

Spring 2021 Employee Climate Survey Qualitative Data Executive Summary

GENERAL OVERVIEW

A total of **1,390** faculty, staff, and administrators (**19.9% response rate**) participated in the spring 2021 Employee Climate Survey; this number of respondents meets the requirements to be considered a representative¹ sample of the University's population. The aggregate quantitative data have been shared with the campus community.

This report provides a summary of the qualitative data (open-ended responses) from the survey, by theme, as is standard best practice. The objective of the thematic qualitative analysis is to provide additional context to the quantitative data. Individual comments in their entirety are not included in order to safeguard the confidentiality of the respondents, which was guaranteed in the survey invitation and opening statement.

The last quantitative question asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with the climate at UofL. The question was then filtered to into three open-ended questions based on response asking why respondents were Satisfied, Neutral, or Dissatisfied with the climate at UofL.

DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of **879**² individuals responded to the open-ended questions; their demographics are provided below, along with the overall UofL percentages displayed in red within brackets for comparative reference:

Position: **63.8%** [UofL = **59.8%**] staff (98.6% FT, 1.4% PT), **33.2%** [UofL = **38.9%**] faculty (89% FT, 11% PT), **2.6%** [UofL = **1.3%**] administrators, and **0.3%** didn't answer.

Race/Ethnicity: **73%** [UofL = **71.9%**] White; **9.1%** [UofL = **10%**] Black or African American; **2.5%** [UofL = **7.2%**] Asian; **1.8%** [UofL = **1.7%**] two or more races; **1.6%** [UofL = **2.6%**] Hispanic or Latino; **0.6%** "another race"; **0.3%** [UofL = **0.2%**] American Indian/Alaskan Native; **0.2%** [UofL = **0.1%**] Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; **10.4%** selected "prefer not to answer"; and **0.5%** didn't answer.

Gender Identity: **56.2%** female, **31.7%** male, **1%** non-binary, **0.5%** Gender nonconforming, **0.3%** transgender male, **0.2%** transgender female, **0.2%** different identity, **8.2%** selected "prefer not to answer," and **1.6%** didn't answer.

Note: Gender identity was not included in the UofL comparison since UofL official records currently only record "male" and "female". If you have additional questions regarding the demographic breakdowns, please contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at iesurvey@louisville.edu.

¹ Sample size calculations based on a total faculty and staff population of 6,997, and a 95% confidence level with a 3% margin of error (the range that the population's responses may deviate from the sample).

² Representativeness is not statistically calculated for qualitative data since the aim is inductive and holistic.

METHODOLOGY

The open-ended responses were reviewed by staff members of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) to ensure agreement on overarching themes and sub-themes that were used to code the data.

Each response was coded into as many separate themes as applicable, based on the content. This means that in instances where individuals addressed multiple themes within their response, their response was split accordingly and each portion of the comment, or “sentiment” was placed within the appropriate theme. This resulted in a total of 1,605 themed sentiments.

THEMES

A total of 1,605 sentiments (from the 879 respondents) —382 (24%) positive, 1,061 (66%) negative, and 162 (10%) neutral³—were coded into the themes and subthemes below. The percentage to the right of the theme represents the total number of sentiments related to that theme.

Positive Themes

Climate/Morale (7.8%): Great place to work, friendly atmosphere; UofL is handling pandemic well; climate is getting better and more inclusive; employees like their teams/colleagues.

Leadership/Supervision (4.8%): UofL administration working towards improving campus, appreciate efforts to make change; leadership has been able to adapt; Neeli continues to be a breath of fresh air, genuine leader; managing UofL’s financial situation; UofL leadership is honest, compassionate; Deans and immediate supervisors treat colleagues with respect and trust, provide support, and create an environment for professional growth.

General Impressions (4.5%): Employees feel safe, satisfied with work environment, workload; UofL is on the right track.

Diversity (1.2%): UofL is making progress/adjustments towards inclusion and equity; forward thinking; able to have open dialogue; progressive compared to the state.

Benefits (1.2%): Satisfied with benefits provided, leave time; feel supported by training opportunities and tuition remission.

Other (2.2%): Satisfied with facilities, compensation, staffing, institutional reputation, job growth opportunities, current work situation.

³ Most neutral sentiments were general, or aligned with the sentiments in this report, and were therefore not included to place further emphasis on positive and negative themes.

Negative Themes

Leadership/Supervision (11.5%): UofL (admin and Deans) need to communicate better; communication does not trickle down from leadership to departments; concerns with management of fiscal budget; lack of funding in departments, research; more transparency with financial standing; rushed policy making; faculty/staff are left out of decisions that affect all; hard to trust leadership with UofL's past; leadership talks about initiating change, but actions are not as visible; professional development needed for supervisors – how to lead, conflict resolution, coaching; HR needs better reporting procedures and more accountability; fear of retaliation for critiquing leadership; prioritizing Belknap campus over other campuses; system of favoritism – friendships promoted over competence; pay gaps in leadership and everyone else.

Compensation (11.3%): Employees are overqualified and underpaid; compensation should be comparable to local companies, peer institutions; no way to get promotions or raises; evaluations do not mean anything if raises are impossible; gained more skills or education (degrees) but pay has not changed; rates of pay make it difficult to recruit or retain qualified faculty and staff; cost of living increases while pay has not; no raises perpetuates low morale; reward work knowledge, competencies to determine compensation; pay equity for BIPOC.

Climate/ Morale (8.3%): Employees are told to do more with less; heavy workloads, lack of work/life balance; hierarchy resides over teamwork; faculty are prioritized over staff; staff are not part of policy decision-making; lack of vision, trajectory; more acknowledgement of employees for contributions; overworked with little recognition; UofL is more corporate than genuine; work is often slowed by bureaucracy or other employees-stymies creativity and optimism; lack of professionalism in some departments; little time for self-care; no accountability for administrators who don't do their part; length of service not respected.

Diversity (6.4%): Race and gender pay inequities; initiatives and communication about anti-racism feel performative; lack of transparency with strategy; difficult to change people; lack of resources/opportunities to recruit and retain BIPOC faculty/staff; conservative voices feel silenced; need better treatment of Black academic community; better support and resources for LGBTQ+ and BIPOC students; little understanding among employees of minority issues and concerns; leadership pushes off accountability with committees; desire to stay out of politics; incidents of racism and sexism still happen on campus; ageism in the workplace; lack of understanding of international/global perspectives.

Other (5.7%): COVID and furloughs disrupted work; concerns about safety on outskirts of Belknap campus, HSC; struggles with mental health affecting work; workload strain on adjuncts; some offices are not taking a student-first mentality; disheartening when students don't feel supported; student success should be defined for every office on campus; lack of concern towards student barriers; bullying in the workplace; feeling of disconnection; lack of connection for offices not on Belknap campus; concern with institutional reputation.

General Frustrations (3.4%): University is more reactionary than proactive; lack of accountability; concern with athletic image; lack of childcare accommodations; siloed, lack of communication between departments.

Staffing Concerns (3.2%): Exceptional staff are leaving; need to examine why people are leaving different areas; areas short on staff; taking on double workloads as positions aren't replaced; not able to replace positions due to funding; offices are operating with too few people to make major changes; physical plant understaffed; furloughed during busy times.

Professional Job Growth (3.2%): No opportunities for promotion, advancement; have to switch departments to advance; better mentoring for new faculty; no value for education levels of staff; faculty of color underpromoted; heavy workload for part-time lecturers without opportunities for permanent positions; less focus on research growth.

Benefits (3.1%): Will retirement contributions return to pre-pandemic levels?; no incentive to do meaningful work; admin gets pay increases while employees lose benefits; other companies offer better benefits; can't use vacation time because of workload and worry of increasing burden on others; need benefits/leave that are in line with other R1 schools; tuition remission narrowed (UofL only).

Facilities/Physical Resources (2.6%): Need campus building improvements, put more resources into fixing current buildings; dated equipment and furniture; need more staffing to help maintain campus facilities; resources not properly allocated; better research facilities; inability to maintain HSC grounds, parking garages; outskirts of Belknap campus are messy; lack of funding for anything but bare essentials.

COVID-19 (7.6%)

Positive (23%): Employees feel more productive while remote working; would like to continue having remote work options; satisfied with overall COVID-19 procedures; satisfied with university leadership response towards COVID-19.

Negative (72.1%): Losing retirement contribution was demoralizing; retirement changes affected personal finances; COVID-19 has affected mental health among faculty and staff; burnout is high; increased workload during pandemic; faculty must balance teaching, research, service, and student needs; increased regulations while still needing to provide same amount of support for students; administration has done little to acknowledge increased challenges; employees feel expendable; university chose bottom line over safety; COVID-19 procedures were left up to interpretation for each department; UofL racing to return to "old" normal when they should be embracing the changes; sense of isolation from colleagues, empty campus; lack of compliance towards COVID protocols, need more universal protocols.

Neutral (4.9%): Need universal COVID-19 measures; some departments could use more PPE.