USAC Annual Report

Introduction

Each year, the Staff Compensation and Benefits Subcommittee (SCBS) of the University Staff Advisory Committee (USAC) prepares a report detailing activities conducted to solicit feedback from staff regarding their employee experience at The Ohio State University.

Consistent themes remain of university-wide interest or concern among Ohio State Staff members based on feedback provided by staff from 2011-2015. These areas include:

- Communication and Transparency
- Professional Development
- University Support and Assistance Programs
- Work/Life Balance
- Rewards and Recognition
- Retention
- Crime Prevention Programs

Methods

SCBS obtained information of best practices through benchmarking against Ohio State peers and aspirants in key areas. In addition, SCBS reached out to several university offices to gain a better understanding of available services, and continued to reach out to staff for input from their perspective in these key areas.
SCBS members held meetings with staff in the following university programs/offices:

- The Office of Human Resources (Learning and Development, Special Events)
- Employee Assistance Program
- Office of Public Safety
- University Employee Assistance Program
- Wexner Medical Center
- Ohio State University Police Department
- Office of Distance Education and eLearning

In addition, SCBS administered online surveys to gather information about staff experiences in the following areas:

- Flexible Work Policy and Work Benefit
- Reward and Recognition
- University Support and Assistance Programs

Finally, SBSC presented a series of USAC “Roadshows” to make staff more aware of services provided by USAC and to solicit in person feedback.

This report includes a summary of our findings and recommendations for addressing staff concerns in the areas outlined above.
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Executive Summary

The Staff Compensation and Benefits Subcommittee (SCBS) of the University Staff Advisory Committee (USAC) reached out to several university offices, conducted online surveys, and obtained information of best practices through benchmarking against Ohio State peers and aspirants to address new and recurring themes identified through staff feedback forums from 2011-2015. These areas include:

- Communication and Transparency
- Professional Development
- University Support and Assistance Programs
- Work/Life Balance
- Rewards and Recognition
- Staff Retention
- Crime Prevention

Communication and Transparency

In staff focus groups conducted by USAC, communication and transparency was a recurring theme. Staff members expressed a broad spectrum of challenges regarding communication both within colleges and units as well as university wide.

Staff members shared that they don’t always understand how they fit into the big picture of the university priorities and goals, and it would be beneficial for leaders to help staff understand their role.

Recommendations

- Re-establish OSU staff/university leadership town hall meetings.
- USAC should continue to serve as an additional conduit to distribute information from university leadership to staff.

Professional Development

The most recent university culture survey results indicate an improvement in staff perceptions of professional development opportunities, but the raw data indicates that only 57.4% of staff members feel they get adequate access to professional development.

USAC has partnered with the Office of Human Resources to offer staff and manager grants for professional development with a significant increase in funding over the past two years.
In addition to the professional development grant funds available through OHR and USAC, SCBS explored other possible professional development opportunities, including Lynda.com and the full utility of the BuckeyeLearn System.

**Recommendations**
- Maintain the current development grant funding level with a possible increase in funding.
- Create a catalog of internal OSU learning opportunities to fully maximize the BuckeyeLearn System.

**University Support and Assistance Programs**
USAC conducted a staff survey to assess the awareness of the university support and assistance programs. While most staff are aware of these programs, USAC still receives inquiries from staff looking for these services.

USAC was also instrumental in obtaining funding to cover a shortage in the Employee Emergency Fund; however, the funding source is currently not permanent.

**Recommendations**
- Help establish a permanent funding model for the Employee Emergency Fund.

**Work/Life Balance**
The university offers a rich benefits package and support policies to help employees thrive at work and in their personal lives. While conducting a staff survey on the use of the Flexible Work Policy and the Tuition Benefit, USAC found there could be a possibility to help staff to utilize these opportunities to a greater extent.

**Recommendations**
- Increase communication around the Flexible Work Policy 6.12, and propose the addition of a business purpose for denial.
- Research current course offering to determine the need for more flexible course offerings.
- Work with the Chief Wellness Officer to increase opportunities for staff to engage in wellness activities.

**Rewards and Recognition**
Rewards and Recognition has been a consistent theme in USAC focus groups and surveys over the past several years. USAC researched current rewards and recognition programs available university-wide and at the medical center to have a better understanding of the programs available to staff.

**Recommendations**
- Convene a university task force to examine potential parity between the medical center and the university rewards and recognition programs with recommendations by June 1, 2016.
**Staff Retention**
In the competitive work market a loss of high performing employees causes the university to lose skilled, knowledgeable staff. USAC met with OHR to gain a better understanding of staff retention and turnover at the university.

**Recommendations**
- USAC will continue to partner with OHR to identify ways to positively impact desirable staff retention.

**Crime Prevention Programs**
Staff expressed concerns in past USAC conducted focus groups about the decreasing availability of crime prevention programs.

With a population on any given day over 100,000 (includes faculty, staff, students) and drawing more than 3.5 million visitors each year, safety concerns for all faculty, staff and students are of vital importance.

**Recommendations**
- Leadership should partner with the Department of Public Safety to ensure funding is introduced to support the re-implementation of lost or decreased crime prevention programs for OSU faculty, staff and students.
Communication and Transparency

In staff focus groups conducted by USAC, communication and transparency was a recurring theme. Staff members expressed a broad spectrum of challenges regarding communication both within colleges and units as well as university wide. Staff identified several areas for improvement relative to communication, including consistency, transparency and inclusion in the decision making process. Ultimately, staff would like opportunities to provide meaningful input regarding changes that impact their day-to-day work.

Staff noted they are excited about contributing to the success of students and faculty at the university.

Understanding the Big Picture

Some staff members shared that they don’t always understand how they fit into the big picture of the university priorities and goals and it would be beneficial for leaders to help staff understand their role. Staff noted they are excited about contributing to the success of students and faculty at the university and would appreciate additional direction from leadership regarding how they could be most effective and fully participate.

Access to Information

Many important university-wide messages are delivered electronically via email, social media and websites; however, not all staff have regular access to a computer at work or at home. While computer access may be provided to employees in break rooms or through other campus facilities, there may also be issues with computer literacy. While staff find university emails informative, ensuring that important information is shared through multiple channels is critical. It is essential to keep all staff, regardless of their position or work location, informed of university policies, procedures and other important issues.

Recommendations

- Re-establish OSU staff/university leadership town hall meetings to provide opportunities for staff to receive information and engage in meaningful dialog with senior leaders.

USAC’s Action Items

- USAC should serve as an additional conduit to distribute information from university leaders to staff. USAC will utilize our social media and communication outlets to help keep staff informed of leadership communications.

It is essential to keep all staff regardless of their position or work location, informed of university policies, procedures, and other important issues.
Professional Development

The most recent University Culture Survey results indicate an improvement in staff perceptions of professional development opportunities, but the raw data indicates only 57.4% of staff members feel they get adequate access to professional development opportunities.¹ Further culture survey results indicate a distinct need for professional development opportunities for staff at the university as the “Growth” section was the lowest overall measure of job satisfaction. For the purposes of this report, professional development is defined as development opportunities that enhance job performance and provide skills making the individual better suited for promotion and enhancing their personal skills. It does not include training opportunities required for employment or certification necessary to maintain one’s current position (e.g. continuing education credits required for licensure).

Manager and Staff Development Grants

Manager Development Grants and Staff Development Grants have been successful for the past 12 years. The previous two years had the greatest impact since funding increased by more than ten times over prior years; which ran approximately $11,000 in total funding. USAC conducted surveys to gauge awareness of the grant programs. Of the nearly 500 people surveyed, 50% of staff (226 of 441 surveyed) were aware of the staff and manager development grant programs.

While the awareness of the grants is comparable to the Culture Survey response rate, the distribution of both the Manager and Staff Development Grants is nearing maximum capacity.

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Staff Professional Development Grants are becoming increasingly competitive. In the most recent application cycle, only 40 individuals and 9 groups totaling 107 staff members received funding. Programs included travel and expenses for conferences or annual meetings, certifications, memberships, subscriptions to Lynda.com, and other educational expenses. While the grants significantly impacted staff receiving them, these recipients totaled less than 1% of the staff population. There is some concern that units may potentially decrease their staff development budgets and ask their staff members to pursue the grants as their primary method of professional development.

Benchmarking – Aspirational and Peer Institutions

USAC members surveyed several aspirational and peer institutions. Two benchmark institutions, The University of Notre Dame and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor were recently named in the Chronicle of Higher Education’s “Best Colleges to Work For”. Not surprisingly, these institutions have similar professional development programs: independent budgets of nearly $1 million, staff of at least five people to run the program, and a diverse set of over 120 courses both online and in person. Both of these institutions have areas of focus, similar to majors for undergraduate degrees, and both have learning tracks through which the employee progresses. Both institutions have key success metrics that drive future course offerings. There is free and open access to third party vendors like Lynda.com in addition to the in-house courses.
The road map to achieve this level of success is mixed. Both Notre Dame and Michigan create some courses in house, but external vendors build the majority of the courses. The instructor or facilitator is also mixed between internal and external subject matter experts. Notre Dame does not charge for courses but will charge a $100 “no show” fee. The University of Michigan charges $179 per staff member per course that is covered by the unit. Both institutions attribute the success of their programs to the support and commitment from university administration.

Benchmarking – Comparable Institutions

In addition to these institutions, USAC also interviewed HR staff at the University of Cincinnati to identify potential trends in Ohio institutions as well as Rutgers University because of the multitude of campuses and size that is similar to issues faced by Ohio State. Both University of Cincinnati and Rutgers University had smaller programs that were still being developed. They had no separate budget from the general HR budget and also have limited staff to support their programs. They rely heavily on in-house courses and instructors. All courses are offered free of charge. Both University of Cincinnati and Rutgers University are in the process of developing learning tracks and series based on trends and course popularity. The president of the University of Cincinnati declared an initiative for staff and faculty development.\(^\text{4}\)

**Lynda.com**

Lynda.com is an online professional development company offering thousands of video courses in software, creative, and business skills. While most Big Ten and comparable universities do own a site license to Lynda.com, Ohio State currently does not. Anyone wishing to utilize Lynda.com must either pay for access (which some do through staff development grants) or sign up for the waiting list at the Digital Union. Currently, the university has 58 licenses for Lynda.com at an annual cost of $13,050. In 2014, they averaged 90 users, viewing 109 distinct courses or 139 hours of video monthly. The average viewer watched 0.1 hours of video per login, which means utilization is in short bursts rather than extended sessions. The top five courses in 2014 by total views were:

1. Access 2010 Essential Training (653 total views, 30.21 hours viewed)
2. iBooks Author Essential Training (444 total views, 30.89 hours viewed)
3. Drupal 7 Essential Training (353 total views, 31.16 hours viewed)
4. Access 2013 Essential Training (332 total views, 19.21 hours viewed)
5. C/C++ Essential Training (314 total views, 29.85 hours viewed)

**Recommendations**

- Maintain funding for the staff and manager grants with the potential for increase.
- Consider purchasing additional licenses for Lynda.com until local content is cataloged and available on BuckeyeLearn (LMS). If a site license for Lynda.com is not possible, the university should centrally drive development of new content for BuckeyeLearn (LMS) using internal educational resources.

\(^{4}\)http://www.uc.edu/news/NR.aspx?id=20464
University Support and Assistance Programs

While most staff are aware of university support and assistance programs, USAC still receives inquiries from staff looking for these services. One way to address these inquiries is to provide additional promotion and support for the university support and assistance programs.

USAC Staff Survey: University Support and Assistance Programs

USAC conducted a survey in the fall of 2014 to determine staff awareness and utility of university-wide support programs including staff and manager grants, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and OHR’s Employee Labor Relations (ELR).

Staff seems largely aware of the EAP, but the majority of staff were unaware of ELR.

Robert Meier, the Director of the Employee Assistance Program met with USAC to discuss programs offered through EAP. Mr. Meier further shared that the EAP Employee Emergency Fund was in financial crisis and funds would be depleted.

Staff expressed reluctance to seek assistance or share concerns regarding interactions with colleagues or supervisors. Staff fear reprisal especially since the small size of many unit prevents true anonymity. Staff also question bias when seeking counsel and advice within their unit.

Robert Meier
EAP serves 1500 – 2000, but has capacity to serve five times that.
- Robert Meier, Director EAP

The Employee Emergency fund nearly ran out of money in 2014, but swift action by USAC and the university CFO prevented this.
USAC followed up with Geoff Chatas, the university Chief Financial Officer, regarding the state of this fund. USAC Leadership collaborated with Geoff Chatas and his office to secure emergency funding to cover the deficit for the Employee Emergency fund for this year only, but Geoff Chatas also asked USAC to help develop a long-term solution.

Recommendations

- Create an endowed fund of $1,000,000 and use the income generated from that fund to support the Employee Emergency Fund, or agree to a permanent allocation from the long-term investment pool (LTIP) of $50,000 per year.

USAC’s Action Items

- In collaboration with OHR and the EAP, USAC will continue to promote ELR and EAP resources through increased messaging.
Work/Life Balance

The university offers a rich benefits package and support policies to help employees thrive at work and in their personal lives. While conducting a staff survey on the use of the Flexible Work Policy and the Tuition Benefit, USAC found there could be a possibility for a greater portion of staff to utilize these opportunities. USAC worked with OHR to develop a survey designed to capture staff experiences with these policies and benefits to best understand the needs of the staff. The survey was distributed through interdepartmental emails, OnCampus, given at the fall pep rally, and during three USAC Roadshows. The survey generated 906 total responses.

Flexible Work Schedule

According to the Office of Human Resources Flexible Work Policy, “The University supports flexible work arrangements to achieve a highly productive work environment that enables faculty and staff to balance work and personal needs, while providing workforce predictability and stability”.

Ohio State staff members who utilize flexible work arrangements reported to USAC that this ability contributed to job satisfaction by enabling them to further their education, spend more time with family, participate in health and wellness activities, and satisfy personal obligations outside of work. Some staff reported they were unaware of the flexible work arrangement and others felt unjustly denied the opportunity to use a flexible work arrangement by their supervisors.

In the USAC survey mentioned above, 45% of staff surveyed indicated they utilize a flexible work arrangement. Such large participation shows the flexible work arrangement is popular and utilized. 7% of the respondents indicated they would like to utilize flexible work arrangements but their supervisors would not approve such arrangements. 20% of the respondents reported being unaware of the possibility of flexible work arrangements. The flexible work policy is popular and utilized but USAC can still see a benefit to increasing awareness of flexible work arrangements among staff and supervisors.

OHR Policy 6.12 suggests supervisors should look for ways to implement flexible work arrangements, and suggests that the decision making process regarding flexible work arrangement requests must be transparent. Currently, providing reason and rationale for decisions regarding flexible work arrangement proposals is at the discretion of individual supervisors.
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Wellness

Staff also expressed an interest in flexing their work schedule to participate in healthy activities on campus during their workday.

According to Bernadette Melnyk, Chief Wellness Officer at Ohio State, there is a direct and researched correlation between health and wellness activities, and employee productivity and attendance.

Tuition Benefit

OHR Policy 2.35 notes “The Ohio State University is committed to recruiting and retaining world-class staff. The university encourages staff to pursue higher education to enrich their lives and to develop the highest quality workforce. To support individuals in their pursuit of higher education, the university allows staff to enroll in university courses and/or degree-granting programs and provides tuition assistance for up to ten credit hours of coursework per academic term for courses taken at Ohio State”.

USAC evaluated the current use of the tuition benefit by reviewing previously conducted focus groups and the recent survey. A review of the results indicated staff would like to take classes at Ohio State but have inflexible work schedules or personal commitments conflicting with the current class offerings.

Recommendations

- Increase communication around the Flexible Work Policy 6.12, and propose the addition of business purpose for denial.
- Research current course offering to determine the need for more flexible course offerings for greater utilization of the tuition benefit.
- Leadership should partner with the Chief Wellness Officer to maintain momentum in creating a healthy work environment that encourage employees to make healthy choices and provide opportunities for employees to engage in wellness activities during the work day.

USAC’s Action Items

- In the next year USAC would like to partner with OHR to re-introduce the flex work policy and to address the fact that nearly 20% of staff survey respondents are not familiar with the policy.
- USAC will work with the Chief Wellness Officer and senior leadership to find ways to offer the Health Athlete Program free of charge to employees who request to attend.
Rewards and Recognition

Rewards and Recognition programs have been a concern among Ohio State staff for many years. While university-sponsored rewards and recognition programs do exist, the combined programs only impact a small percentage of the total number of university staff. Below is a breakdown which includes the current programs, the number of staff participating in each program and average cost associated with the programs from 2010-2014. This information was provided by the Ohio State Office of Human Resources – Special Events.

Central University Sponsored Rewards and Recognition Programs:
Approximately 2,000 employees of Ohio State’s 23,000+ staff employees were participants or recipients of these programs in 2014. Staff also received 10,000 free Football tickets in 2014.

The total annual budget for all 2014 programs was $82,000. The data only reflects participation and attendance, but not how well-received the programs were by guests, faculty, and staff.

Wexner Medical Center Rewards and Recognition Program

Programs above are available to both medical center and non-medical center staff. However, the medical center also has an exclusive rewards and recognition program for medical center staff. The BRAVO! Rewards and Recognition program is long-standing and has become an industry best practice.⁸

“To create a workplace of choice and a high-performing organization, faculty and staff at Ohio State’s Wexner Medical Center must create a culture of engagement. Accordingly, the medical center has launched a new BRAVO!

"Building a culture of recognition supports our medical center’s mission, vision and values. Recognition is critical to becoming a workplace of choice and a high performance organization”

-Guide to the NEW BRAVO!

The new Bravo! rewards and recognition program that will incorporate formal, informal and day-to-day recognition capabilities and social interactions to inspire enthusiastic performances from our teams. The new BRAVO! ⁹, now available on OneSource, offers more ways to recognize employees who demonstrate our values and commitment to improving people’s lives by providing the safest and highest quality care and experience."

The new Bravo! rewards and recognition program boasts a new interactive on-line dashboard to track personal achievements and recognize colleagues as well as allowing manager's to track employees' rewards and recognition points.

Rewards and Recognition Survey

In addition to the university-wide and medical center rewards and recognition programs, some individual colleges and VP units also have individual rewards and recognition programs. USAC conducted an online survey made available through On Campus and the Hidden Benefits Fair to better understand the types of rewards and recognition programs staff currently enjoy and would like to see. There were 319 respondents—103 medical center staff; 205 non-medical center staff and 11 were unclear or not sure.

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Responses were quite varied; however, there was a strong indication staff want more rewards and recognition programs. Over 33% of the staff surveyed indicated they would like to be recognized through a one-time bonus approximately 15% of staff would like university gifts and 12% of staff would prefer distinction awards.

**Wexner Medical Center Rewards and Recognition Participation**

The new BRAVO! Program is projected to impact 19,000 faculty and staff. In addition to Bravo! Amy, Hurley, Program Director for Faculty Staff Recognition at the Wexner Medical Center, stated that the faculty and staff recognition team is also involved in the following:

- Leadership workshops on rewards and recognition for various staff groups
- Participation in New Leader Orientation
- A welcome program for new staff to inform them about recognition programs, and the platform and tools available

**Recommendations**

- Convene a university task force to examine potential parity between the medical center and the university rewards and recognition programs with recommendations by June 1, 2016.

**USAC’s Action Items**

- Partner with OHR to ensure USAC holds a seat on the rewards and recognition task force.
Staff Retention

In the competitive work market, regrettable loss of employees causes the university to lose skilled, knowledgeable staff and increases recruitment costs and related staff hours. Focusing on onboarding programs, performance management, and classification and compensation will positively influence retention rates.

USAC had identified an opportunity to develop a comprehensive strategy which has the potential to curb the loss of high quality staff members. OHR metrics survey against industry standards, but the current process tracks simple turnover rates without noting regrettable versus non-regrettable turnovers. In addition, current retention statistics do not relay factors or reasons for staff resignations, which leaves OHR with limited ability to evaluate the effect of any retention programs. Other factors must be taken into consideration to truly assess retention rates. We want to be sure we keep our top performers to retain the best talent.

Onboarding

New staff employees are provided with information at hire but then are provided little guidance or assistance their first year of employment. Developing a consistent and comprehensive onboarding process (beyond orientation) would assist in promoting an environment of unity and cohesiveness, by giving staff the metrics for success in their positions, and the resources necessary to achieve that success.

Performance Management Programs

Currently, the university lacks a centralized organizational performance management program, so it is left to units to determine the process’ consistency and structure. Developing themes across areas would allow a level of reliability absent by a lack of requirements in form, consistency and method. An organizational performance management program could allow the university to identify retention issues resulting from poor management, training, or development of employees. Performance processes creating two way communications, regular checks, and feedback engage employees to resolve issues that may go unseen.

Classification and Compensation

Ohio State believes competitive total rewards are a key element in recruiting, retaining, and rewarding staff critical to fulfilling the university’s mission. While Ohio State does offer a comprehensive total rewards package, one aspect of staff employment that has the potential for greater clarity is career paths and advancement opportunities.
Through resources such as University Staff Advisory Committee, OneVoice, and staff surveys, staff reported a desire for a robust and transparent reward system, clear career paths and promotion opportunities. They also have reported job and pay structures which are perceived as inconsistently designed, poorly understood, and unevenly administered.

The Office of Human Resources is embarking on the Classification and Compensation Redesign Project. Over the next several years, the university and The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center human resources offices will look to review and update Ohio State's job classification and compensation systems.

This project will create a new job family and salary structure that organizes positions and their pay ranges across Ohio State in a logical way, is applicable regardless of who does the work or where the work is done, is administered consistently, and identifies top performers for outstanding work. This ultimately could help Ohio State attract, recruit, and retain top talent.

**Recommendations**

- Continued financial support of the staff Classification and Compensation Redesign Project as well cover the projected current budget shortfall.
- Establish university-wide standard themes for the performance management programs.
- Establish a university-wide exit survey system to gather relevant data to assess and track regrettable turnover.

**USAC’s Action Items**

- Conduct surveys with staff to gauge their understanding of current departmental onboarding programs.
- Promote the use of BuckeyeLearn, the university’s new learning management system.
Crime Prevention

Campus Safety Programming

Staff expressed concerns in past USAC conducted focus groups about the decreasing availability of crime prevention programs. The main campus of OSU has been referred to many times as “a city within a city.” With a population on any given day over 100,000 (includes faculty, staff, students) and drawing more than 3.5 million visitors each year, safety concerns for all faculty, staff and students are of vital importance.

Community outreach and crime prevention programs have been scaled back. For example, the Rape Aggression Defense (RAD) program has been incredibly successful, but that program has been forced to reduce from 5 classes annually down to 3. This reduction leaves 60-75 fewer women who can obtain this training, many of whom are survivors of sexual assault or domestic violence referred to this program by responding officers and other advocates.

Other programs suffering reductions due to low staffing levels are the Active Shooter Training as well as the Officer Liaison Program. During discussions with the Ohio State University Police Department personnel, they expressed a great interest in bringing back public safety crime prevention programming as well as adding additional crime prevention programs if staffing levels were increased.
Crime Facts on Campus:

1. We have over $1 million in reported property theft every fiscal year.
2. OSUPD has the lowest officer ratios by population and square footage in the Big Ten: .85 officers per 1000 people and over 700,000 square feet per officer.
3. OSUPD fields nearly 1,100 calls for service every month.
4. OSUPD officers work more than 2150 hours per year (an FTE is only 2080). The average OSUPD officer works 382 hours of overtime per year which equates to each officer working 48.5 hours every week; these averages have actually decreased, but remain the workload is sustained well over 40 hours per week.

The “city within the city” is only growing in population. With the addition of the new James Cancer Hospital as well as new sophomores beginning to live in on-campus dormitory housing, the current staffing level and decrease in public service programs is a concern. Furthermore, increasing security staff is not a sufficient replacement for police services. OSU police officers fill multiple roles on campus and they have increasing duties due to the parking concession such as an increase in traffic crash reports formerly fielded by T&P as well as vehicle lock outs as CampusParc cannot perform that function. No other local police agency provides the level of services demanded by OSUPD. Functions such as dignitary protection and crisis assessment as well as safety programming cannot be provided by anyone other than a sworn police officer.

**Recommendation**

- Leadership should partner with the Department of Public Safety to ensure funding is introduced to support the re-implementation of lost or decreased crime prevention programs for Ohio State faculty, staff, and students.
Conclusion

USAC looks forward to collaborating with university leadership to provide guidance on evolving staff interest. USAC is committed to working with leadership to bring the recommendations set forth in this report to fruition. In addition USAC will continue to partner with leadership on future items that impact the staff experience at The Ohio State University.
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