing Ohio University's mission and vision and what they value about Ohio University. Include links to documents such as the most recent fall welcome message from the President. Make the "message vehicle" available through a link on the employee front page, the human resources page, the ohiouniversityjobs page, etc. Utilize the link in orientation sessions by HR and in sessions for new Classified, Administrative, and Faculty employees.

2. *Human Resources should work with units to improve annual employee evaluations so that they can be used to inform compensation and employment decisions.*
  - a. *[High Potential] Human Resources should work with units to develop and implement an evaluation verification process to ensure all OU Classified and Administrative positions have at least annual evaluations in their personnel files.* The reality is that many Ohio University employees are not evaluated annually, and it is therefore not surprising that many Ohio University employees view merit-based compensation plans cynically. Responsibility for conducting evaluations lies with supervisors, but HR and the HR Liaisons could assist units to implement evaluation processes and track compliance.
  - b. *[High Potential] Human Resources should seek and/or develop, then implement, a training initiative for Classified and Administrative staff and their supervisors/managers/ team leads focused on effective and informative employee evaluations.* The reality is that many Ohio University employees have not been evaluated effectively, and it is therefore not surprising that many Ohio University employees view merit-based compensation plans cynically. Performance evaluation will only be effective if employees and their supervisors have shared expectations for how they will be conducted and used.
  - c. *[Ongoing] Units should consider widespread implementation of 360 degree feedback as part of the evaluation process.* The same survey software that is used for online student evaluations can be used to gather anonymous feedback from an employee's peers, clients, and reports. The Russ College uses such a survey to provide information to supervisors for use in annual evaluations. Employee evaluation should include self-analysis and should consider the position description as well as individual goal-setting.
3. *Continue ongoing initiatives to ensure that pay for Ohio University employees is competitive with national benchmarks and equitable internally.*
  - a. *[Ongoing] Continue with the biennial review scheduled for 2016 to identify and address inequities in the classified and administrative pay structure developed in COMP2014.* The University was in the midst of the COMP 2014 project at the time of the survey, which likely heightened concerns among classified and administrative employees about whether they were or would be fairly paid. At the conclusion of COMP 2014 in November 2014, 270 employees were identified for base pay increases while several more were determined to be ineligible for future base pay increases as their current pay rate exceeds the pay grade for their position. A concurrent FLSA study resulted in approximately 100 employees being changed from exempt to non-exempt status. These

employees will now be eligible for overtime pay for hours worked in excess of forty in one work week. In short, although COMP 2014 has resulted in a pay structure which is aligned with national benchmarks and should result in more consistency across the university, not all employees were impacted as they hoped or expected. The planned periodic reviews to adjust the pay structure to remain comparable with national benchmarks and consistent internally will be important to the overall long term success of the project.

- b. *[Ongoing] Continue to set aside funds from the raise pool to be allocated by Compensation to correct equity disparities.* Disparities can arise over time for a variety of reasons, such as a rapid increase in starting salaries outpacing raises for those with long service, or limited raises for a good performer with a cadre of excellent colleagues. Such situations should be identified and addressed regularly.
  - c. *[Ongoing] Continue the faculty salary investment pool to meet the goals set by the Faculty Compensation Task Force.* As a result of the Faculty Total Compensation Task Force, Ohio University committed to investing \$3.9 million over a three year period to move the average salary for tenure-track faculty on the Athens Campus to the position of 3<sup>rd</sup> for each rank among the four year public universities in Ohio. Approximately \$540,000 was also set aside to address compensation for regional tenure-track faculty. An additional estimated amount of \$740,000 and \$940,000 was earmarked to address Group 2 faculty salaries for the Athens Campus and regional campuses respectively. In year one over \$1M in faculty pay increases were provided as a result of the Faculty Compensation Task Force. Additional funding in approximately the same amount was set aside for years two and three to continue to address faculty compensation matters.
4. *[Ongoing] Continue the HR Liaison program.* The HR Liaisons can play an important role in helping units meet their unique staffing needs while maintaining compliance with legal standards and consistency across the University. They can assist units to develop robust orientation and evaluation practices and utilize professional development opportunities.
  5. *[Ongoing] Continue to identify and publicize opportunities for leadership, management, and supervisory training.* The Office of the Provost promotes opportunities for academic leadership training. Human Resources provides a series of workshops in leadership and management for supervisors. It may be possible to alter the format for in-house workshops to make them more accessible to employees. Many employees feel unable to devote a half-day or full day to a workshop because there is no one to cover their job duties.
  6. *[Consider] Consider linking all training opportunities to a single Ohio University Employees' Professional Development website, and providing a Professional Development link directly from the employee homepage.* See <http://www.uco.edu/administration/professional/index.asp> for an example. New employee orientation, leadership training, and systems training resources can all be found from one page. The current Professional Development link on the Human Resources website provides access to an immense selection of eLearning opportunities, but many employees seem to be unaware of it. Perhaps a button on the employee homepage would give it higher visibility.

## Senior Leadership and Strategic Direction

Both the quantitative results and the illustrative comments reflect some concerns with senior leadership in the areas of shared governance, effective communications and the overall strategy and vision for OHIO's educational mission. There is recognition that a natural tension may exist in these areas between employees and senior leadership, especially during times of change. To mitigate this natural tension, efforts should be made by both employees and senior leadership to ensure communications are respectful and transparent and that employees read and respond to communications and engage in the interactive process. Reciprocity is essential for meaningful change in this area. Some of our recommendations in this area are straightforward and can be implemented quickly, but long-term commitment both by employees and senior leadership will be needed to effect substantial climate change.

1. *Senior leadership should communicate a consistent vision of how Ohio University continues its educational mission in this time of change.* Ohio University has a Mission, a Vision, Core Values and Guiding Principles (Articles of Academe), six Strategic Priorities, Four Fundamentals and Four Supporting Strategic Priorities (also called the 4x4 Strategic Plan), and a Values Statement (the "Five C's). Senior Leadership may want to consider consolidating these objectives and defining how they are interrelated, where possible to make it easier for employees to clearly identify the principles that guide decision-making by senior leadership. Consistently communicating these objectives on the external-facing front page, the employee front page, the President's page and the Executive Vice President and Provost's page would be helpful in reinforcing OHIO's mission in a manner visible and assessable to employees.
  - a. *[High Potential] Create a clear and prominent statement of OHIO's strategic mission, including the policy ramifications and specific goals related to the 4x4 Strategic Plan. Link consistently to this statement in University-wide e-mail communications related to policy decisions, on web pages related to University policy and governance, and on the employee front page.*
  - b. *[High Potential] Senior leadership and executive administration should consider regularly citing relevant portions of the 4x4 Strategic Plan and its specific goals when communicating policy decisions.*
  - c. *[High Potential] Senior leadership should investigate issuing monthly or quarterly updates to the campus community on progress toward specific strategic goals, including policy decisions that have not yet been implemented. This should reinforce a sense of shared mission, and be distinct from special messages reacting to external events.*
2. *(High Potential) Senior leadership should review the web presence of strategic initiatives and update the pages to reflect progress and status taking care to note when an initiative has terminated*
  - a. *COMP 2014.* <https://www.ohio.edu/hr/compensation/comp2014/index.cfm>. In many ways, the web communication for COMP 2014 is a model of good practice. Although some of the central description is outdated, the articles linked on the right side of the page describe the completion of the project and the plan for moving forward with the new compensation system. Useful information on the COMP 2014 site, such as the Job

Framework page ([https://www.ohio.edu/hr/compensation/job\\_framework.cfm](https://www.ohio.edu/hr/compensation/job_framework.cfm)) is also directly available under Compensation from the Human Resources web page, so the COMP 2014 page can move to an archival status (which it should probably do after the 2016 biennial review), and information that hiring managers and supervisors need going forward will be readily available. There are some documents on related pages that are outdated (e.g., the Managers' Guidelines for Compensation Management at <https://www.ohio.edu/hr/managers/index.cfm>, but overall the web communication about COMP 2014 and current compensation policies is relevant and useful.

- b. Environmental Scan.* Ohio University and its constituent units conducted Environmental Scans in 2010, with the intent of looking forward six years to identify challenges and opportunities. As stated when the initiative was undertaken, "The University Environmental Scan report, which will be updated on a regular basis and interwoven with planning unit scans, will play a pivotal role in determining strategic opportunities and planning unit budgets over the course of the next six years." Five years on, the website (accessible to employees within <http://www.ohio.edu/provost/strategic-initiatives.cfm>) archives final reports for the constituent units and a draft report (but not a final report) for Ohio University from 2010. It is unclear whether subsequent work based on the 2010 Environmental Scans is fragmented and reported elsewhere or whether the approach was abandoned.
  - c. Responsibility Centered Management.* <http://www.ohio.edu/provost/rcm/>. The transition to RCM is underway. The website shows the Model and the plans for First, Second, and Third Year implementation as "under construction". Links such as ASIC and SAI do not have clear meanings. It is unclear whether the information on the SAI sub site is current. The ASIC sub site shows clear evidence of current activity, with a table of current status and links to concise and constructive reports. The "smartsheet" application that provides the ASIC "dashboard" may deserve wider use, with the one drawback that it is a navigational dead end. The RCM site needs to be restructured and updated to provide employees with current information or current contacts to obtain it.
- 3. Senior leadership and the Senates should clarify the pathways for shared governance to impact decision-making.*

  - a. [High Potential] Senate leaders and executive administration should engage in conversation to ensure that they have a common understanding of Ohio University's shared governance roles and agree upon language to define them.*
  - b. [High Potential] Defined roles for shared governance should be easily found on webpages of the Provost and the Senates, and on webpages supporting major governance functions such as budget planning and University Curriculum Council.*
  - c. [High Potential] Senior leadership should designate and routinize points of contact for faculty, staff, and students regarding budget processes and priority setting, and provide clarity about when and how input can be effective. This information should be easily accessible on the budget planning webpage and linked from Senate webpages.*
  - d. [High Potential] The curricular approval process should be clearly communicated on the UCC webpage and linked from the Provost's webpage.*

- e. *[Consider] The University Curriculum Council (UCC) and Provost may want to consider simplifying and clarifying the curricular approval process, in consultation with the Registrar.*
  - f. *[Consider] The Senates and senior leadership may want to consider restructuring and pruning back Standing Committees and other Task Forces and committees to reduce redundancy, clarify overlapping responsibilities, and reflect smaller Group I faculty numbers.*
  - g. *[Consider] Consider a program to establish and nourish cross-campus interactions, similar to the Campus Connections Initiative at Austin Peay University.*  
<http://www.apsu.edu/ctl/faculty-development-initiative-0>.
4. *[High Potential] Senior leadership and the Senates should define a process to continue monitoring campus climate, including following up on decisions regarding recommendations in this report and identifying mechanisms for tracking progress, including a decision on whether to repeat the Modern Think survey and, if so, when.*
5. *(Ongoing) Senior leaders should consider avenues to interact directly with employees. Personal interaction is a hallmark of Ohio University's culture. Interaction with students and with co-workers was a top comment from every employee group in response to the question "What do you appreciate most about working at this institution?"*
- a. *[Ongoing] Continue with regularly scheduled small-group informal meetings of faculty and faculty senate.*
  - b. *(Ongoing) Continue regularly scheduled small group informal meetings such as Coffee / Tea with the President / Provost for an hour with a small number of employees each month, perhaps on a regional campus once each semester.*
  - c. *[Consider] Consider providing a regularly-scheduled forum for the President / Provost to address questions submitted by faculty and staff. Possible formats are a biweekly piece in the employee newsletter or a quarterly "town hall meeting" live and webcast. Advance submission will enable appropriate background research to address questions; it is not reasonable to expect anyone to field questions about details of university operations on-the-fly.*

### **Work Environment and Work-Life Balance**

In general, employees express high levels of satisfaction with the work environment within their department. They generally rate their supervisors positively for willingness to be flexible in the name of work-life balance, and rate their benefits positively, especially the tuition benefit. Employees value the opportunity to positive influence Ohio University's students and the local community through their work. However, beyond their immediate supervisors, they often feel that their efforts are not appreciated, their concerns are ignored, and that recognition programs are not meaningful. Some of these concerns may be addressed by recommendations in other sections of this report, such as those intended to improve internal communication structures.

1. *[Ongoing] Evaluate the impact of the Sick Leave Donation Pilot Program as soon as possible, and determine whether the program will be extended, modified, or terminated.*
2. *(Ongoing) Evaluate the impact of the Paid Parental Leave Pilot Program as soon as possible to determine whether the program will be extended, modified or terminated.*
3. *[Ongoing] Continue to provide high-quality benefits to Ohio University employees, including the tuition benefit for employees and their immediate families.*
4. *[Ongoing] Continue the Healthy OHIO Initiative. Give its web presence more prominence, and seek ways to evaluate its impact. Anecdotally, the Healthy OHIO program is well-received by employees who participate.*
5. *[Consider] Consider a “sabbatical” program for non-faculty employees to enable them to develop a new competency which would positively impact their impact in their current position, or enable them to make a lateral career move or seek promotion at Ohio University.*
6. *[Consider] Consider a recognition program to encourage groups of employees to undertake service projects within the community, thus using community engagement to foster collaboration and team spirit.*

The task force has completed its review of the Modern Think survey results and made several recommendations as a result of this review. The task force is recommending the formation of three new committees to focus on reviewing these recommendations and determining how to implement the suggestions giving priority to items denoted as “high potential” with a goal of making these changes within the next three months. The three new committees formed will focus on Professional Development, University Wide Internal Communications and Senior Leadership and Strategic Direction. We are not recommending a committee be formed to address the Work Environment and Work-Life Balance items. There were no “high potential” items identified in this area and four of the six items noted here are currently underway.