

**University of Arizona**  
**Millennium Project Phase II:**  
**Enhancing the Climate for Excellence at the University**

**Executive Summary**

The purpose of the second phase of the University of Arizona (UA) Millennium Project is to assess the quality of work life of the year-to-year Appointed Personnel and Classified Staff in order to enhance the climate for excellence at the University. The quality of work life of support personnel at colleges and universities is rarely measured, and yet, these employees perform vital tasks that enable the functioning of the entire enterprise. Their issues and concerns, as reported in this study, deserve the attention of the full University community.

Based on the available literature and a series of facilitated discussion groups, two questionnaires--one for year-to-year Appointed Personnel and one for Classified Staff--were designed to reflect concerns and to measure satisfaction with the quality of their work lives. Many issues are common to both groups; thus, the questions on the surveys were largely parallel, allowing comparability of the responses. Employees belonging to these two groups, and not previously included in the Millennium Project Phase I, were invited to respond.

Overall, **fifty-three percent** of the support personnel, over fifty percent from each group, returned their surveys. The analysis of data included both quantitative and qualitative indicators of employee satisfaction with their jobs, their morale regarding the institution, and the likelihood that they will leave their positions or the University. The detailed findings, disaggregated for each group of support personnel and by gender, race and ethnicity, are presented in Appendices 1 through 8 in Volume II. The full report is available online at: <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~millen/millen2.htm>.

Many positive aspects of the University are identified by the findings. Most employees, whether Appointed Personnel or Classified Staff, enjoy their jobs and working for the University. The great majority reports they have positive working relationships with their colleagues. They feel their co-workers trust them. Many employees surveyed report loyalty and commitment to the University. They are proud to be UA employees.

Qualitative comments point to the President of the University, Dr. Peter Likins, as one of the primary reasons employees value and respect the University. They refer repeatedly to the integrity with which he leads.

However, examination of the overall findings reveals and underscores the need to attend to community building within the University. The specific recommendations developed in the report and listed in this Executive Summary are intended to support the following overarching goal:

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*To build a University community that honors the contributions of all its members in meeting the mission of a student-centered research institution. Building such a community means:*

- *Treating all members of the community with respect and civility;*
  - *Recognizing and rewarding good work in all units, at every level;*
  - *Ensuring that all members of the community receive fair compensation and the resources necessary to accomplish their jobs;*
  - *Creating a safe and open climate for sharing concerns, criticisms and ideas.*
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## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are grounded in the findings of the study. The intent of the recommendations is to improve the quality of work lives of Appointed Personnel and Classified Staff and to build a University community that honors the contributions of all of its members. The severe fiscal challenges facing the University and the state may preclude immediate response to issues of pay and benefits, but plans should be developed now to make alleviating these problems a priority as soon as fiscal conditions improve. Many of these recommendations are far more dependent on leadership, climate, and values. Work on these issues should begin immediately.

### **LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISION**

**PROBLEM:** *Limited opportunity for employees to evaluate supervisors.*

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Employees must be afforded the opportunity to contribute constructive feedback on a confidential basis as part of the supervisor's annual evaluation.
- The University should establish performance standards and evaluation criteria for management and supervision.
- Given findings about the lack of trust and mutual respect (32 percent of Classified Staff and 27 percent of Appointed Personnel are not satisfied with the climate in terms of trust and mutual respect), the University should mandate the use of periodic, comprehensive evaluations of every supervisor that allow input from subordinates, peers, and constituents.
- Evaluations should be used as a tool for supervisor coaching and development. When appropriate, the outcomes of these evaluations should lead to mandatory training for supervisors to upgrade supervisory skills.

**PROBLEM:** *Lack of sufficient training of supervisors.*

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Supervisors need to be knowledgeable about University policies regarding evaluation, the administration of merit increases, and career advancement. They should have a clear understanding of the values and culture of UA and of their responsibilities to prevent harassment and discrimination and to promote a respectful learning and working environment.

- All new hires with supervisory responsibilities should be required to attend a special orientation designed to enhance supervisory skills and specific to this University.
- All employees who advance to supervisory positions, and who fail to demonstrate previous supervisory training, should be required to attend supervisor development programs.
- Current supervisors must recognize that supervisory skills are enhanced through continuous professional development. As appropriate, supervisors should be prepared to demonstrate that they have engaged in activities designed to improve their skills in management and supervision.

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT**

Many employees report they see no way to move up at UA. Given the lack of consistent Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) and the lack of money even for merit raises, the only way to receive higher pay is to have the opportunity to move ahead in your career. Findings indicate that many employees lack information about the opportunities that are available.

**PROBLEM:** *Insufficient opportunities for promotion or lateral transfer.*

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The University should provide clear information about the multiple career paths available to support personnel at UA and expand career development training to educate both employees and supervisors about these opportunities. All opportunities should be broadly communicated.
- During orientation, the University should make clear to all new employees its philosophy and practices regarding career development and advancement. This will allow employees to take an active, realistic role in planning their own career development.
- Supervisors should encourage career development and advancement for their staff (even if it means the eventual recruiting of a new employee). Employees should be encouraged to use release time for professional development, as granted through University policy.
- Many employees believe they should be able to advance without leaving their present unit. In order to apply new skills, training, or degrees, employees need

to recognize that they may have to pursue promotion opportunities outside their current unit or make lateral transfers.

- Communication should be clear regarding advancement opportunities within units. It is vital that supervisors do not create unrealistic expectations regarding advancement opportunities.
- It is important to create a culture that supports lateral moves that make better use of employees' newly developed skills when promotion opportunities may not exist.
- When "in-class career progression" is possible within a unit, the criteria for this type of advancement should be made clear to employees and consistently applied.

**PROBLEM: *Inadequate availability of mentoring.***

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- UA should make mentoring more broadly available to Appointed Personnel and Classified Staff. While supervisors share a responsibility to make sure employees receive the mentoring they need, UA should foster a broad concept of mentoring with many options and should encourage extensive and creative ways for linking those who desire mentoring with mentors.
- Employees should assume responsibility for determining the extent and type of mentoring. It should be made clear to employees that mentoring is available upon request, but that it is their choice to participate.

**SALARY AND BENEFITS**

A number of factors are contributing to employee dissatisfaction with working conditions at the University. Within the last year health care options have become more limited with increased out-of-pocket costs for many employees, promised raises were curtailed, and persistent increases in costs associated with working at the University have reduced overall net income for some employees. While no singular issue is seen as a cause of workplace dissatisfaction, it must be recognized that the convergence of recent and recurring events is contributing to poor morale.

**PROBLEM: *Low salary and/or wages.***

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- As part of a continuing broad-based effort to raise salaries to market level, priority should be given to informing members of the legislature and the Arizona Board of Regents of the consequences of below market salaries, and that employees are continuing to fall farther behind.
- Employees should be classified appropriately and compensated for the work they do. When duties have changed in response to the needs of the department, employees should be appropriately re-classified. Supervisors should view this as a priority that not only contributes to the appropriate compensation of employees, but also improves job satisfaction, morale, and retention.
- Every effort should be made to eliminate the "working poor" at UA. Increases in health care costs and parking fees intensify the impact of low wages and contribute to the perception of unfairness. The University needs to address the starkest inequities first.
- Particularly for Appointed Personnel and Classified Staff, an annual Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) **must** be made prior to any consideration of merit increase. When overall salaries and/or wages are relatively low and there is no annual across-the-board increase, supervisors often feel compelled to reward everyone in their charge, because everyone is underpaid. Merit is thus undermined. When merit is awarded above and beyond COLA, it is far more likely to be perceived as fair (see following discussion).

**PROBLEM: *Perceived inequities in merit pay increases.***

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Employees perceive merit pay as being distributed unfairly. The University must determine why so many employees report they feel this way (45 percent of Classified Staff and 38 percent of Appointed Personnel are not satisfied with the equity in merit pay increases), despite indicating that their own performance evaluations are fair (66 percent of Classified Staff and 61 percent of Appointed Personnel are satisfied with the fairness of their evaluations).
- In accordance with accepted personnel practice, merit increases should be tied to performance evaluations. Therefore, **every** University employee **must** be reviewed annually. Supervisors must be held accountable for conducting

evaluations seriously, fairly, and consistently. Results of evaluations should be shared and discussed with each employee.

- Supervisors should receive training regarding the equitable distribution of merit pay. Their own performance appraisals should reflect accountability in this area.
- Procedures should be established for the evaluation of Appointed Personnel that are appropriate to the category of employee (e.g., peer or supervisor review). This would require clarification of Appointed Personnel categories to determine when peer review is relevant. Past efforts to revamp the categorization of Appointed Personnel have resulted in frustration and little change; nonetheless, the University should commit to developing a simple, basic classification system with broad categories for purposes of evaluation, market comparison and compensation.
- Additional forms of compensation should be explored beyond COLA and merit, such as bonuses, which do not add to base salary, for extraordinary effort in a particular year.
- Part of the reason that people are concerned with inequity in merit is that there is a lack of other recognition and reward systems. The University must develop additional systems of recognition and reward that may not be tied to compensation. Approximately half of each respondent group report that they are satisfied with the recognition they receive for their contributions to their unit. The other half is neutral or dissatisfied. The University must find ways to value and recognize its employees by showing appreciation for a job well done. Such opportunities for recognition are particularly important in times of financial hardship.

**PROBLEM:** *Access to and affordability of parking at and around the University.*

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The exceptionally high level of dissatisfaction combined with the high level of importance reported by both Appointed Personnel and Classified Staff mandate that the University find better ways to address parking issues. A special task force should be established to identify viable solutions.
- UA must think creatively about the parking situation. Developing new alternatives, such as the following, should be given high priority.
  - Subsidize parking cost for lowest income groups or charge fees proportional to salary.
  - Provide additional, low cost, remote site parking lots with shuttle service.

- Provide payroll deduction for bus passes.
- Given the large number of employees and students who must travel to and from UA daily, UA should work more closely with the City of Tucson to increase transportation alternatives.
  - Increase the availability and location of Park and Ride facilities.
  - Expand express bus service.
  - Increase the number of safe bicycle routes to campus.

**PROBLEM: *Increased cost of health care.***

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The University should address the issue of steep increases for out-of-pocket health plan related expenses, such as co-pays and prescriptions, especially for low-income employees.
- Given the high proportion of state workers employed by the Universities, the Arizona Board of Regents should take a more active role in reflecting university employees' concerns with regard to health care benefits.

**PROBLEM: *Inadequate childcare options.***

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Respondents report childcare is an important area of dissatisfaction. This finding is consistent with previous research from Millennium Project Phase I and other campus climate surveys. Hence, the University should continue to investigate new solutions for childcare support.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of current options such as the voucher system and the Sick Child Care Program.
- Explore alternative work arrangements, such as job sharing, flextime, and telecommuting, which alleviate the need for childcare.
- Programs at peer institutions should be reviewed to identify new ways of addressing the childcare issue.

**PROBLEM: *Lack of state government support.***

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- President Likins is encouraged to continue his leadership role in efforts to ensure that the members of the state legislature recognize the contributions of higher education to the welfare and vitality of the state. Alliances with Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University may be fruitful in this effort.
- The legislature must make higher education funding a priority. Until the legislature provides adequate funding, the University will not be able to fully address salary and benefit problems.
- Employees share a responsibility to participate in the process of reaching out to legislators on their own time.

**CLIMATE OF RESPECT AND CIVILITY**

Many respondents feel the University does not value its employees. There is a belief that the University is not a caring institution. Findings indicate that morale among both Appointed Personnel and Classified Staff is affected by a pervasive lack of trust and mutual respect. Additionally, qualitative comments report a caste system that perpetuates a perception of lack of respect between employee groups.

While findings indicate that the vast majority of Appointed Personnel and Classified Staff have never experienced harassment or discrimination, the number of employees who report occasional or more frequent incidents is of great concern. Further, it is evident that a number of support personnel fear retribution or retaliation from their supervisors for criticisms or comments intended to improve the work environment. Retaliation can range from social isolation or paperwork that "falls through the cracks" to loss of support for professional development, inequitable compensation, or even loss of job.

**PROBLEM: *Perceived lack of caring and respect.***

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Promoting civility should be as central to the mission of our University as are research and student success. The University must articulate as one of its core values respect and civility for all members of the University community (Faculty, Appointed Personnel, Classified Staff, Administration, and Students).

- The University must expect all administrators and supervisors to demonstrate a commitment to civility and to promote a climate of respect for all.
- Search criteria for all positions should include a demonstrated commitment to the core values of civility and respect. Candidates for administrative or supervisory positions should be expected to articulate examples of experience and successes in this area.
- The University must model respect and civility during all searches and should treat all candidates in that fashion.

**PROBLEM:** *Numerous reports of perceived harassment and discrimination.*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The University must adopt a ‘zero tolerance’ policy with regard to harassment and discrimination. Such a policy should demand clear and consistent consequences for non-compliance. This policy must be articulated broadly to the campus. Accountability for this policy must rest at the highest levels of the administration.
- Authority and responsibility to investigate and resolve incidents of perceived harassment or discrimination should be assigned to a member of the University’s senior administration. It should be noted that not all reported incidents may constitute harassment or discrimination as defined by law. This should not remove the University from the responsibility of taking seriously complaints from those who perceive their treatment as inappropriate.
- Some instances of perceived harassment may stem from misunderstandings between cultures, particularly in the case of international differences. UA should explore methods of better educating employees regarding these differences to promote cultural understanding and the demonstration of appropriate behavior within the diverse University context.
- Policies regarding sexual harassment and discrimination must be more broadly publicized and should be incorporated into orientation and training programs for all administrators and supervisors.
- Information regarding employee rights in situations of harassment and discrimination should be available to all employees.
- Safe Zone training should be expanded to include the concept of providing safe environments for those that feel they have experienced or are experiencing harassment or discrimination.

- The University must insure there is no retaliation against individuals who report incidents of harassment and discrimination.
- Units currently involved in the reporting or investigation of incidents of harassment and discrimination should publish public reports of their findings on an annual basis. These reports should address the types of issues that occur and the steps taken to resolve them without revealing specific details that would affect personnel confidentiality.
- UA should investigate practices designed to eliminate harassment and discrimination at peer institutions to identify ways in which to enhance its own efforts.

**PROBLEM: *Fear of retaliation.***

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Supervisors should create a climate for open, constructive input from all employees. Such a climate must be instilled through leadership by the head of every administrative unit.
- Employees report that it is sometimes more productive to leave a department rather than to continue to work in or to report an intolerable situation or hostile environment. The University needs to have a better understanding of why people move from unit to unit. In some cases, such moves may indicate un-resolvable issues with supervisors or co-workers.
- The University should provide a mechanism for employees to voice complaints without fear of retribution. A conscientious effort must be made to examine the validity of reports and determine solutions.
- Reprisals or retaliation against employees who report unethical conduct or practices that violate University policy must not be tolerated.
- UA should develop and/or expand avenues for employees to seek safe, confidential assistance when problems cannot be resolved within their unit. Such resources should be promoted widely.

## **ACTION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The University must demonstrate a commitment to improvement in the areas highlighted in the Millennium Project Phase II Report by taking the following actions:

- Appoint an oversight committee. The Millennium Project Action Committee (MPAC) should include representatives of both Appointed Personnel and Classified Staff (in numbers proportional to their representation throughout the University). Members of MPAC should include representatives from colleges and major administrative divisions, as well as off-campus and branch campus locations.
- Provide staff support to assist in the implementation of recommendations stemming from this report.
- Provide support for the further analysis of data gathered through the Millennium II study. Additional analysis will determine correlations between factors and may identify further areas for attention and intervention.
- Conduct a follow-up study of Appointed Personnel and Classified Staff in five years (2007) to determine progress toward improvement in each of the key areas identified by this project.

## **FINAL COMMENT**

The immediate intent of the University of Arizona Millennium Project Phase II, is to improve the quality of work lives of Classified Staff and Appointed Personnel employed at the University. The ultimate goal is to build a University community that supports and honors the contributions of all of its members. The findings and recommendations reported in this document can provide direction to accomplish these ends.

President Likins and members of the University administration are to be commended for undertaking the Millennium Project Phase II. It is a rare academic institution that looks seriously at the quality of the work environment experienced by support personnel. This administration clearly recognizes that support personnel provide vital services to the University community and that their concerns deserve attention.

If concrete actions are taken to enact the recommendations offered here, both the staff and the University stand to gain. The work lives of staff members will be more satisfying and meaningful, and the University will ensure the loyalty and commitment of the many talented individuals they employ.

The current fiscal challenges facing the University are formidable, but retaining and rewarding talented and dedicated employees must always be a priority. Fortunately,

many of the concerns raised in this report can be addressed with no-cost or low-cost solutions. When matters of respect, civility and fairness become part of the ethos of the University, all members of the community will benefit. When such core values are modeled by leaders and expected of all employees throughout the University, the development of an institutional culture that fosters productivity, creativity, and excellence can be realized.