

---

# Executive Summary

## 2012 UH Staff Morale Survey Final Report

A survey of 1,169 staff members on the UH Main campus conducted in the Fall of 2012 indicates that in general, staff members at UH are a highly engaged workforce who enjoy their jobs, but are less satisfied with the 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 perceptions that pay and promotions may not always reflect their contributions, the level of support and quality of communication received from upper administration, and the fairness of procedures and communication strategies used by supervisors. Unlike in 2011, staff attitudes did not differ greatly across job categories. Notably, attitudes of staff working in Technical & Service Craft positions appear to have improved from 2011.

Together, these results suggest that the primary issue regarding staff morale is one of *feeling underappreciated*. The data suggest at least four strategies for managers at all levels who desire to improve staff morale: 1) communicate important information that affects staff to them in a clear and timely manner; 2) be open and candid in all communications with staff, particularly with information that pertains to performance feedback, raises, and promotion opportunities; 3) communicate with staff regarding what role they play in helping UH solidify its status as a Tier 1 research university; 4) find informal ways to demonstrate appreciation for staff contributions. Moreover, there are several strategies supervisors can implement to improve morale: 1) performance expectations should be communicated to staff in clear, unambiguous terms; 2) procedures and standards for pay and promotion decisions should be explained thoroughly and in clear, unambiguous terms; and 3) provide staff with accurate performance feedback year-round so that they know where they stand.

In 2011, the UH Staff Affairs Subcommittee of the UH Staff Council consulted with Dr. Lisa Penney (Associate Professor, Organizational Psychology) to develop and administer a survey to understand staff morale issues, including the factors that drive morale and how morale affects organizationally valued outcomes. In the summer of 2012, the UH Staff Council requested that a follow-up survey be administered in Fall 2012. Based on the results of the 2011 Survey and staff feedback, several changes were made to the 2012 survey. Because of staff concerns about the anonymity of their responses, no demographic information was collected in the 2012 survey. The survey length was also reduced by 42%. Finally, new items were added to the survey to gather more detailed information about two issues that staff identified as important in the 2011 Survey: communication quality and staff perceptions of fairness. However, the main goal of this survey, as in 2011, was to examine staff attitudes regarding their jobs and UH, identify aspects of the work environment that drive staff attitudes, and examine potential consequences of these attitudes.

UH staff received an email invitation from Staff Council to participate in an online version of the survey over a 2 week period in November-December 2012. Paper surveys in English and Spanish were also made available to staff with limited or no computer access. The survey contained 96 items and one open-ended item inviting staff to leave comments. Survey participants were asked to respond to a number of questions using a five-point scale (e.g., Strongly disagree to Strongly agree). All scales are reliable and valid measures of their respective constructs. Of the 1,169 staff members who attempted the online survey, 932 (80%) completed the entire survey and 333 (35.7%) included comments at the end. The survey participants represent every division and college on the main campus, as well as positions ranging from technical service craft (e.g., electrician, groundskeeper) to executive (e.g., deans, associate vice presidents).

Survey results indicate that staff are satisfied with their jobs in general (76%) and committed to UH (62%); thus we did not target those attitudes for further investigation. However, staff satisfaction with pay (16%) and promotions (20%), as well as perceptions of reward fairness (32%) were relatively low. A comparison of UH staff attitudes in 2011 and 2012 indicated few significant changes. However, although the 2011 survey indicated that staff in Technical & Service Craft jobs experienced more challenges to morale and poorer attitudes, the results of the 2012 survey indicate that the attitudes of those in Technical & Service Crafts jobs have increased to a level that is on par with attitudes of other staff at UH.

Because staff attitudes (i.e., satisfaction) were lowest for pay, promotions, and communication, additional analyses were conducted to identify the primary drivers of those attitudes. Results from multiple regression analyses indicate that pay satisfaction is primarily driven by division support, procedural fairness, and supervisor communication fairness. We identified similar drivers of staff promotion satisfaction. Specifically, staff satisfaction with promotion opportunities appears to be driven primarily by division support, communication from upper administration, and supervisor communication fairness.

---