Addressing Enrollment Staffing Challenges

with Northern Arizona University
Today’s Presenters

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EAB

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Northern Arizona University
A public research university based in Flagstaff, Arizona, with a total enrollment of about 30,000 students

**NAU Graduate College**

- Provides institutional oversight for over 130 graduate programs
- 4,500 registered graduate students
- 20 statewide campuses and online options, allowing for greater flexibility
Education’s Trusted Partner to Help Schools and Students Thrive

Your Imperatives Determine Ours

**INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY**
Prepare Your Institution for the Future

Executive guidance rooted in research to support your strategic priorities

**MARKETING AND ENROLLMENT**
Achieve Your Enrollment and Growth Goals

Tailored partnerships powered by a recruitment ecosystem with unrivaled reach to enroll your future classes

**STUDENT SUCCESS**
Build a Student-Centric Campus

Technology trusted by 850 schools to retain, graduate, and empower more students

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**
Advance DEI on Campus and in Your Community

Technology, research, and bold initiatives to strengthen your DEI strategy and eliminate equity gaps

**DATA AND ANALYTICS**
Embrace Digital Transformation

Data and analytics solutions built for higher education to guide decisions and accelerate innovation

We partner with 2,500+ institutions to accelerate progress and enable lasting change.

95%+ of our partners return to us year after year because of results we achieve, together.
Understanding the Staffing Crisis
Pandemic Forces Give Higher Ed Whiplash

Talent Shortages Force Shift From Cost-Containment to Asset Management

Labor as Our Biggest Cost Center
Focused on surviving early-pandemic revenue losses

“How can we encourage early retirement?”

“How do we retain our people?”

Labor as a Strategic Asset
Growing your institution in an era of labor shortage, inflation, and competition

2020: Pandemic Scarcity

-11% Workers in Higher Ed¹

2022: The Great Resignation

“How can we attract talent?”

“How do we retain our people?”

1) Estimated loss of workers in the college and university industry from January 2020-January 2021 (lowest employment level during pandemic)


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Higher Ed Experiences Growing Pains

Historically High Hiring Growth Stresses Higher Ed HR
Percent change in total employees from January 2020, seasonally adjusted

Higher Ed average annual growth pre-pandemic

K-12 Recovers Faster than Higher Ed

Hiring Growth, 2021-2022

Source: EAB analysis of the Current Employment Statistics survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; EAB interviews and analysis
Accounting for Your Vanishing Workforce

Five Key Factors at Play

- Remote work has created a national marketplace for labor
- The number of working-age people in the United States is shrinking
  - Projected deficit of 6 million workers nationally by 2028
- Employees developed a taste for flexible work during the pandemic
- Higher ed lags industry on compensation and flexible work
- Downward spiral of worsening admissions work conditions and staff resignations

Source: EAB research and analysis.
Grad Enrollment Leaders Report Heightened Stress

Q: How stressful is your current work situation compared with last year and pre-COVID-19?

Results from EAB and NAGAP flash poll, January 2022

- **More stressful**
  - Last Year: 43%
  - This Year: 69%

- **Same stress level**
  - Last Year: 22%
  - This Year: 40%

- **Less stressful**
  - Last Year: 17%
  - This Year: 10%
**Half of Grad Enrollment Leaders Considering Leaving**

Q: At this time, are you considering leaving your current position?

*Results from EAB and NAGAP flash poll, January 2022*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No, not at this time</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, for a position at a different college/university</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, for a position outside higher education</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, for another position at my institution</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, considering all options</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not currently looking, but <strong>open to leaving</strong></td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering <strong>retiring</strong></td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46% Reported they are open to or considering leaving their current position.
A Root-Cause Perspective

Identifying Areas of Focus for Potential Solutions

Staffing Shortfalls in Context

- Too much work
- Not enough staff
- Inefficient use of existing staff

Staff burnout, increased resignations, compromised enrollment outcomes...

High quit rate
Inability to fill open positions
Time spent on unimpactful activities
Staff and activities mismatched
Suboptimal execution on impactful activities

Source: EAB research and analysis.
A Staged Approach

Considering Lead Times for Implementation and Impact

![Diagram showing immediate, 6-plus months, and 12-plus months actions and tactics]

**Immediate**
- Triage staff’s workload
- Maximize flexible-work options
- Embrace “staff-first” management practices
- Deploy recruitment and retention bonuses
- Revise job posting copy
- Hire outside help

**6-plus months**
- Lobby your organization for higher pay
- Launch more complex outsourcing partnerships
- Shore up web-based recruitment infrastructure
- Build tuition-remission recruiting partnerships
- Increase options for staff skills development

**12-plus months**
- Implement retention strategies for senior staff
- Implement department-based pay-raise strategies
- Beef up your sub-entry-level ranks
- Implement improved career paths

Source: EAB research and analysis.
Understanding What Staff Want

Which Benefits Matter Most to Prospective Employees?

% of Surveyed Individuals Identifying Benefit as Having the "Most Influence"

3 Strategies for Solving Workforce Challenges

How Northern Arizona University Improved Staff Satisfaction and Retention
1. Maximize flexible work options
2. Ensure appropriate compensation
3. Create an engaging work environment
### A Fundamental Disconnect

Employers and Employees Are Misaligned on Remote Work

#### Percentage of Surveyed Employers and Employees, by Remote-Work Preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full-time on site</th>
<th>Hybrid</th>
<th>Full-time remote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What employers say</strong></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What employees want</strong></td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11% of university presidents say >50% of staff will be permitted to work remotely at least 2 days per week.


1) Not specific to higher education.
An Inherently In-Person Function?

Offering Meaningful Flexible Work Opportunities for Flexible Work?

Three Ways to Make More Options Available Within Admissions Teams and Beyond

- Adjust balance between in-person and flexible recruitment modalities
- Consolidate in-person responsibilities into dedicated roles
- Maximize match with personal preferences

Mostly in person vs. Mostly remote

All roles have a sizable in-person component

In-person work concentrated in dedicated roles

Mostly in-person

Mostly remote

Source: EAB research and analysis.
A Flexible-First Perspective

A Constraint-Based Approach That Accepts Flexibility as Default

Staff Allowed to Choose Where They Work, Except as Below

**Calendar-based constraints**
Staff in certain roles must work from the office at certain times of year (e.g., advising, orientation)

**Role-based constraints**
There is no way for the essential work that some roles entail to be done remotely

**Task-based constraints**
Some activities, such as leading campus tours, only can be performed in person, on campus

**Personal preference**
Some staff prefer to perform, in person, work that could be just as easily done remotely

Same logic can be applied to aspects of flexible work not related to location (e.g., scheduling)

Source: EAB research and analysis.
Creating Flexible Work Policies to Meet Staff Needs

- Early adopters of a hybrid first approach
- Introduction of the three-day weekend, regularly giving staff summer Fridays off through True Blue Fridays
- Additional days of PTO around winter holidays and for community service
1. Maximize flexible work options
2. **Ensure appropriate compensation**
3. Create an engaging work environment
A Pay Problem for Enrollment and Admissions

Low Compensation Creates Flight Risk

Typical Salaries Put Many Roles in or near the Danger Zone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vice President of Enrollment Mgmt</td>
<td>$157,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Graduate Enrollment</td>
<td>$73,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment Manager</td>
<td>$63,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Admissions Coordinator</td>
<td>$49,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Admissions Counselor</td>
<td>$44,944</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A “hardship threshold” of $60,000

Employees making less than $60K are 1.6x more likely to quit

Industry Throwing Dollars at Prospective Hires

% of Organizations Taking Specific Measures to Combat Recruitment Problems

- 50% Offering pay higher than market rate
- 42% Offering retention bonuses
- 29% Beating or matching counter-offers received by potential hires

Lobby Your Institution for Higher Pay
Information to Share with Your Organization’s Paymasters

- Number of graduate admissions positions **unfilled** for 3+ months
- Current **quit rate** versus historical
- Number of **failed searches** in past 12 months
- **Negative impact** on enrollment processes/outcomes
- **Market context** on the staffing crisis
- **Recruitment/retention enhancements** you’ve made
- **Cost cuts** you’ve made to help fund positions
- How much **revenue** your staff bring in
- Insights from exit interviews with **departing staff**
- Feedback from **failed hires**
- **Compensation** benchmarks
- What your institution pays for comparable **non-graduate admissions roles**
- What **industry** pays individuals with comparable backgrounds
A Revenue-Based Argument

Highlight the Dollars Your Team Brings In

Scripting

“Even if you were to assume that our admissions counselors only influence 20% of enrolling students’ decision to pick our school, that would still mean that every one of our counselors locks in $486,000 in revenue for the institution in each enrollment cycle. And that doesn’t count the large additional amount of nontuition revenue those students generate.”

Run the numbers for your institution

Average amount of tuition revenue each of your counselors secures for your institution every enrollment cycle

\[
(\text{# of enrolled students per counselor}) \times (\text{Average net tuition revenue per student per semester}) \times (\text{Average number of semesters a student spends at your institution}) \times (20\%) 
\]

Percentage of student decisions influenced by counselors

Source: EAB research and analysis.
A Role for Nonrecurring Payments
A Flexible Tool for Temporary Relief

Example: Lapsed Salary Turned into Bonuses

Unused funds from unfilled staff positions

Signing bonuses

Retention bonuses

Prospective hires

Current staff

A note on lapsed-salary funds
Policies regarding allowable uses of lapsed salary differ by institution, with some HR teams being more restrictive than others.

Source: EAB research and analysis.
Increasing Compensation to Stay Competitive

Raising Salaries by 2025
- Keeping up with increasing cost of living in Flagstaff
- Stay competitive with other institutions and private companies

Issuing a One-Time Bonus
- Making staff feel appreciated
- Giving institution flexibility to provide additional money when funds are more liquid
1. Maximize flexible work options
2. Ensure appropriate compensation
3. Create an engaging work environment
What Makes Staff Want to Stay?

Three Pillars of Staff Morale Over Which Managers Have Direct Control

**Effective communication**
- Careful listening
- Contextualization
- Acknowledging staff accomplishments

**Robust staff development**
- Targeted training and support
- Clear and compelling career paths
- Opportunities to expand skill set

**Maximum staff agency**
- Clear goals
- Adequate resources
- Minimum interference from above

Source: EAB research and analysis.
Ensure Effective Communication

Three Keys to Optimal Performance

**Careful listening**
- Check in with your staff regularly
- Ask about their goals and how your team can improve
- Let your staff do most of the talking and make it your aim to understand them as deeply as possible

**Acknowledging staff accomplishments**
- Celebrate team and individual achievements
- Highlight noteworthy and interesting successes, especially generalizable innovations worthy of emulation
- Give credit where credit is due

**Contextualization**
- Show your staff how their efforts promote the team’s goals
- Situate their work in the context of admissions as a profession.

Source: EAB research and analysis.
Implications and Campus Perspective
From Northern Arizona University

Giving Staff Members a Voice
- Creating a university graduate committee to allow NAU staff from across the institution to voice their questions and concerns

Providing Trainings and Workshops
- Ensuring all staff have a good base understanding of processes by hosting training sessions and workshops

Offering Child-Care Options
- Considering expanding our child-care facility so staff and faculty can benefit from this amenity as well, allowing them to be focused and engaged
Three Takeaways from Today’s Session

1. Seize the initiative
   Much of the responsibility for staffing has traditionally fallen outside of the admissions team; involving yourself more directly in staff recruitment and retention efforts can expedite much-needed change.

2. Embrace a staff-first perspective
   Channeling your team members’ point of view can suggest innovations that might not otherwise have occurred to you—ones that can have benefits beyond staff recruitment and retention.

3. Blank-slate your admissions approach
   We are in a time of unprecedented and likely permanent change; rethinking your admissions approach from scratch can help ensure you remain in step with radically altered market conditions.
Q&A