What Do Staff Need To Be Successful?
Preliminary Results from the AAMC Staff Success Engagement Survey Pilot

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Staff Success

Staff Success Engagement Survey Model and Methods

Staff in academic medicine are essential to the operations of an institution, yet little is known about their professional needs. To create strong workplace cultures within medical schools, leaders need to understand what concerns staff.

The AAMC Staff Success Engagement Survey (SSES) is a companion satisfaction and engagement survey to the Faculty Forward Engagement Survey. The SSES has been developed through survey and focus group research at U.S. medical schools, and it assesses the distinct workplace experiences of staff in academic medicine

Staff Success Engagement Survey Model

Gather Staff Feedback → Interpret the Results → Communicate the Results → Use the results for organizational improvement
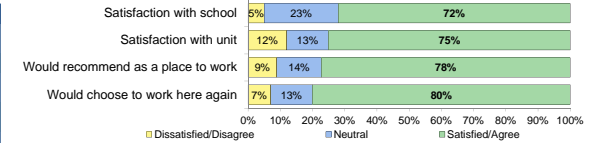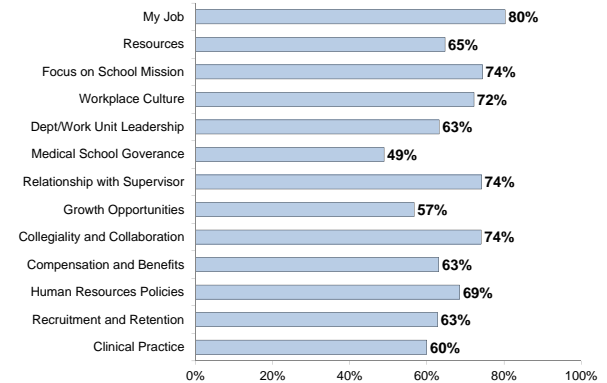
Methods

- SSES designed to encourage an evidence-based approach to improving the academic medicine workplace environment for staff
- 10 LCME-accredited U.S. medical schools participants to date
- SSES administered to over 10,000 staff, with a 54% response rate overall
- Results reported here are from Jan-March 2015 web-based surveys

Survey Domains and Overall Summary Score Results

Dimension Name	Dimension Description
Nature of Work	Sense of accomplishment and contribution, role clarity, autonomy
Resources	Staffing, technology, and physical resources
Focus on Medical School Mission	Clarity of school mission and accomplishment of mission
Workplace Culture	Whether the workplace culture cultivates teamwork, innovation, and other ideals
Department/Work Unit Governance	Opportunities for staff participation in decision-making; communication from the work unit leadership; work unit's explanation of finances to staff
Medical School Governance	Opportunities for staff participation in governance; communication from the dean's office; medical school's explanation of finances to staff
Relationship with Supervisor	Supervisor's support of individual goals; good communication
Opportunities for Career and Professional Growth	Opportunities for training and professional development; opportunities for advancement
Collegiality and Collaboration	Personal "fit" (i.e. sense of belonging); interactions with colleagues; opportunities to collaborate; appreciation by colleagues
Staff Recruitment and Retention	Success in hiring and retaining high quality staff
Compensation and Benefits	Evaluation of overall compensation; health and retirement benefits
Human Resources Policies	Consistent application of HR policies; policies support work/life balance
Staff Recruitment and Retention	Success in hiring and retaining high quality staff
Clinical Practice	Ability to provide high quality care; how well the clinical practice functions overall
Global Satisfaction	Overall satisfaction with work unit and medical school as places to work, including two open-ended questions to solicit suggestions for improvement
Demographic Information	Demographic information regarding sex, race, age etc.
Employment Information	Length of employment; type of position; primary work location

Satisfaction with school: 5% / 23% / 72%
Satisfaction with unit: 12% / 13% / 75%
Would recommend as a place to work: 9% / 14% / 78%
Would choose to work here again: 7% / 13% / 80%

Legend: Dissatisfied/Disagree | Neutral | Satisfied/Agree

Staff Success created summary scores representing conceptually-related items with compatible scales (e.g., all agreement response scales) within the survey dimensions. The summary scores below represent the overall top two response options (e.g., strongly agree or agree) across all staff members.

Summary Score	%
My Job	80%
Resources	65%
Focus on School Mission	74%
Workplace Culture	72%
Dept/Work Unit Leadership	63%
Medical School Goverance	49%
Relationship with Supervisor	74%
Growth Opportunities	57%
Collegiality and Collaboration	74%
Compensation and Benefits	63%
Human Resources Policies	69%
Recruitment and Retention	63%
Clinical Practice	60%

Top Ten and Bottom Ten Survey Results

Top 10 Survey Items	% Favorable
I am usually willing to give more than what is expected of me in my job	96%
I am satisfied with our school's policies for sick and vacation leave	84%
I am satisfied with my autonomy at work	82%
My day-to-day activities give me a sense of accomplishment	81%
My work unit colleagues are respectful of my efforts to balance work and home responsibilities	81%
Quality of personal interaction I have with work unit colleagues	80%
I feel that the workplace culture at this medical school supports diversity	80%
If I had to do it all over, I would again choose to work at this medical school	80%
My work unit colleagues usually get along well together	79%
Health benefits	79%

Bottom 10 Survey Items	% Favorable
Senior leadership does a good job explaining medical school finances to the staff	34%
There are sufficient opportunities for staff participation in the governance of this medical school	37%
Additional benefits, such as child care etc.	37%
Staff can express their opinions about the medical school leadership without fear of retribution	41%
Communication to staff about this location's financial status	41%
The pace of decision making in the dean's office is reasonable	46%
I am satisfied with the opportunities to advance my career at this medical school	46%
My work unit has enough staff to handle our workload	47%
Communication from senior administrators	48%
I am satisfied with the opportunities to advance my career at this university	50%

Key Findings

Overall, **approximately 3 in 4 staff are satisfied with their work units and medical schools as places to work. Additionally, 3 in 4 would recommend their medical schools to others as good places to work.**

Staff indicated **positive relationships with colleagues,** both personally and professionally. They also agreed that their **day to day activities provided as sense of accomplishment.** Lastly, they were reported **satisfaction with their health benefits and institutional policies for sick and vacation leave.**

In spite of these overall high levels of satisfaction, there are areas where medical schools can improve the workplace environment for staff:
- **Increase opportunities for growth and development**
- **Ensure adequate staff resources are in place to support workload**
- **Improve benefits such as childcare, parking, etc.**

Survey findings are consistent with the themes of a 2014 AAMC focus group study across 4 medical schools and nearly 100 staff.

Future Action

While medical school resources are often limited, leaders might consider the following actions to address staff concerns:
- **Use benchmarking data and other tools to determine the most efficient and effective staffing plans for each function**
- **Create or rebrand development and training opportunities to be tailored specifically for staff**
- **Prioritize career planning and coaching to retain high-quality staff over time**
- **Consider innovative models for improving benefits by directly using staff feedback about what benefits matter most to them**

Many of the findings about the relationship between the medical school and the individual, such as communication from leadership, **are consistent with findings from the AAMC Faculty Forward Engagement Survey.** This points to a larger cultural need for academic medicine leaders to increase understanding of and participation by staff and faculty in the operations and governance of the institution.

These results a new layer of understanding to the staff experience in academic medicine. **While these results are from a pilot study of 10 medical schools, they warrant future research across a larger and increasingly diverse group of institutions.** Continuing to assess staff engagement alongside of faculty engagement provides opportunities to make academic medical centers truly excellent places to work.