



Talent Strategy: New Realities Prompt New Approaches

After a wave of departures, layoffs, and other workforce reductions, an [autumn 2022 study](#) found that the higher education workforce has returned to roughly its pre-pandemic size. But a closer look reveals both challenges and opportunities.

The pandemic accelerated cultural shifts percolating below the surface in many areas of our lives. In the workplace, issues such as salary, benefits, flexibility, and work-life balance are now front and center, prompting colleges and universities to reassess their employee recruitment and retention strategies.

A national survey of higher education leaders, hiring managers, and administrators conducted by Huron and The Chronicle of Higher Education captured many of these strategies. Here we present the survey's key findings and strategic actions institutions can take to respond to new workplace realities. [Access the full report.](#)

Talent Acquisition

According to the Chronicle survey referenced in figure 1, colleges and universities are finding it harder to attract and retain talent, receiving fewer qualified applicants, and relying more on interim hires. There are also more open positions, with IT, building services, and dining services being the most difficult vacancies to fill.

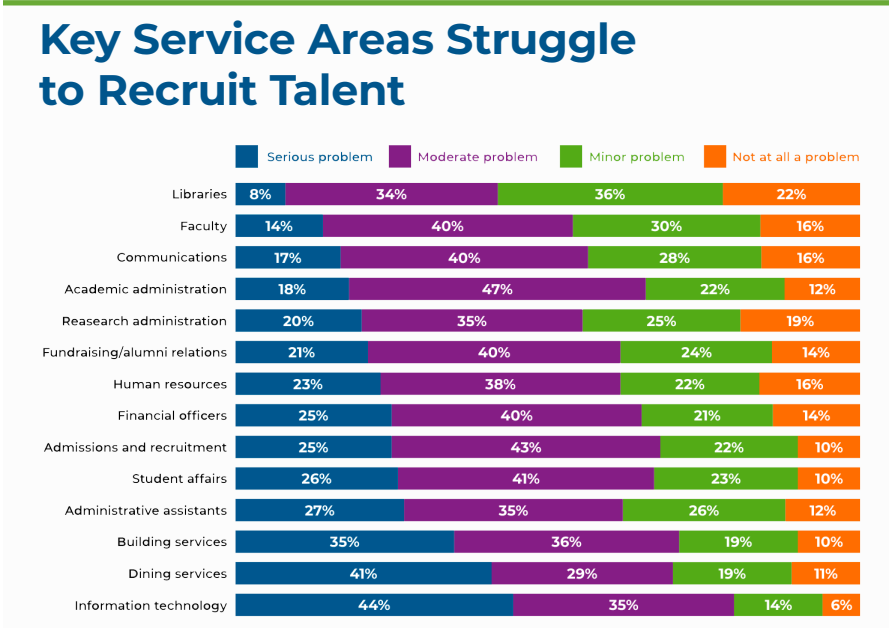


Figure 1. Survey asking how problematic it has been to hire employees in the areas

Credit: [Huron, "The Staffing Crisis in Higher Education"](#)

- **Do what is best for student success:** Institutional realities make it difficult to meet the highest levels of employee expectations. Colleges and universities that focus on areas of critical need will be most successful.
- **Employ a data dashboard:** A single data source on new hires, promotions, and attrition can help monitor institutional performance and identify trends to improve workforce planning.

Total Rewards

Seventy-seven percent of respondents said the overall appeal of working in higher education has decreased in the last year. And only about 1 in 4 said they either agree or strongly agree that their college has the right mix of salary, benefits, workplace culture, and mission to appeal to today's workers.

- **Adopt a total rewards philosophy:** Reframe conversations about individual benefits to the entire employee support system, such as training and development opportunities that allow people to thrive at work.
- **Re-imagine the workplace:** Foster a collaborative, inclusive culture that leads to greater employee engagement. Prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion and incorporate multiple points of view to promote an environment of cultural plurality and strengthen organizational capabilities.

Leadership

The uncertainty of the last several years has eroded the trust and loyalty of many employees. Leaders must work harder to restore confidence and focus on making their institution a preferred place to work.

- **Provide human resources with a seat at the table:** Leverage the important role of a chief human resources officer (CHRO) differently. With an inside view of employee engagement, CHROs can be an invaluable, yet often under tapped, resource.
- **Foster a leadership culture where everyone is responsible for talent success:** Make talent acquisition and retention a priority of the campus strategic plan.



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