



## 2022 Seattle University Staff Council Staff Voices Survey Executive Summary

### Overview and Purpose

This second edition of the Seattle University Staff Council (“SUSC”) Staff Voices Survey had two main purposes: 1) to ensure the work of SUSC continues to focus on the most important concerns of Seattle University staff; and 2) to gauge current staff views on some of the ongoing themes presented in the first version while gathering more in-depth information on some topics.

When SUSC launched, representatives formed committees to address what they believed to be the most pressing staff issues. The 2019 Staff Voices survey confirmed that the committee choices aligned with staff concerns, and also provided committees with direction on appropriate objectives. The 2021-22 SUSC formed two additional committees to address emerging needs: Staff & Faculty Interactions (for the sometimes-difficult relationship between staff and faculty); and the Committee on Appointments (to provide to campus a resource of willing and qualified staff to serve as representatives on committees/task forces). The previous four committees continued: Inclusion & Community, Professional Development, Recognition & Appreciation; and Review, Benefits & Compensation.

As was the case for the 2019 survey, SUSC committees analyzed and summarized their corresponding survey question results, then an SUSC volunteer gathered the overall reports into one large document. The SUSC Leadership Team (the president, vice-president, and secretary/treasurer) further condensed that information and highlighted the themes that stood out, both in contrast to and support of the 2019 results. The conclusions were presented verbally at the April 12, 2023 Staff Council meeting and will be posted on the SUSC website.

There were differences in the questions on the two surveys. In 2019, more emphasis was placed on sorting responses by FLSA status and discerning issues between exempt and non-exempt staff. In 2022, more in-depth questions were added around diversity, equity, and inclusion (“DEI”) topics, and also interactions between staff and faculty. Questions about workload and work unit staffing levels were also asked, as was a question to ascertain what attracted staff to or keeps them at Seattle University. Finally, the 2022 questions about benefits were redone to rank importance of and satisfaction with each of the listed benefits rather than simply asking about satisfaction with benefits overall.

The 2022 survey had 285 total staff responses, which is a 36% response rate (down about 12% from the first survey). Analysis for each section will follow, but the following are the most important themes that recurred throughout the survey:

1. **Compensation (also in the top three in 2019)**
2. **A need to include staff voices in decision-making (also in the top three in 2019)**
3. Transparency – reasons for decisions
4. Respect of staff, including respect from faculty, students, family members, and other staff
5. Desire for career ladder/professional advancement opportunities for staff

### Review, Benefits, and Compensation

For each category, the survey asked not only about staff satisfaction levels, but also about how much of a priority each topic was. The priority of “Review, Benefits, and Compensation” as a general topic was up by 5.1% from 2019. Common issues for these areas:

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- **Compensation** remains a source of worry and came up in many fill-in comments in many sections, whether compensation was the specific topic or not. There is confusion around the MRR system and the pay philosophy in general; fewer people have a clear understanding of SU's pay philosophy and structure now than in 2019: only 45% indicated they understood in 2019 and that dropped to 41% in 2022. **Many requested a cost-of-living increase, and comments indicated that staff do not feel that compensation for those with the same or similar titles is equitable. In addition, staff who take on extra responsibilities during transitions and vacancies are not often compensated for those extra duties; policies around this are requested.**
- **Benefits** was harder to draw direct comparisons, since the 2022 questions separated employee benefits into individual questions, but about 15% fewer staff were satisfied or very satisfied with the benefits package on average, and **erosion of benefits was mentioned as a big concern.** Some positive news: **about 25% more respondents in 2022 were satisfied or very satisfied with flexible work arrangements than respondents in 2019; however, there are still concerns about flexwork plans not being enacted equitably across similar jobs in different departments.** There is still apprehension about the fact that supervisors (or *their* supervisors) have authority to make across-the-board decisions without an independent agency enforcing equitable policies.

## Recognition & Appreciation

It is noteworthy that the priority ranking for recognition and appreciation has gone up by 15% since the 2019 survey, and more respondents agreed/strongly agreed in 2022 that they felt recognized and appreciated. This might be in part because of SUSC actions: this committee was able to propose and have approved three more staff recognition awards, and launched the "Kudos for Colleagues" initiative where staff can easily provide appreciation to each other by filling out a short online form. That said, the survey results still seem to point to a need for additional recognition programs.

**For this year's survey, an additional question was asked to determine what specifically makes staff feel appreciated. The overwhelming response was a person's supervisor at 59.61% of respondents; the next highest category was "other" at 13.3%.**

## Professional Development

There were some significant changes at Seattle University in the professional development realm between 2019 and 2022. President Peñalver introduced Staff Professional Formation as an official Reignited Strategic Directions committee, and that committee created a framework and was able to present research and proposals to various university bodies in 2022.

Of note: In 2019, 78% of respondents said they had professional development funds available; in 2022 that number plummeted to 8.3%, and 38% didn't know whether they had funds or not. However, 65% of respondents indicated they had been offered the opportunity to participate in Professional Development within the last year. It is unclear whether they were able to take part or were just offered the opportunity: **time for professional development was mentioned several times as something that needs to be supported or even mandated.** The previous note concerning inadequate job coverage during staff absences could be a reason some staff are unable to pursue even free development opportunities.

The survey solicited suggestions about preferred types of professional development, and the top three selections were on-campus workshops, guest speakers, and off-campus conferences, with SU classes/degrees/certifications not far behind these.

**There is a desire for more career advancement opportunities at Seattle University. Career ladders, and a better communication system about job openings, are highly sought.** The university would profit from action on this, as retaining talent is of benefit to both the university and individuals working here.

**Staff advocated for manager training throughout the survey, naming the most urgent areas for training as DEI concerns, use of pronouns and gender sensitivity, flexibility in work schedules, faculty who supervise staff, and respectful language and conduct toward staff.** There was also an expressed desire from recently promoted staff to receive training on how to conduct themselves as managers. **Finally, staff requested that faculty – not just faculty supervisors – participate equally in DEI training.** Note that because the survey came out before Human Resources launched its pilot Supervisor Training Courses, staff were unaware that supervisor/manager training would soon be available.

## Inclusion and Community

The staff priority ranking for Inclusion and Community was consistent between the surveys. New questions asked in 2022 concerned DEI training; **89% of respondents indicated they felt DEI training should be available annually or on an ongoing basis to make it even more impactful. More than half of staff (between 63% and 68% per question) answered that it was a priority/high priority for mandatory annual training, having DEI be part of goal setting, and/or identifying action steps for follow-up.**

When asked about increasing the sense of community on campus, staff showed significant interest in all nine of the listed activities in the survey; informal social events rated especially high. **Interest in communities of practice is noteworthy because it rated quite high even though it is more job-focused than social, and SU has no current program in place. This area especially merits development.**

## Staff and Faculty Interactions

This committee was created after the 2019 survey so there is no data to compare, but the topic arose throughout other survey categories in 2022. For example, in the survey's Inclusion section, staff requested more exhibited respect from faculty; staff also asked that faculty participate equally in DEI training. In the campus community section, staff expressed a desire for more interaction with faculty, especially non-work interactions.

In both SUSC meetings and in the survey, “practicing what we preach” was repeatedly articulated. **The Seattle University mission, vision, and values are important to staff, yet staff cite regular incidents of incivility and outright abusive behavior from faculty, and from students and/or their families (and less often but sometimes from other staff).**

## Also Worth Noting

Employees are concerned that staffing levels are inadequate, but comments made from leadership that there are currently fewer students than in 2019 while we have added “13 more staff” (SUSC has not received specific information on what positions were added) seem to indicate that leaders feel there is general overstaffing. In direct contrast to this, **47.64% of respondents chose “disagree” or “strongly disagree” to this statement: “My work unit is appropriately staffed in order to accomplish priorities and provide an adequate level of service” (whereas only about a third of staff agree/strongly agree).** 45% responded “disagree” or “strongly disagree” to: “I am confident my work unit has adequate coverage to complete my work if I am out of the office” (only 28% of staff indicated “agree” or “strongly agree”).



**When asked what attracted staff to or keeps staff at Seattle University, the most repeated answers were: colleagues/team members/co-workers; the SU Mission/Jesuit ethos; and being able to work with and help with students' educational and professional formation.** Noted in the same section were several comments indicating that people were actually not staying and were actively seeking other jobs.

## Conclusion

Progress has been made on several issues raised in the 2019 survey, and SUSC continues to help move the university forward in all the ways in which we are able. We hope that leadership will take note of the areas bolded throughout this report, which express the strongest sense of staff's concerns and values. These are things that need immediate attention as well as items that we might build upon. Finally, we want to reiterate that compensation and the need to include staff voices in decision-making were in the top three themes for both the 2019 and 2022 surveys, and we hope to work with leadership to address these issues in particular. Staff Council has appreciated the partnership with university leadership and campus thought partners as we all work to transform Seattle University into its best possible version.