

Kelsey Harmon Finn

Addressing Employee Needs in Higher Education:
A Data-Based Future Focused Leadership Session (BUS 2255)



**Welcome
and thank
you for
being here**

Kelsey Harmon Finn



UNLV



Learning outcomes

1. Validate the status of the higher education employment environment and employee satisfaction
2. Understand key elements that are affecting hiring and retaining talent in higher education
3. Apply knowledge learned to create and execute strategies to positively affect staff retention and satisfaction

A
little
about
you

Why did you pick this course
Years in higher ed
Different campuses
Feeling energized
Currently supervise others
Value of higher education

2023 HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

acuho-i
Making Campus Home

NIRSA[™]



The Society for College
and University Planning

COMPASS
GROUP



Study Overview



Objective

Understand the myriad of factors impacting the motivations and retention of higher education employees



Representation

- ☐ Campus leadership
- ☐ Staff
- ☐ Faculty



Methodology

Total respondent count = **431**

Survey tool disseminated across the memberships of ACUHO-I (n=57), NIRSA (n=255), SCUP (n=116), and AASHE (n=3)

Institutional Representation

66% **Four-year**

31% **Mid-size**

58% **Public**

44% **Urban**

49% **Large**

41% **Suburban**

Respondent demographics

97% Full-time employees

60% Student Affairs

65% Director or Assistant director level

40% Admin & Finance, Academic Affairs, Other

38% 10-20 years in higher ed

78% Ages 27-58

How We Reported These Stories: Our survey team fielded a 25-question online survey between October 24 and November 18, 2024, asking about the experiences of employees at higher-education institutions in the United States. The team collected 4,107 responses – from 1,402 administrators, 1,443 faculty members, and 1,262 staff – and for answers to four open-ended questions used AI to rank the frequency of themes that emerged. Reporters then used answers to the entire survey to inform their interviews with dozens of respondents and other higher-ed employees.



A CONSTANT SCRAMBLE

Higher Education Is Exhausted

By [Adrienne Lu](#) | February 10, 2025



SHIFTING SANDS

Higher-Ed Employees Think Their Workplaces Are Respectful – but Toxic

By [Megan Zahneis](#) | February 10, 2025



DATA

What It's Like to Work in Higher Ed

By [Brian O'Leary](#) | February 10, 2025



ADVICE: WORKING BETTER

Feeling Unappreciated? You're Not Alone.

By [Kevin R. McClure](#) | February 10, 2025



A SENSE OF PURPOSE

What Keeps Stressed-Out Faculty Members Going? Their Students.

By [Beth McMurtrie](#) | February 10, 2025



THE REVIEW | FORUM

16 Bold Ideas to Make Higher Ed a Better Place to Work

February 10, 2025

Addressing the shared goal of attracting & retaining staff



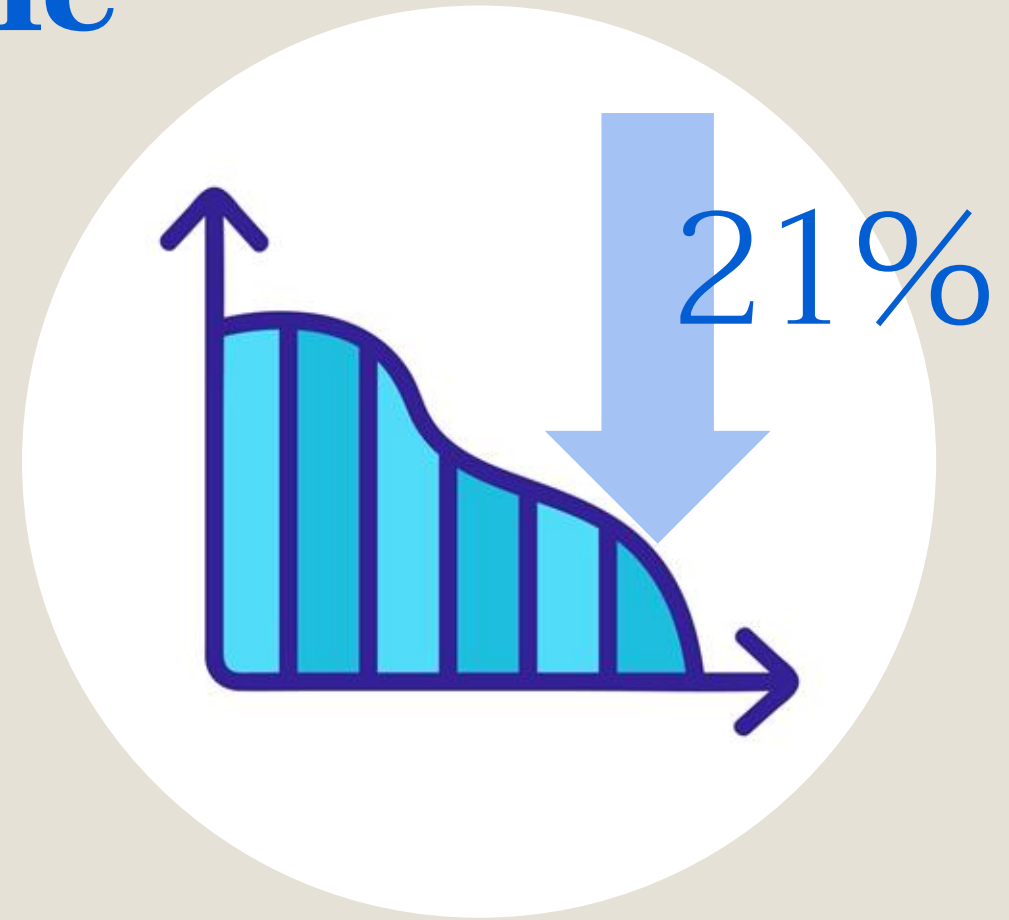


Pain Points:

What's driving
employee
dissatisfaction?

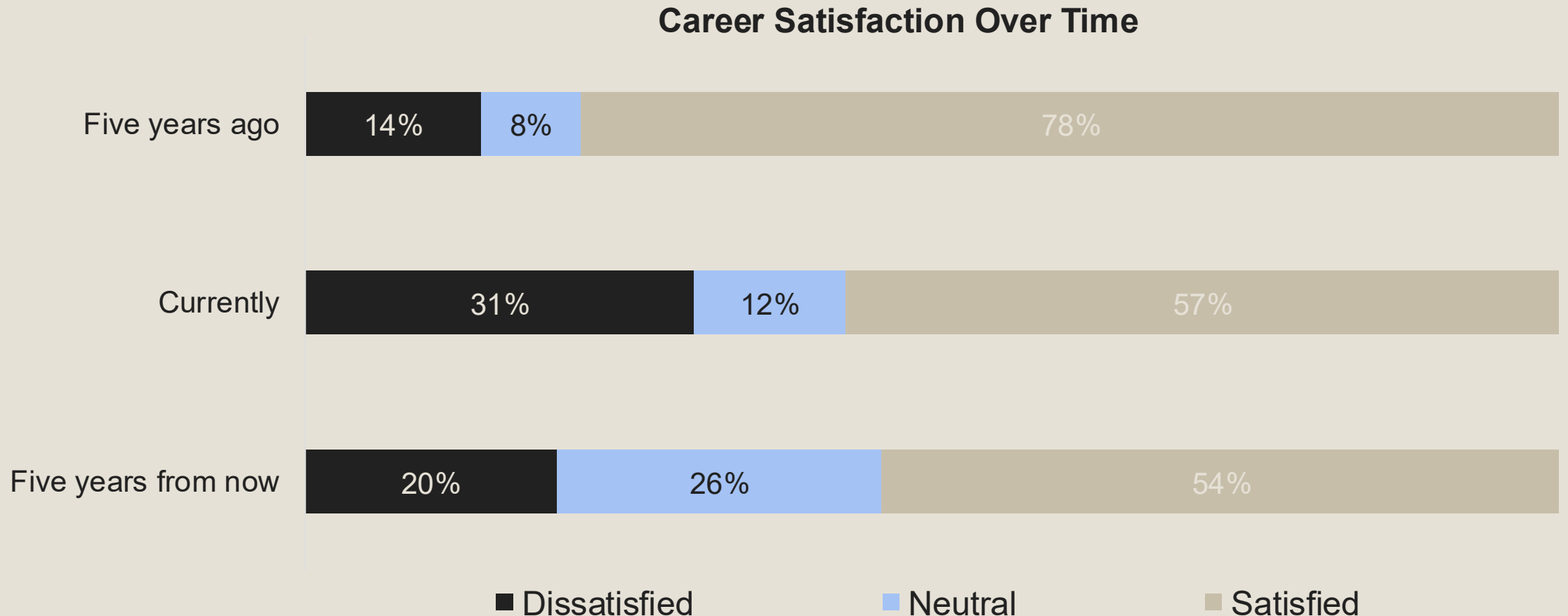
Overall satisfaction has been on the decline

Career satisfaction across higher education decreased 21%, from 78% in **2018** to 57% in **2023**.



Details to Note...

Please rate your overall satisfaction with working in Higher Ed across the following time frames



**Most team members feel
unheard by campus leadership**

About 57% of staff do not feel supported by or feel neutral about campus leadership

Over 50% of respondents indicated that campus leadership does not make purposeful decisions that improve the experiences of students, faculty and staff.



“They do not see or value the impact that their decisions have on the people doing the work.”

– NIRSA member

Perceptions of campus leadership

Staff appreciate campus leadership who show up for them, support their department, listen to their needs, and provide them with the necessary resources to be successful in their role.

Some campus leaders lack people management skills pertaining to communication, team engagement and management, and leadership.

Staff members feel unappreciated and undervalued by campus leadership compared to members of faculty at their institutions.

Oftentimes people they feel a

A New Episode

SNEAK PEEK!

CAMPUS CONFIDENTIAL

with Kelsey Harmon Finn
& Loren Rullman, Ph.D.



**Most team members feel
supported by their direct
manager**

77% of respondents feel supported by their direct manager

According to the Chronicle, only 22% of higher ed administrators feel their college prepares them to oversee a modern workforce.



“They do not engage me in projects for which I am qualified and have something to offer.

– ACUHO-I member”

What's driving turnover?



Compensation



Lack of growth opportunities



Flexible Schedules & Empowerment



Poor leadership



Feeling undervalued

Key Factors:

What makes a
difference to
employee
experiences?

Sense of purpose is critical

Respondents chose a career in higher education to impact the lives of students and for the mission and values of higher education in general.



63%

want to impact
the lives of
students

48%

driven by the
mission and
values of higher
ed



THIS WEEK'S GUESTS

DJ PEPITO CHAVEZ Senior Director for Research & Innovation,
Society for College & University Planning

& LISA WALKER Senior Consultant,
The Equity Group Consulting, Inc.



Positive attributes of a supportive direct supervisor

They are available for questions and provide help when needed (75%)

They care about my overall wellbeing (75%)

Actively practice transparent communication (62%)

Listen to feedback and follow-through with changes (57%)

Collaborate and partner effectively with others (56%)

Create an inclusive environment that acknowledges differences (54%)

[They are] not a micromanager; trusts and empowers me to make decisions and do my job.

– SCUP member

Positive attributes of supportive campus leadership

They have a clear and principled vision for the campus (57%)

They make purposeful decisions that improve the community's experience (55%)

Adaptive, open-minded, and forward thinking (51%)

Listen to feedback and follow-through with changes (30%)

Deep experience and expertise in higher ed (50%)

Create an inclusive environment that acknowledges differences (49%)

“They provide the needed resources for me to be effective.

– ACUHO-I member”



Campus
CONFIDENTIAL
Secrets to Higher Education Leadership

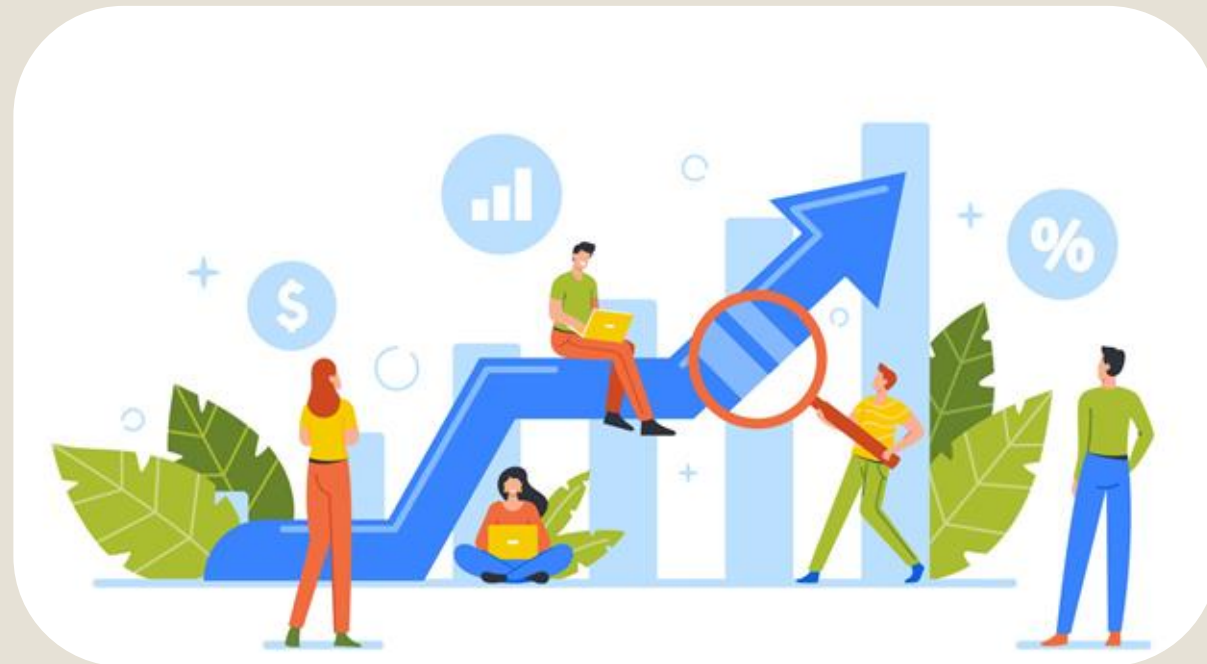
THIS WEEK'S GUESTS

ERIN MOORE RUDDY, E15
& ELYSE BAIS, E15



Top 5 desired training & development

1. Management that is aware of my career goals and assigns me to projects that prepare me for growth (48%)
2. Training on financial planning and strategy skills (48%)
3. Training on project management (46%)
4. Development on people management and effective leadership (41%)
5. Development on how to improve work-life balance and recover from or avoid burnout (34%)



Questions?

Pair & Share

Where do you see your own experience reflected in the survey data?

Where do you need more support or development?

What specific leadership practices do you implement regularly?

Which of your approaches have succeeded or failed, and why?

Report Out

Key takeaways from pair and share conversation?

Impactful leadership requires?

Courageous leadership
Communication skills
Authenticity
Flexibility
Transparency
Inclusivity
Vulnerability
Accountability

You know I will tell you that I learned

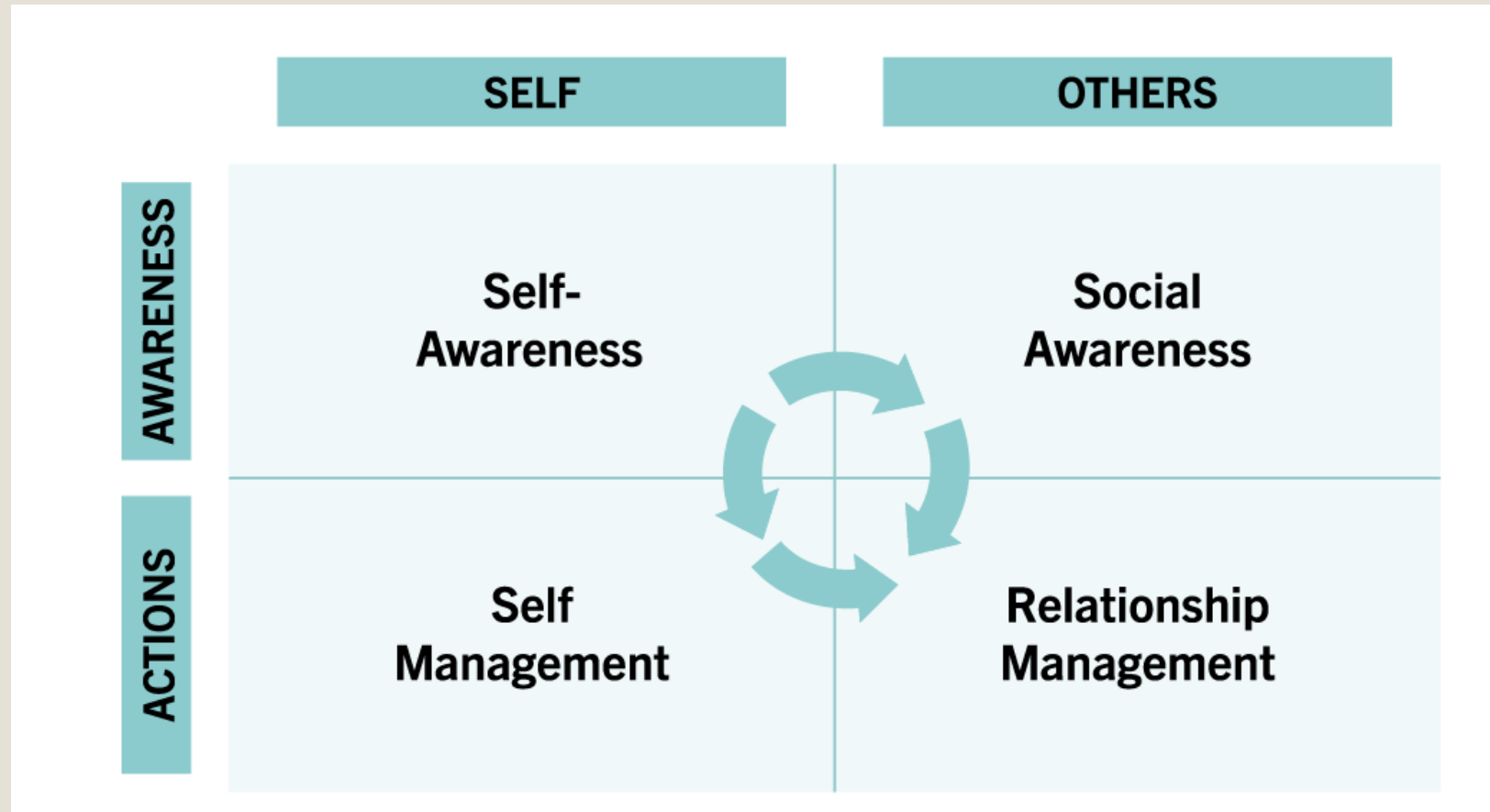


THIS WEEK'S GUESTS

DR. MORDECAI BROWNLEE President, Aurora
Community College

& MARY JANZ Executive Director of Housing and
Residence Life, Marquette University

Emotional Intelligence



Additional resources

Personality tools

DISC
Enneagram
Strengths Finder
Myers Briggs

Emotional Intelligence

Self Awareness
Self Regulation/Management
Social Awareness
Social Regulation/Management

Productivity tools

Working Genius
Traction (EOS)

Other resources

5 Dysfunctions of a team
BRAVING by Brene Brown
Maslow's Hierarchy of needs

**Final
thoughts &
questions?**



“

An institution's
growth is
constrained by
the sophistication
of its leadership.

”

Further reflection:
How can I hold space to
effectively have these
conversations more
often?



Thank you



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<https://www.linkedin.com/company/campusconfidential/>

