

November 2023

Faculty and Staff Engagement Survey:

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS



UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA



Overview of Results

The University of Alberta is one of the top teaching and research institutions in Canada. Since our inception in 1908, we have built a reputation for excellence. Over the last 115 years the university has grown and plays an important role in Alberta, Canada, and globally. Between 2020-2023 the university experienced significant change, including restructuring through University of Alberta for Tomorrow (UAT) and reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic.

An engagement survey was administered in Fall 2019. However, as a result of the pandemic disruptions and significant restructuring, the survey results were not rolled out consistently to all faculties and units. The results of the 2019 survey are no longer reflective of the current environment and do not provide an appropriate benchmark for the university's current environment.

In 2023, many of the changes and challenges of the previous years are less prevalent, and the university is embarking on a new era initiated by the University Strategic Plan. As such, it is an opportune time to implement changes that will improve staff and faculty engagement and the overall culture at the university.

In May 2023, a faculty and staff survey was administered to gather perceptions about the university's strengths and areas of opportunity. This survey offered faculty and staff an opportunity to express their views on a variety of topics related to the work environment at their campus, faculty, unit and/or department, and their experiences in their role. The results are intended to guide senior leadership's commitment to work together to continuously improve as a university.

As we look forward, the 2023 survey results will provide the university with a benchmark to measure progress on faculty and staff engagement by using consistent methodologies for future surveys. Surveys will be conducted every two years.

Survey Participation

All faculty and staff employed as of April 1, 2023 were invited to take the survey. Respondents included continuing and temporary academic staff, salaried support staff, excluded staff, postdoctoral fellows, student employees and casual support staff.

The overall survey participation rate was 51% (5,368 participated out of 10,626 active employees). We are pleased with this participation rate for the survey.

Despite administering the survey to all faculty and staff, we are mindful the results are not necessarily proportional to the makeup of the university community. For example, the College of Health Sciences, post-doctoral fellows and graduate students are under-represented in the results, whereas the vice-president portfolios and academic administration are over-represented in the results.

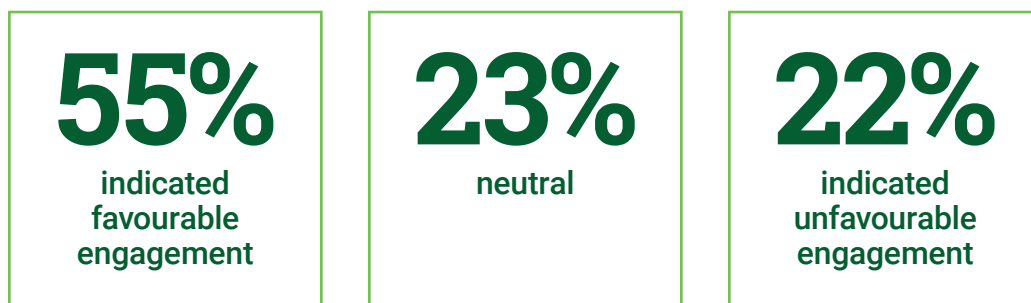
Survey Results and Analysis

The survey comprised 61 closed-response questions and two open-response questions. Survey results have been categorized into two key outcomes: engagement and enablement. When faculty and staff are engaged and enabled, they are motivated and able to succeed; can provide an optimal student experience; and are more likely to continue their employment and recommend the university to others.

Engagement

Engagement is defined as the “want to”. For example, are faculty and staff committed to the university, and are they willing to put in extra effort for the good of the university?

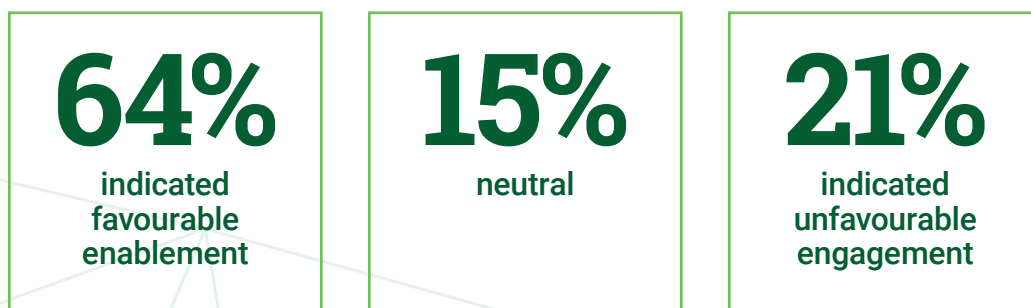
Of the respondents:



Enablement

Enablement is defined as the “can do.” For example, are faculty and staff’s skills and abilities fully utilized in their roles, and does the university environment support them in getting work done?

Of the respondents:



Both our favourable engagement score (55%) and our favourable enablement score (64%) are lower than the benchmarks provided by the survey administrators. These results are a starting place as we aim to grow engagement and enablement.

The neutral responses for engagement and enablement indicate there are short term opportunities to improve with action planning and further engagement initiatives.

Favourable, neutral and unfavourable responses provide insight into our strengths and opportunities as they relate to engagement and enablement.

Strengths

The survey results identified the following strengths, with favourable results ranging between 79% - 86%:

- Faculty and staff say that the person they report to treats them with respect and say that person is accessible when needed.
- People on their team are committed to delivering high-quality services.
- Have a good understanding of the health and safety rules and procedures.
- Feel respected as individuals.
- Faculty and staff are in roles that are the right fit for their skills, abilities and provides room to grow.

Opportunities

The results show the greatest opportunities to increase engagement and enablement, with favourable results ranging between 24% and 73% are:

- Improving how the university listens to the concerns of employees.
- Improving effective sharing of ideas and resources across the university.
- Increasing confidence in the university's organization and structure.
- Increasing trust and confidence in executive leadership's (president, provost, and vice-presidents) actions and behaviours.
- Prioritize lifting barriers for faculty and staff as related to: lack of resources; sharing of information; provision of high quality support from across the university, inadequate training; and ensuring staff have sufficient authority to carry out their role.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity

Seventy percent of respondents answered favourably regarding the university's success at creating a favourable employee experience regarding equity, diversity and inclusion. Although results are less favourable than the external benchmarks (by 10 percentage points), there was a high favourable result about fair treatment (85%) and differences being respected (77%).

The university has achieved a diverse workforce with more young people, women and other gender identities than generally reported in Canada. However, the results of this survey and those of the U of A Workforce EDI Census indicate that more effort is needed to increase the number of Indigenous persons and persons with a disability.

Reflections

Faculty and staff are central to supporting the core missions of teaching and research.

The survey reflects sentiments around the challenges faculty and staff experience. The responses to the survey help us proactively work together across the university. While there are opportunities for improvement, the survey shows there is a strong foundation of pride in and for the university as well as optimism for the future.

The time faculty and staff took to provide their feedback is greatly appreciated. As with any honest and good feedback, some of it is hard to hear. Leadership knows improvement is needed, is committed to doing better, and will work together with faculty and staff to do better.

Our survey results are less favorable, in most cases, than external benchmarks. While these benchmarks are informative, it is most important that we focus on survey-over-survey results, internal benchmarking, and improvement over time as we measure our results and progress. We will use all these measures to check our progress and ensure we are doing what is needed to garner increased engagement and enablement of faculty and staff.

Intersections with Current Initiatives & Strategies

There is significant work already underway to support the core missions of teaching and research at the university, including but not limited to: a new University Strategic Plan; *Student Experience Action Plan*; *Forward with Purpose - Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation*; *Braiding Past, Present and Future*; refresh of the Strategic Plan for Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity; *Culture of Care*; *Continuous Administrative Service Improvement Program (CASIP)*; and *Budget Model 2.0*. These initiatives, which have been responsive to feedback, work in conjunction with survey results to improve faculty and staff engagement and enablement.

What's Next: Action Planning

Senior leaders will begin university-wide action planning and are committed to transparency. By addressing opportunities (as listed above) during action planning, leadership can demonstrate that a supportive environment for faculty and staff is a priority.

Supervisors will receive results for their area and will work directly with their teams to share survey results, discuss specific feedback, and to implement changes that will increase engagement and enablement.

Following the distribution of survey results to supervisors, senior leadership will be hosting town halls open to the university community and results will be shared broadly. The university will provide comprehensive reporting, will continue to offer avenues for feedback on the results, and hear how the community would like to see the strengths and opportunities addressed.

All of the actions taken in response to the survey results will be in service of our faculty and staff, starting with a commitment in the new University Strategic Plan:

“Our talented faculty, staff, and students represent the critical foundation for our university’s past achievements and our future ambitions. If we are serious about making lasting, meaningful impacts on people’s lives, we must take deliberate steps to ensure we support the people of our university and create a culture where everyone can achieve their full potential.”