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KBOR USS-UPS SURVEY:  
WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY  
RESULTS

A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES

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# Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	3
INTRODUCTION, RESPONDENTS, AND CAVEATS.....	8
ANALYSES OF OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES, ITEM 12 .....	10
ANALYSES OF OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES, ITEM 15 .....	18
ANALYSES OF OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES, ITEM 17 .....	24
CONCLUSIONS .....	33
APPENDIX A: METHODS .....	36
APPENDIX B: RESPONSE RATES FOR SURVEY AND FOR OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS .....	39



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**KBOR USS-UPS SURVEY  
SPRING 2019  
WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY RESULTS  
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF RESPONDENT COMMENTS  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Respondents in the Spring 2019 Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) survey of University Support Staff and Unclassified Professionals were given the opportunity to respond to three open-ended items in addition to their responses on a number of closed-ended fixed response items:

1. **Is another incentive important to you?** *[please see Appendix K, question 11 in the full report for list of incentives]*
2. **Is there another area in which budget limitations have impacted your job?** *[please see Appendix K, question 14 in the full report for list of ways budget limitations may have impacted the respondent's job]*
3. **And finally, do you have any other comments to add?**

Details regarding original survey methods, descriptive data about participants, and quantitative analyses are found in the original report from the Docking Institute of Public Affairs at Fort Hays State University. The current report is a qualitative analysis of the responses of **Wichita State University (WSU) respondents only** to open-ended questions 12, 15, and 17 on the survey.

**A detailed discussion of analysis methods and cautions is found in Appendix A.**

## **WSU RESPONDENTS**

The **total population for this study is 1480** unclassified professional staff and university support staff employees to whom WSU sent a survey invitation. A total of **653 people responded**. After data cleaning and organization, **221 respondents were included in the analysis of question 12**, **166 respondents were included in the analysis of question 15**, and **169 respondents were included in the analysis of question 17**.

**Detailed information about response rates is found in Appendix B.**

## **KEY FINDINGS**

### ***QUESTION 12: "Is another incentive important to you?"***

→ Responses to this item clustered into six main themes: *(1) pay me what I'm worth; (2) give me flexibility; (3) improve my work environment; (4) I'd like some perks; (5) help me grow professionally; and (6) parking is a problem.*

- Although the question asked about incentives, *respondents overwhelmingly addressed basic compensation and benefit issues* instead of incentives. This tracks closely with the quantitative analysis of the survey results for WSU.
- Frustration with the level of pay and cost of benefits was evident in responses to this question.
- Work flexibility was important to respondents, including work location flexibility, flexible time schedules, and more flexible and generous leave policies, especially related to the use of vacation time for the holiday shutdown.
- Work environment was also important, especially in terms of perceived fairness, appreciation, and recognition.
- Respondents suggested a variety of possible perquisites, including free products and services, discounts for both on- and off-campus products and services, and other on-campus benefits including free tickets to sports events, performances, and other events.
- Professional growth and advancement are important to respondents, who mentioned formalized goal setting, promotion tracks, and mentoring. Outside conferences and training were also seen as important contributions to advancement.

**QUESTION 15: “Is there another area in which budget limitations have impacted your job?”**

- Five major themes emerged in responses to this question: *(1) staffing issues affect my job; (2) compensation issues affect everybody; (3) physical resource challenges affect my job; (4) my professional growth is limited; and (5) budget issues affect morale.*
- Understaffing, employee retention, turnover, and recruitment concerns were mentioned by respondents, with understaffing mentioned most frequently. However, all four of these issues are seen as driving each other and being part of the same budget limitation issue.
- Compensation was of key concern again, with the absence of pay raises central to comments.
- Physical resource challenges were mentioned as affecting respondents’ ability to do their jobs. Building condition and maintenance, equipment age and availability, and technology challenges were all mentioned as challenges related to budget limitations.
- Respondents were concerned that budget limitations affected their professional development and their ability to advance at the university. In particular, they mentioned the inability to attend conferences, training, or other professional development

activities held away from work.

- Finally, respondents commented on ways in which morale on the job was affected by budget limitations. Overall stress, fear, health issues, burnout, and helplessness were mentioned.

**QUESTION 17: “And finally, do you have any other comments to add?”**

- Four main themes were identified in responses to this question: *(1) How I feel; (2) Compensation and insurance costs need more discussion; (3) I have concerns about management or supervisors; (4) Workload gets higher, turnover gets higher, pay stays the same.*
- Two codes received the most mentions: emotional responses and, once again, compensation. The remainder of the codes were much more fragmented than responses on the two previous items, and many codes had too few mentions to be grouped under any of the four main themes.
- A number of responses were positive about work at WSU, both because of aspects of the job itself and about working at WSU. However, even these responses often mentioned pay concerns.
- Many general comments about morale and frustration related to compensation and insurance costs.
- Some respondents mentioned feeling undervalued, unappreciated, and without trust. In addition, some mentions reflected anger and stress about work.
- As in the previous questions, respondents mentioned that stagnant compensation and increasing health insurance costs aggravate the sense of doing worse instead of doing better or even seeing a chance of doing better in the future. Compensation inequities were also mentioned.
- Concerns about managers and supervisors were mentioned, with particular mentions of perceived unfair hiring and promotion practices, a lack of communication, and an absence of setting performance expectations and providing reviews.
- Respondents also noted a cycle of an increased workload with no associated increase in pay, resulting in higher turnover and understaffing, leading again to increased workload.
- Overall, compensation and cost of benefits were central concerns to respondents throughout comments to all three questions.



## QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

**KBOR USS-UPS SURVEY  
SPRING 2019  
WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY RESULTS  
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF RESPONDENT COMMENTS**

**INTRODUCTION**

Respondents in the Spring 2019 Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) survey of University Support Staff and Unclassified Professionals were given the opportunity to respond to three open-ended items in addition to their responses on a number of closed-ended fixed response items. Those three questions were:

1. **Is another incentive important to you?** *[please see Appendix K, question 11 in the full report for list of incentives in closed-ended question 10]*
2. **Is there another area in which budget limitations have impacted your job?** *[please see Appendix K, question 14 in the full report for list of ways budget limitations may have impacted the respondent's job in closed-ended question 13]*
3. **And finally, do you have any other comments to add?**

Details regarding original survey methods, descriptive data about participants, and quantitative analyses are found in the original report from the Docking Institute of Public Affairs at Fort Hays State University. The current report is a qualitative analysis of the responses of **Wichita State University (WSU) respondents only** to open-ended questions 12, 15, and 17 on the survey.

This qualitative analysis was performed independent of and without reference to the full survey in order to avoid bias. However, the quantitative results were reviewed after analysis in order to reach conclusions about the relationship between the two parts of the survey. **The methods used in the current report are detailed in Appendix A.**

**WSU RESPONDENTS**

The **total population for this study is 1480** unclassified professional staff and university support staff employees to whom WSU sent a survey invitation. A total of **653 people responded**. After data cleaning and organization, **221 respondents were included in the analysis of question 12, 166 respondents were included in the analysis of question 15, and 169 respondents were included in the analysis of question 17.**

**Detailed information about response rates is found in Appendix B.**



## CAVEATS

There are certain issues that must be considered when using the results of this analysis.

- First, it is important to remember that the number of people who responded to these items is a relatively small percentage of those who responded to the survey, and an even smaller percentage of the population, so these results cannot be construed to represent the opinions of the entire population or even of the entire group of respondents.
- Second, the responses to the open-ended items may be biased either by being from respondents who have especially strong opinions about particular aspects of the study or by the absence of responses from respondents who feel that their comments will not be considered, who feel that their anonymity may be compromised by commenting, or who simply did not want to take the time to comment.
- Third, reading the actual words in the comments of the participants can make qualitative data seem more important or have more weight than a quantitative analysis. Instead, the comments should be used to enhance understanding the results of the quantitative analysis.
- Finally, unlike quantitative analyses, the analysis of qualitative data necessarily has more of the researcher embedded in the outcomes. Although in both types of studies the researcher makes choices about methods and interpretation, in qualitative analyses the researcher looks at every case individually and makes decisions about it that have an impact on the results.

Because of these issues, it is important to view the results of this analysis together with the results of the main survey report in order to have a balanced understanding of participants' opinions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All respondent direct quotes are presented verbatim, with few exceptions. In cases in which it seemed that leaving the spelling or grammar uncorrected might change the attitude of the reader, the spelling or grammar was corrected. Otherwise, the quotes are verbatim as delivered in the raw data from FHSU.



ANALYSES OF OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES  
QUESTION 12: IS ANOTHER INCENTIVE IMPORTANT TO YOU?

## ANALYSIS OF OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES QUESTION 12

### ***Question 12: “Is another incentive important to you?”***

Respondents were asked in a closed-ended rating question to indicate their interest in five “incentives or opportunities”: flexible schedules, on-the-job training, transportation assistance, childcare assistance, and improved healthcare benefits. Question 12, an open-ended follow-up question asked for elaboration on any other important incentives. There were 221 responses.

### ***Response themes:***

Six major themes emerged from the analysis of elaborative responses to this item:

- 1. Pay me what I’m worth.**
- 2. Give me flexibility.**
- 3. Improve my work environment.**
- 4. I’d like some perks.**
- 5. Help me grow professionally.**
- 6. Parking is a problem.**

When asked to comment on other incentives that were important, respondents overwhelmingly mentioned basic compensation and benefit issues instead of incentives, accounting for 136 of over 300 mentions for this question.

### **1. Pay me what I’m worth.**

Incentives are typically considered to be compensation sweeteners that are designed in advance to improve job performance in the future. Bonuses are given to reward something that has already happened. This may be related to performance, but may also be given for other reasons, such as spot bonuses for doing a good thing, a bonus to retain an employee during a difficult work event, or a bonus for perfect attendance. However, both incentives and bonuses are independent of basic compensation. **Many respondents to question 12 about incentives instead focused on their basic salary and benefits:**

- “A living wage.”
- “Better compensation.”
- “Properly being compensated.”

- “Better, more competitive pay.”

The opportunity for growth of their base salary through regular raises was especially important to respondents to this question. This included **cost of living raises**:

- “Annual cost of living adjustments.”
- “Knowing you get pay increase every year to keep up with cost of living.”
- “Increase the hour wage follow the living cost.”

**performance-based raises:**

- “Evaluations that come with raises...”
- “Raises should be merit based. Why do we do evaluations if they aren’t linked to raises?”
- “There seems to be no opportunity for merit raises...”
- “Yearly increase in pay dependent on yearly reviews.”

**and raises based on longevity:**

- “Salary increase based on longevity.”
- “Fair pay/merit increases for years of service.”

Comments about traditional benefits split evenly between health care benefits and retirement benefits. **Most of the mentions about health care benefits related to cost:**

- “Health insurance cost reductions.”
- “Lower and simpler health care costs over improved healthcare benefits.”
- “Reasonable cost for health care after retirement.”

Comments related to retirement were broader, including both retirement funding and other types of benefits:

- “Free parking for WSU retirees.”
- “On-campus retirement living opportunities in future.”
- “KBOR should not force employees to gamble retirement money with Wall Street (TIAA, VOYA); allow a NCUA credit union option instead. I resent being forced into a total unsatisfactory 403b program that was entirely created for the benefit of Wall Street.”

**Generous tuition assistance is a benefit that is clearly important to respondents.** There were the same number of mentions of this benefit as for health and retirement benefits together. Many comments suggested enhancements to this benefit:

- “Better tuition options for children who are beyond BA/BS...”
- “Educational funding support at other regent institutions for me...”
- “Tuition remission outside WSU for dependents/spouse and myself.”
- “...online fees need to be covered.”

Financial incentives and bonuses were mentioned by only a few respondents, with only nine mentions:

- “I think some type of longevity bonus would be a nice incentive.”
- “...bonus incentives for performance.”
- “Yearly bonuses.”

**One of these mentions brought the issue back to basic pay:**

- “The most important incentive for me is a raise in my hourly wages.”

**Frustration with pay and benefits was evident** in several of the responses to this question:

- “A pay raise. One in 5 years is a joke!”
- “Bosses that actually care about employees instead of their own pockets.”
- “I would appreciate a salary that recognizes the amount of work I do and the amount of education I have. I am here, alone, completing this at 7:08 pm because I am booked solid with appointments and have a backlog of email.”
- “I have been working for the state for over 27 years in the same type of position, have earned an ‘exceeds expectations’ evaluation for more than 90% of my evaluations, yet I still earn under the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile for my job responsibility...”
- “Medication and health care costs are increasing every year, but wages do not increase that much or none at all.”
- “Pay, pay, pay, pay, pay, pay, pay, pay oh, and it’s the pay.”

## 2. Give me flexibility.

Work flexibility was mentioned by respondents to this question most frequently after compensation and benefits with 49 mentions. **Work flexibility includes three different elements: flexible work location, flexible schedules, and time off/leave policy.**

**Working from home** was mentioned by 15 respondents, with different possibilities suggested:

- “Ability to work remote from home.”
- “Be able to work from home during slow times (spring break, Christmas, summer).”
- “Option to work from home once a week or once a month when possible.”
- “The ability to work from home couple times a week esp. In the summer.”

**Flexible work schedules** were also mentioned, including:

- “4 day work week with 10 hour days.”
- “Flexible shifts with ability to stay the same unless I change it, not the company.”
- “Working into a 9-80 program. Where you have every other Friday off.”
- “Working part-time when retiring from full-time job

**University leave policies** were mentioned by several respondents. Family leave, including paid parental leave, was mentioned by 7 commenters. An increase in the amount of time off, both for sick leave and vacation leave, was mentioned by 13 commenters. In addition, 13 commenters addressed the specific issue of using vacation time during the winter holiday shutdown:

- “Paid Christmas vacation so we don’t need to use our vacation for it.”
- “...not having to take vacation days during Winter Shutdown.”
- “When university is shut down for a holiday break not have to take vacation to pay for it, university should pay us if the building we work in is closed.”
- “Not having to use my personal earned vacation time during the university shutdown during the holidays.”

### 3. Improve my work environment.

Work environment was addressed by 36 respondents. **Fairness was an issue for several**, but in different ways:

- “Yes, stop the unfairness out here treat people with respect.”
- “Fairness and equality in the work place, and in hiring practice.”
- “Fairness in policies! Other employees benefit from ability to build and use holiday closedown hours and have less stringent rules related to use of leave time.”

**Appreciation and recognition, both tangible and intangible, were mentioned by 11** respondents:

- “Being told thank you would be a nice incentive.”
- “Recognition for exceptional work.”
- “...just recognition and the ability to advance.”
- “Appreciation for the work I do.”

A number of separate work environment issues were mentioned by 18 respondents, including the ability to wear casual clothes, “Google-like” physical work environments, trust and honesty, job security, and better communication. In addition, three comments addressed concerns with specific employees.

### 4. I’d like some perks.

Miscellaneous perquisites (“perks”) are often used by organizations as low-cost additional benefits for employees to express appreciation for the jobs that they do. These are often benefits that can make employees’ work lives easier or contribute to their quality of life away from work. 35 respondents mentioned benefits that could be characterized as perks. These included **free products and services**, including:

- “Free access to University exercise facilities.”
- “Complimentary tickets to campus events, such as music concerts, plays, sports events.”
- “Free stuff.”

Several possible **on-campus benefits** were mentioned, such as:

- “Discounts in meals at Shocker Hall.”
- “Reduced prices for food at Rhatigan.”
- “It would be neat if employees got some kind of dollars that could be spent at the vendors on campus for food or maybe even at the Shocker Store.”
- “I feel as an employee of the university, tours or special meet and greets with athletes and coaches would be neat.”
- “...more opportunities for free tickets to sporting events, performances, etc. would be appreciated. I spend a ton of money at WSU and on our students. Would be nice to get the occasional break.”

Finally, **discounts** both on- and off-campus were suggested:

- “Discounts in the community for being in a state service-oriented position.”
- “Free membership to YMCA or other health-related facility.”
- “Local zoo membership discounts (single and family options).”
- “Discounts at local/national merchants.”

## 5. Help me grow professionally.

**Opportunities for professional growth, either through advancement or professional development** were mentioned by 26 respondents. The ability to advance was addressed generally (e.g. “Able to advance in my career”) but a few specific opportunities were mentioned:

- “Offering formal promotion tracks to university support staff.”
- “Goal setting and implementation...”
- “Paid time off for advancement of education.”

Professional growth opportunities mentioned included:

- “Conference attendance.”
- “Employee leadership mentorship/coaching...”
- “Improved communication about professional development opportunities.”
- “Mentoring program, multicultural training programs.”
- “Off the job training: courses, workshops, and conferences.”



## 6. Parking is a problem.

Parking was mentioned as an irritation by 16 respondents and was one source of frustration mentioned by respondents. **Paying for parking was a special source of irritation:**

- “Free parking for University employees.”
- “Free parking. I don’t know of another job where you have to pay to park at work.”
- “Staff and faculty paying for parking is ridiculous. We pay you, so we can do our job? Nuts.”

**Accessibility of parking** was also mentioned, both in terms of finding a parking place and proximity of parking to work:

- “Paid parking in a closer lot.”
- “Not having to drive around for an hour to find parking is very important.”
- “Staff only parking. GTA aren’t staff they are students. Do away with 2 hour loophole, it is exploited. I can’t take lunch off campus because a student will take my parking spot.”



## ANALYSES OF OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES

QUESTION 15: IS THERE ANOTHER AREA IN WHICH BUDGET LIMITATIONS HAVE IMPACTED YOUR JOB?

**ANALYSIS OF OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES**  
**QUESTION 15**

***Question 15: “Is there another area in which budget limitations have impacted your job?”***

***Response themes:***

Respondents were asked in a closed-ended rating question to indicate how, if at all, budget limitations had an impact on their jobs. Question 15, an open-ended follow-up question, asked respondents to elaborate on other areas in which budget limitations affected their job. There were 166 responses.

Five overarching themes emerged from responses to this question:

- 1. Staffing issues affect my job.**
- 2. Compensation issues affect everybody.**
- 3. Physical resource challenges affect my job.**
- 4. My professional growth is limited.**
- 5. Budget issues affect morale.**

Staffing and compensation issues are interwoven to a great extent in the comments, and together comprise the largest proportion of responses to this item with almost 100 of the mentions.

**1. Staffing issues affect my job.**

**Understaffing, employee retention, turnover, and recruitment concerns** were seen as the most important staffing issues, with understaffing mentioned by far the most frequently:

- “Budget limitations have stunted the growth of the office. As we are asked to do more we have employees working 1.5 job appointments and hours as a result, but we cannot get additional help.”
- “Chronic understaffing for many, many years continues to demand more of current employees. Faculty positions are seen as more important to fill, without thought to the staff necessary to support their needs.”
- “I frequently end up working 60 to 90 hour work weeks for months at a time because we supposedly cannot afford to hire more people...All our positions are full, but there is more work than can be reasonably be handled by the number of staff there is.”

- “Unable to add staff to accommodate increased demand for IT services. New services are demanded with no increase to staffing to accomplish implementation and support.”

**Retention and turnover are two sides of the same coin**, with budget issues relating to compensation holding them together. Respondents saw retention as being mission-critical, but the inability to provide appropriate wages, salary, or raises as leading to turnover:

- “We have more turnover in our student workers, who leave to find better paying jobs.”
- “We lose staff members in lower-level positions due to low salaries. We’d have to combine positions/funding to pay employees more.”
- “Budget limitations make it very difficult to obtain and retain quality workers. Costly, frequent job turnover are a big problem as a result.”
- “We’ve lost a lot of experienced staff due to missing out on raises for years, and have been forced to replace them with individuals that have no experience or training.”

**Employee recruitment efforts were also seen as less fruitful** as a result of budget restrictions on pay:

- “I think my unit is less competitive when searching for good candidates nationally or regionally because even with the relatively low cost of living, the salaries offered are on the low end of the scale for the skills needed and there’s virtually no coverage of relocation costs...”
- “It is hard to attract and keep talented staff without salary increases.”
- “...the quality of student workers I can hire is diminished because we cannot pay them high enough wages to attract the highest quality candidates.”

## 2. Compensation issues affect everybody.

In response to this question, many respondents mentioned pay issues, both for themselves and in general. Again, the **absence of regular pay raises was central** as it was in answers to Question 12:

- “A 3% raise every 3-5 years is not keeping up with inflation/rise in cost of living.”
- “Raises in pay are so unlikely.”
- “There have been no raises for current positions.”

- “I feel that a salary increase is not possible for my position due to budget constraints within our department.”

**Low base pay and the inability to be paid overtime** were also concerns:

- “Healthcare costs go up, so with no wage increase my take home pay has been decreasing.”
- “I am covering the duties of what used to be multiple positions and am not rewarded for this financially or by any other means.”
- “Cannot work overtime. When I do work additional hours, I do not receive an hourly wage. I have to accept earned comp time, which is not my preference.”
- “...we have to work different days and weekends so no one has overtime.”

### 3. Physical resource challenges affect my job.

Physical resource challenges were noted in four different areas: **facilities, equipment, lack of supplies, and technology**. Several respondents expressed concerns about university facilities and maintenance. Some comments were about the **physical condition of buildings and work areas**:

- “Building is full of mildew/mold...it is also incredibly cold in our work environment due to temperature guidelines.”
- “Our office looks terrible, but there is no money for any improvements.”
- “The work environment is terrible. The building I work in is falling apart it leaks when it rains there is mold. The lighting is going out and no one is in too big of a hurry to fix anything.”
- “We work in cramped quarters and desperately need space.”

**Maintenance issues** were noted by several:

- “Building and bathrooms aren’t cleaned; bathroom supplies are poor quality; work orders take a long time to get to.”
- “The custodial staff does not clean as well as they used to due to lack of supplies so I have to do more cleaning than I used to.”
- “...the custodial staff in our building are no longer vacuuming offices, because of old equipment and they are required to cover more space, toilet paper is even limited. This is an environment issue that impacts us when we

have to vacuum our own offices and although we don't have to bring in our own toilet paper yet it's an issue."

**Equipment issues** of different kinds were mentioned. These included:

- "One copier for all staff which is a tremendous waste of time and effort."
- "Maintaining very old, mission critical equipment that NEEDS to be replaced."
- "Our work vehicles are falling apart and it doesn't seem to bother the plant facility head. Very inefficient!"

A few respondents also noted that rather than try to obtain supplies that they need through work, they prefer to buy them on their own and bring to the office.

**Technology challenges** were mentioned by ten respondents. These concerns included both hardware and software and the effects of these on services offered and efficient operations:

- "...limited on buying up to date technology equipment and supplies."
- "The technology we need to improve productivity and reduce compliance liabilities is not financially available, but would positively impact the university in a huge way if we were able to implement the necessary systems."
- "Inability to purchase automated software to increase efficiency and record keeping."
- "Limits on updated technology and computers."

#### **4. My professional growth is limited.**

As in responses to Question 12, **professional development and advancement opportunities were mentioned as being limited** by budget restrictions. Fewer professional development opportunities in general were noted:

- "Fewer professional development opportunities and fewer teambuilding activities across the division."
- "Reduced professional development. General stress in the office. Fear for our jobs."
- "Shrinking professional development opportunities."

The **inability to attend conferences or training** for professional development was mentioned by several:

- “Limited to no opportunity to receive training outside of the office.”
- “Most trainings are out of town and require travel to attend.”
- “There is no budget for individual professional development opportunities (i.e. professional society memberships, certifications, etc.).”
- “Not able to partake of professional development opportunities such as conferences.”

#### **5. Budget issues affect morale.**

Finally, some respondents mentioned ways in which morale was affected on the job by budget concerns and limitations. **Overall stress, fear, health issues, burnout, and hopelessness** were noted:

- “Lower morale, increased body pains.”
- “General stress in the office. Fear for our jobs.”
- “Stress and personal health...the environment and no support from the university takes a personal toll on me.”
- “The limitations create a sense of hopelessness for increased earnings or additional help in the future.”
- “Morale has lowered due to fear of termination...”
- “I find myself purchasing things I would like out of my own pocket for fear of asking.”



## ANALYSES OF OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES

QUESTION 17: AND FINALLY, DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS TO ADD?



## ANALYSIS OF OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES QUESTION 17

### *Question 17: “Finally, do you have any other comments to add?”*

The final question on the USS-UPS Survey was an open-ended question that allowed any comments that respondents chose to give. There were 169 comments from respondents. More than 100 of these responses reflected emotional responses to the issues addressed in the survey. In addition, there were more than 70 mentions of issues relating to compensation, which was central to responses on the previous two questions. The remainder of the mentions were much more fragmented than on the previous questions, and many cannot be grouped into an overarching theme. In order to properly address the main themes of responses to this question, mention codes that received five or fewer mentions and were not mentioned in previous questions were removed.\* In addition, mention codes that received five or fewer mentions but were mentioned in the previous questions were grouped together and remained on the hierarchy map.

### **Response themes:**

Four major response themes were identified from the analysis of responses on this item. Because of the large number of individual codes with a relatively small number of mentions that emerged from the responses on this item, as noted above some codes did not fall into any of the major themes.

1. **How I feel.**
2. **Compensation and insurance costs need more discussion.**
3. **I have concerns about management or supervisors.**
4. **Workload gets higher, turnover gets higher, pay stays the same.**

Emotional responses were much stronger and detailed for this question than in the previous two questions, and compensation issues continued to be critical. The number of mentions related to these two themes dwarfs the number of mentions to all other codes. However, because health insurance costs are integral to employee compensation, and because the issues addressed in the last two themes were not as focused in in the previous two questions, they have been identified as a major theme.

#### **1. How I feel.**

There were 19 responses that mentioned **positive feelings about WSU**. Some of these comments reflected appreciation for the survey (e.g. “I appreciate surveys like this” and “I appreciate the opportunity to take part in the survey”). Several responses indicated **happiness with the job** itself:

- “I love my job!”
- “My husband and I both graduated from WSU and now both work here. We love our jobs, but we make the minimum salaries for our positions.”
- “I started at WSU in 2019 and it is by far one of the best jobs I have ever had” I thoroughly love what I do!”
- “I love the university that I work for and intend to stay for a while. My position is very fulfilling.”

In addition, some respondents mentioned **aspects of their job that they enjoy**:

- “I have good job variety, work on a nice campus and enjoy most of my coworkers and interacting with students.”
- “We have terrific benefits, my boss is supportive, and our department is generally well-run.”
- “The director of my department is greatly responsible for the positive environment here...This affects my outlook more than university-wide issues.”
- “Generally a great place to work with lots of energy and smart co-workers.”

However, several of these positive respondents **also mentioned the need for better pay**:

- “My future goals are to obtain more responsibilities and increased wages for the work I do.”
- “I am satisfied by nearly every aspect of my job except my salary, which is not competitive with the market.”
- “A salary increase would be wonderful, as we are living paycheck to paycheck, working side jobs to make ends meet, and trying to raise a family.”

Unfortunately, most of the emotional response comments were less positive. Many **general morale comments related to compensation and insurance costs**:

- “...I work very hard each day but yet I don’t get additional compensation for a job well done at my yearly performance review. It’s hard to stay motivated some days knowing that...”
- “I am very disappointed that pay increases are not given to those who receive exceeds expectations on their yearly evaluations. Yet the cost of insurance keeps going up to a ridiculous amount each year...It’s very discouraging.”

- "...The premium costs have skyrocketed and the proportion of costs covered by the state has declined dramatically. This is a huge disappointment and the single greatest drag on morale among myself and my coworkers."

A **sense of unfairness** in the workplace was mentioned by several respondents:

- "I have also seen firsthand our new director give less experienced individuals positions handed to them on a silver platter without even being interviewed for the position."
- "Men here at Department C get paid more than women for the same role which is very upsetting to many of my fellow female coworkers."
- "I also believe that WSU discriminates upon age and experience. Those they want in certain positions are placed and most are never considered."
- "The pay here is unfair! I have remained here because the hours have worked for my family."
- "Completely unfair promotions that ignore all the legalities and seniority, but most of all, ignoring great employees."

A **general sense of frustration** was also expressed, and **to a great extent that frustration is associated with pay**:

- "It's frustrating to do a great job and work hard, but that is not tied to raises."
- "The proposed COLA raise by the Governor hasn't been approved yet and probably won't be because no one cares about the little people who actually get things done."
- "Someone with a bachelor's degree working as an administrative assistant can earn more than I do at my job and my job requires a master's degree. Even comparative to other similar entry-level positions across campus which require a master's degree, I am making \$6000 less a year (about 15% less). That is frustrating."
- "Parking gets taken out of my paycheck yet I fight students for parking spots...If I can't have a pay raise for my years of service then I'd at least like to be able to use what I am paying for on campus."

A sense of being **undervalued and underappreciated** was also expressed:

- "We seem to have no value, always under scrutiny and threats when we know our responsibilities and we have been great employees."

- “I wish valuing my hard work was a priority of the university, but it very much feels like I am continually asked to do more for the same pay.”
- “I do my job extremely well and have received great reviews for five years, but my salary has been stagnant. Staff seem extremely undervalued in higher education.”
- “I work for multiple departments and I feel appreciated by only one department chair.”
- “I don’t think loyalty and longevity are appreciated by administration anymore and my dedication is not appreciated...”
- “...As a state employee, I feel that most of my fellow Kansans think I contribute little of value. It’s disheartening.”

A **lack of trust** was mentioned by a few respondents:

- “It appears no matter how hard some try to make you believe there is transparency, there have been too many times this has been stated but when it is all said and done, there truly was not transparency. This can be a huge cause for distrust...”
- “When we left the classified system and became University Support Staff, we were made promises and some of those promises were not upheld. Many people don’t trust the administration because of this.”
- “Uncertainty and distrust are abundant because of constantly changing whims and power plays.”
- “Trusting your employees to do their job adds so much to morale, productivity, and quality of services.”

Finally, some comments also reflected **anger and stress**:

- “You have highly capable, educated people working at this university and yet they are paid a wage that is almost offensive.”
- “It’s just not right that the higher ups have so much but give so little.”
- “...unfair labor practices and undue cruelty!”
- “From the moment I wake up I DREAD going to work. I hate being in the car while driving to work.”
- “I think morale is a problem, and it feels ‘uniquely bad’ for each group...but it isn’t: all groups are stressed out and feel put upon.”
- “...the workload several months out of the year causes me to question whether it is worth the stress...”

- “The job isn’t as much fun as it used to be. The pressure to work harder and accomplish more aren’t reflected in better pay or benefits. Stress is higher.”

## 2. Compensation and insurance costs need more discussion.

As seen in the responses to the previous questions, **stagnant compensation** continues to be a concern, and **increasing costs of health insurance aggravate the sense of doing worse instead of doing better**. Raises dominated the mentions related to compensation:

- “Many of us haven’t had any merit raises in years.
- Not much of an incentive to go above and beyond.”
- “Currently my take home pay was higher in 2007 than it is today. If I did not love my job and the people I work with, I would look for employment elsewhere.”
- “Please find a way to adjust pay annually to keep up with insurance increases. Ultimately, many people make less now than they did 10 years ago because they have higher insurance premiums and the same salary.”
- “The lack of pay increases...impacts what I will receive at retirement. I am curious to know how some people in this office and elsewhere on campus can receive pay increases, but the classified workers are always told that there is no money for pay raises.”

Respondents also mentioned a **sense of inequity** with new employees being paid as much as an employee with more longevity:

- “It is very discouraging that when new employees are hired, their beginning salary is almost equal to or greater than mine and I have been in my current position for almost 20 years.”
- “Many people who have had responsibilities added do not receive an increase in pay, whereas new hires can negotiate or get paid higher salaries than those who have been loyal to the university.”
- “It is extremely frustrating to see new employees come in the Regent’s system and earn higher salaries for a comparable position. Especially, when you consider that long time employees have a well-established knowledge base. It appears that the university does not value that.”

### 3. I have concerns about management or supervisors.

Manager and supervisor behaviors were mentioned by some respondents. Concerns included **unfair hiring and promotion practices:**

- “Those they want in certain positions are placed and most are never considered, especially when positions are externally or internally advertised.”
- “Some high administrative positions have been filled by people with few skills in this area. Some of the positions were created especially for these individuals...”
- “They are allowing favoritism in hiring and promotions. Examples of this is a manager’s position that was filled without an interview process. Department Lead Management was hired and that person does not meet the requirement standards of the position. Allowing Supervisor/Manager to hire and direct family members.”

#### **absence of setting performance expectations and providing reviews:**

- “I haven’t even received a performance review for the last two years. I was not made aware of my supervisor until a few months ago after being employed in the position for over a year.”
- “...I am troubled by the fact that I do not have a supervisor with training in the same field as me. My supervisor is competent but does not understand the work I do or the needs of my area...I have not had a meaningful review of my performance since I began employment.
- “In general, I would say there is a lack of clarity around roles, responsibilities, and expectations.”

#### **and a lack of communication:**

- “And because our supervisor does not bring us all together at regular intervals, we all just do our own thing...”
- “I get zero feedback...I fear getting let go with no advance warning given the lack of communication.”
- “Our director started in 2017. His first meeting with us was five months later. By that time almost 30 people had either retired, quit, or been terminated.”
- “...in my honest opinion I have never worked where expectations weren’t made perfectly clear...I have never worked where intense micro-managing was on such a level you feel uncomfortable doing your job without asking

about every facet. This just may be normal in higher ed due to budget constraints, but I'm not comfortable with that degree of micro-management."

In addition to mentioning concerns about managers and supervisors, some respondents also addressed issues relating to WSU administration. In general, mentions related to a **lack of respect or concern for respondents and the jobs they do**:

- "At WSU, the Innovation Campus appears to be the only focus of our administration."
- "Now the overriding mandate at Wichita State University is to reduce and triage our offered services down to the essentials just to keep us financially afloat and keep the front doors open. This is not a path that many of us signed up to do with our careers in the academic industry."
- "...our workload has increased tremendously. Which executives seem to be oblivious to...We are treated as cheaters, wasting our time, dishonest, lazy, and never uttering a word of appreciation, encouragement, and thank you."

#### **4. Workload gets higher, pay stays the same, turnover gets higher.**

Finally, respondents noted an **increase in workload without an associated increase in pay, followed by higher turnover**.

- "Doing twice the work for the same pay. Had to laugh when asked about a second job. When would I have the time?"
- "I like the kind of work I do, but since we have gotten bigger I have more work and no extra pay."
- "...the long hours and amount of work done with a very limited staff is exhausting and makes it challenging to want to stay if those individuals were not around."
- "The reduction in staff coupled with increased work load makes it difficult for employees to utilize their accrued vacation and/or comp time."
- "At WSU, my sense is that certain areas—typically academic departments—often have lower workloads and expectations as compared to other more student-service oriented departments/roles. This is an unfortunate morale-lowering issue and hurts staff retention in student-service departments."
- "I am in a research funded position but am stuck with state general fund raises (less than 4% increase in 5 years). My unit and ones like mine work our tails off to get work and other employees receive the raises. There is zero

equity in pay structure at WSU...If not resolved soon, I am gone as the pay level here is really poor.”

- “I wish valuing my hard work was a priority of the university, but it very much feels like I am continually asked to do more for the same pay. If noticeable changes are not made, the university will continue to pay the hefty cost of frequent turnover as dependable, intelligent and capable employees move to the private sector.”

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\*As noted above, the following codes and mentions within these codes were removed. In some cases, these comments were mentioned within other codes.

1. Cost-cutting (5 mentions)
2. Inefficient systems (5 mentions)
3. Innovation Campus (3 mentions)
4. Lack of focus on students (2 mentions)
5. Private involvement in public education (2 mentions)
6. Different expectations (1 mention)
7. Climate change (1 mention)
8. Faculty (1 mention)
9. Interdepartmental competition (1 mention)





## CONCLUSIONS

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Although the results of this analysis cannot be inferred to represent the entire population or even the total sample for the USS-UPS survey, there are several important issues that surfaced that may provide a different frame for considering the overall survey results.

**“Pay, pay, pay, pay, pay, pay, pay, pay oh, and it’s the pay.”**

This comment encapsulates the general attitude expressed in responses to all three open-ended questions. Respondents focused on pay issues when asked about incentives because perceived adequate basic compensation is more important than incentives—unless the incentives include pay. Budget limitations affect their ability to do their job because staffing challenges require additional duties and longer hours for which they are not paid. As far as additional comments are concerned, what respondents perceive that they don’t have—being valued for their contribution and expertise, being able to improve skills in order to advance on the job, and having clear and fair criteria for compensation increases—is seen as having an impact on how they feel about work and the university. ***So, it’s the pay.***

Although this survey did not focus exclusively on compensation and benefits, it is clear from the responses on all three open-ended questions that issues relating to compensation and benefits are at the forefront for respondents and that these are seen as the result of budget challenges for the university. It is also clear that compensation and benefit issues are seen by respondents as being the first step in a cycle that directly affects their work experience:

***Stagnant basic pay combined with irregular or inadequate raises leads to employee turnover. Turnover leads to reduced staff. Reduced staff leads to an increase in work for which employees perceive they are not adequately compensated and about which they feel dissatisfied. As a result, there is more turnover and the cycle continues.***

In addition to feeling as if basic pay is inadequate, respondents feel that because health insurance costs continue to increase, they are actually worse off than they were earlier in their employment. These results track with the overall survey results that indicate that additional duties with no pay increase and salary increases not keeping up with costs were named as the cause of worsening morale by almost 70% of those at WSU who reported that their morale has worsened compared to two years ago.

In a situation in which state funding often dictates availability of funds for regular compensation, meaningful attention by the organization to other aspects of work life becomes even more important. Respondents have suggested a number of possibilities that could enhance their work experience, including different approaches to work flexibility, more generous or flexible leave policies, more opportunities for professional development, attention to improving people management skills among managers and supervisors, and more liberal

parking options. However, the perception of inadequate basic compensation is likely to continue to be a dissatisfier for employees at WSU as long as funds for compensation are limited.

Although these results indicate significant dissatisfaction from respondents about budget-related issues, there is still a store of goodwill from respondents about working at WSU. This was also found in the general survey results, with 78% of respondents saying that they continue to work at WSU because they enjoy the work. Respondents in the general survey results also reported that, in general, they feel that their work is appreciated, especially by coworkers and department heads. The results from the comment analysis may provide more nuance when looking for opportunities to enhance the work experience of USS-UPS employees at WSU.



## APPENDIX A METHODS

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### ***Software***

Two types of software were used to help organize and analyze the data.

- The original survey raw data for the three questions were provided by FHSU in an Excel spreadsheet. No raw data for any other questions or identifying information of any kind were provided.
- Item responses and participant data were imported into NVivo for Mac (release 11.4.1) for organizing and coding qualitative data.

### ***Data cleaning and organization***

Before data analysis began, the raw data were reviewed case by case in order to remove cases that did not contribute useful data. For all three items, any cases were excluded in which there was no response, or a response that did not provide useful data, such as “N/A”, “no,” “I can’t think of any right now,” or “none.” For question 12, three cases were excluded. For question 15, five cases were excluded. For question 17, five cases were excluded.

### ***Coding methods***

Different types of coding were used in the analysis of the qualitative data from the open-ended items.

- For all questions, in vivo coding was used in the first cycle of coding. In vivo coding uses the actual words of the respondents to create initial codes that capture their lived experience.
- Because many of the comments included emotional responses to the questions, a second round of coding focused on capturing the emotional quality of the responses.
- An individual response to the item may be coded in more than one way depending on the complexity of the response. For example, one response may include concern about the cost of employee health benefits, the expression of frustration about long work hours, and the respondent’s emotional response to the way they feel treated by their supervisor. In this example, three “mentions” will be coded differently. A less complex response, such as “free parking” would be coded as one mention.

### ***Theme development***

After coding all responses for each item, the codes were examined for prominence by preparing a code map as well as reviewing the number of mentions for each code. Codes were then organized in order to find patterns among the responses. As themes emerged, mentions by code were sorted into those themes, and then reviewed and reorganized as necessary. The final themes with subsidiary codes were then represented visually as hierarchy maps to examine the relationships of the codes to each other within each theme.



## APPENDIX B

### RESPONSE RATES FOR SURVEY AND FOR OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

**APPENDIX B  
RESPONSE RATES FOR SURVEY AND FOR OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

**WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY RESPONDENTS AND RESPONSE RATES**

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<b>Possible respondents</b>	1480
<b>Actual respondents</b>	653
<i>WSU response rate</i>	44.1%
<b>Item 12 responses<sup>1</sup></b>	221
<i>% actual respondents</i>	33.8%
<b>Item 15 responses<sup>2</sup></b>	166
<i>% actual respondents</i>	25.4%
<b>Item 17 responses<sup>3</sup></b>	169
<i>% actual respondents</i>	25.9%

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- <sup>1</sup>Item 12                      **Is another incentive important to you? If so, please provide that incentive in the space below.**
- <sup>2</sup>Item 15                      **Is there another area in which budget limitations have impacted your job? If so, please provide that area in the space below.**
- <sup>3</sup>Item 17                      **And finally, do you have any other comments to add? If so, please provide comments below.**