

NC State University 2014 Staff Well-Being Survey

Introduction, Research Methods, and Response Rates

(Available online at <https://oirp.ncsu.edu/spring-2014-staff-well-being-survey/>)

Introduction

One of the goals outlined in NC State's Strategic Plan is to "enhance organizational excellence by creating a culture of constant improvement." Strategies to achieve that goal include "enhancing institutional pride among staff, faculty, and students," "encouraging diversity and inclusion," "facilitating work/life balance," and "configuring university support services for efficiency and effectiveness." To help assess how well NC State is achieving those objectives, as well as to more broadly assess satisfaction among employees and identify specific areas for improvement, in Spring 2014 NC State's Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) administered the Staff Well-Being Survey (SWBS).

The Spring 2014 SWBS, sponsored by Provost Warwick Arden and Vice Chancellor for Finance and Business Charles Leffler, was a follow-up to the SWBS first administered in Spring 2008. Thus, in addition to assessing the current state of affairs, the survey also provides the opportunity to identify changes in staff opinions and experiences over time. The questionnaires cover a wide range of topics, such as salary and benefits, campus leadership, working relationships, diversity, support and professional development, performance reviews, and administrative processes.

This document provides a brief overview of the history of the project and the development of the questionnaire, describes the survey population, details how the survey was administered, and gives response rates broken down by various sub-groups of the population. Links to reports providing more detailed information are provided. A copy of the questionnaire with overall results to the survey (along with comparisons to results from the 2008 SWBS), an executive summary on the overall results, and tables of results broken down by various sub-groups of the survey population (e.g., division/college, employment profile characteristics, and demographic characteristics) are available online at <http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/staff/>.

OIRP has been and will continue to work with the campus community to identify specific areas of interest from the survey to explore more fully. Reports and/or presentations on these areas of interest (e.g., the performance review process, diversity concerns, campus leadership) will be shared as available.

History and Development

Although various staff members at NC State might have been asked to participate in surveys over the years to collect information on specific issues of concern (e.g., campus safety), prior to the 2008 SWBS the University had apparently never before conducted a broad-based, campus-wide survey of its staff. To facilitate the development and implementation of the initial project, OIRP's (then University Planning and Analysis) Associate Director for Survey Research, Dr. Nancy Whelchel, organized an advisory committee consisting of representatives from the Staff Senate, the Office for Equal Opportunity and Equity and the Office for Diversity and Inclusion (now combined into the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity), the Committee on the Status of Women, and Human Resources, as well as the University Director for Assessment and staff members representing various constituents across campus (e.g., Building Maintenance and Operations, NC State Libraries, CALS Cooperative Extension Services). The major goal of the survey project was to collect information that would be useful to the university community in identifying what NC State is doing well and what challenges the university faces in promoting staff well-being. Ideally, the resulting data would better enable the university to work towards making improvements in areas of concern identified by the survey.

The 2008 committee built on the questionnaire originally developed and used for the Fall 2006 Faculty Well-Being survey project. In addition, the committee explored staff surveys administered at other universities as well as in the private sector. When possible, the NC State questionnaire included questions similar or identical to these surveys in order to allow for comparisons with other universities. Ultimately the questionnaire included 12 topical sections related to staff well-being, and a final section collecting demographic information not available through personnel records. Topical sections were:

- Overall Satisfaction
- Working Relationships
- Communication
- Leadership
- Vision and Direction
- Diversity and Multiculturalism
- Work Activities
- Support and Professional Development
- Performance Evaluation
- Pay and Compensation
- Campus Infrastructure and Physical Environment
- Campus Activities

Altogether there were about 300 forced-choice questions on the 2008 survey, most of which employed a 4-point Likert response option scale (e.g., “very satisfied,” “satisfied,” “dissatisfied,” “very dissatisfied”). Response options did not generally include a middle or neutral response option (e.g., “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”) but did include a “don’t know” type option when it was judged likely that some respondents would not have sufficient experience on which to base an opinion. The questionnaire also included a limited number of open-ended questions.

During the summer and fall of 2007 and early 2008, Dr. Whelchel gave presentations on the project to the Staff Senate, NC State University Executive Officers, Vice Provosts, and Human Resources’ Personnel Connections, and sought their input on the topics covered in the questionnaire. In addition, members of the SWBS advisory committee were encouraged to talk with their constituents about the project and to provide feedback on the questionnaire, in particular to make suggestions for topics and/or specific items to include (or exclude). The questionnaire was also pre-tested with a group of staff an Occupational Activity Code of “professional,” a group of “technical” and “clerical” staff, and two groups of “skilled crafts” and “service/maintenance” staff (for a total of four separate pre-tests). Revisions were made to the questionnaire based on feedback from the presentations and the pre-tests. Dr. Whelchel also met with the university’s Regulatory Compliance Administration to confirm that the project was following appropriate regulations regarding research with human subjects.¹

In preparation to re-administer the survey in Spring 2014, Dr. Whelchel solicited input from administrators and staff in offices across campus, and from various committees (e.g., University Diversity Advisory Committee, Staff Senate, Administrative Processes Review Committee, Human Resources Connections). The primary objective was to identify areas of the survey, in particular specific questions, that worked well and provided useful information, those that either were no longer needed or needed revisions, and to identify new areas of information that needed to be collected. The resulting questionnaire was very similar to that used in 2008, with about 90 percent of the questions identical on both surveys.²

Survey Population

The survey population was designed to be as inclusive as possible. In general, all staff with Staff Senate representation were eligible to participate in the SWBS. Specifically, the population included all non-instructional EPA and SPA permanent and time-limited staff with an FTE of 0.5 or higher who had been employed at NC State for at least 6 months at the time of the start of the survey. Librarians and Cooperative Extension staff (most of whom are classified as “instructional” in personnel records) were included in the population. All NC State employees classified as SAAO Tier 1 or 2 (essentially those in top administrative positions), post-docs, and student workers were excluded from the population. No sampling was done - - all staff in the population as defined above were invited to participate in the survey. The final survey population size was 5,860. (More details on the demographic make-up of the survey population are included in discussions of response rates below.)

¹ Because of the nature of the survey – internal assessment - - the project did not fall under the purview of the IRB. However, IRB procedures were followed through all stages of the project.

² Overall, about 30 questions were dropped from the 2008 SWBS, and 30 new questions added to the 2014 SWBS. In addition, about 20 questions were slightly revised for the re-administration of the survey.

Survey Administration

As with the 2008 SWBS, the 2014 SWBS was available both online and on paper, with the paper version being available in both English and Spanish. All staff were eligible to use up to one hour during their normal working hours to complete the survey in a private setting.

Online survey: OIRP staff did all programming to create the online survey and host it on Qualtrics. Only members of the survey population could access the survey, using a process designed to maximize confidentiality and data security. Specifically, respondents first needed go through NC State's secure login procedures by entering their Unity ID and password. Their Unity ID was matched to a secure dataset that included their Unity ID and a 10-digit randomly generated unique ID number to confirm that they were eligible to participate in the survey. Eligible participants were then passed through to the survey on Qualtrics, using a unique link created just for them. The random ID number was also passed through, and included on their survey record. No other personally identifying information was included on survey records in Qualtrics.

For the duration of the data collection process OIRP maintained a data file linking the randomly generated IDs to contact information for each member of the survey population in order to facilitate follow-up reminders and the data cleaning process. As per item 47790 in the North Carolina Program Records Retention and Disposition Schedule, this latter data file was destroyed after the data cleaning process was finished, thereby assuring the confidentiality of all respondents.

Paper survey: In order to better enable participation in the survey, particularly to those with limited access to the Web, the survey methodology included a paper questionnaire option. The printed form contained identical question wording, and essentially mirrored the formatting of the online survey. All staff classified as skilled crafts, service, or maintenance (N=994) were mailed packets with a paper copy of the survey, a cover letter, and a pre-addressed postage-paid return envelope. All staff in this group with a race/ethnicity of Hispanic (as indicated in personnel data) were sent both an English and Spanish version of the cover letter and survey in their packet (N=113). Paper surveys were also available on request for those in other occupational classifications. Those receiving paper survey packets were also informed that they could complete the online survey if they chose to do so.

Survey Promotion, Announcements, and Invitations³

A great deal of effort was put in to promoting the survey and encouraging staff to participate in it. A few weeks before the survey went live Provost Arden and Vice Chancellor Leffler sent a [memo](#) to the Administrative Leadership group informing them about the survey, and explaining that all staff who wanted to participate in the voluntary survey were to be given one hour to complete it in private during their normal work hours. In addition to the presentations noted above, articles about the survey were published in the March 2014 issue of Human Resources' [HR News & Helpful Hints](#) newsletter, and in the April 10, 2014 issue of the [Bulletin](#). OIRP distributed [flyers](#) to be posted in work locations across campus, and distributed information and incentives at a booth during NC State's Employee Appreciation Day on April 18. The Chair of the Staff Senate emailed all those represented by Staff Senate to encourage them to participate, and various senior leaders on campus sent targeted emails to their constituents informing them about the survey.

A number of different incentives were used to help encourage staff to participate in the survey. An [NC State magnet](#) was included in all pre-notification letters, and all paper survey packets included an NC State logo pencil. In addition, a total of 96 employees participating in the survey were randomly selected to win various prizes. While the survey was live there were weekly drawings for \$10 University Dining gift cards (three winners drawn every week for five weeks), and for either a \$3 gift card for Yates Mill Bakery or a \$3 NC State "conference card" valid at venues across campus (ten winners drawn every week for five weeks). In addition, all participants could specify the specific drawing in which they would like to be entered to win one of the following:

- Four tickets to an NC State football game (4 winners)
- Four tickets to an NC State men's basketball game (4 winners)

³ See Appendix A for an example of all correspondence with staff about the survey.

- \$50 gift card for the University Bookstores (4 winners)
- Voucher for two rounds of golf at the Lonnie Poole Golf Course (5 winners)
- A one-year membership at the Carmichael Complex (3 winners)
- Lunch for two at The State Club (1 winner)
- Two tickets to an ARTS NC State performance (10 winners)

The research design called for members of the survey population to receive a pre-notification letter, either paper survey packet or an email announcing when the online survey went live, and at least two follow-up reminders for non- and partial-respondents. About one week before the survey went live, Provost Arden and VC Leffler sent all staff in the survey population a hardcopy pre-notification letter about the upcoming survey (including a Spanish version for Hispanic staff). Pre-notification letters were sent via campus mail to staff members' on-campus address, or through US mail to those with an off-campus work address. The letter informed staff about the upcoming survey, explained its importance in helping NC State identify what is going well for employees and where improvements are needed, and emphasized that participation in it was voluntary and that all responses would be kept confidential. The letter also included information about the drawing for incentives.

On April 15, 2014 all members of the survey population with a valid email address were sent an email from Provost Arden and Vice Chancellor Leffler announcing that the Staff Well-Being Survey was now available online. (This and all subsequent email announcements about the survey also informed faculty that a paper copy of the survey was available on request.) All those classified as skilled crafts, service, or maintenance were sent a paper copy of the survey to their work address, either through campus or US Mail.

In order to keep the names of those who had and had not responded to the survey confidential, all follow-up reminders to non-respondents and partial-respondents, and all queries about the survey were handled directly by Dr. Whelchel. On April 24, Dr. Whelchel sent targeted follow-up email reminders to non-respondents and to those who had submitted some, but not all sections of the online survey. Non-respondents classified as skilled crafts, service, or maintenance were sent a postcard reminder to their work address through either campus or US mail. On May 7, skilled crafts, service, and maintenance staff who had not yet submitted the survey either online or on paper were mailed another complete survey packet, and all others were mailed the postcard reminder. A final email reminder was sent to all non- and partial-respondents on May 22. The survey closed on May 30, 2014.

Response Rate

The Staff Well-Being Survey was in the field (either online or on paper) for a total of 39 days. As of that time, 3,162 of the 5,860 staff in the survey population had submitted either some or all of the survey, either online (N=2,886) or on paper (N=264 English version and N=12 Spanish version), for a 54 percent response rate, and a margin of error of plus or minus 0.8 percentage points.⁴

The online survey was designed so that respondents could complete it in more than one sitting. At any point during the survey the respondent could log out of the survey; when they logged back in, they would be taken to where they left off. As shown in Table 1, 86 percent of those who started the online survey completed all sections in it. About 20 percent of those who completed the entire online survey took advantage of the option to work on it in more than one sitting. Among those completing all sections of the online survey in a single sitting, a plurality of people finished it in 36 minutes. The median time for completion was 45 minutes, and the average time 51 minutes.

⁴ That is, if 78.0 percent of the respondents answered a question saying they are "satisfied" working at NC State, we can be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 78.9 percent (78.0 + 0.9) and 77.1 percent (78.0 - 0.9) if all faculty had responded to the survey. The margin of error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements for various subgroups, such as the separate figures reported for full professors and assistant professors, are less precise than statements based on the total sample (see Table 2 for the margin of error for sub-groups).

Table 1: Number and Percentage of Respondents Completing Each Section of the Online Survey

Section	N	Percent
A: Overall Satisfaction	2,886	100.0%
B: Working Relationships	2,819	97.7%
C: Leadership	2,710	93.9%
D: Vision and Direction	2,687	93.1%
E: Diversity and Multiculturalism	2,625	91.0%
F: Work Activities	2,534	87.8%
G: Support and Professional Development	2,513	87.1%
H: Performance Evaluation	2,500	86.6%
I: Pay and Compensation	2,495	86.5%
J: Campus Infrastructure/Physical Environment	2,492	86.3%
K: Campus Activities	2,490	86.3%
L: Demographics	2,486	86.1%

Table 2 presents a breakdown of response rates by broadly defined divisions/colleges. Among the administrative divisions, response rates ranged from a high of 76 percent for the Provost's Division to a low of 37 percent for Athletics. Among the Colleges, response rates were less varied, ranging from a high of 62 percent for the College of Education to a low of 50 percent for the College of Engineering. In general, however, the proportion of respondents from any given division/college is very close to their proportion in the survey population. For example, 3.5 percent of the survey population work in Academic Outreach and Entrepreneurship, and Academic Outreach and Entrepreneurship respondents make up 3.9 percent of all survey respondents. College of Science staff make up 3.2 percent of the survey population and 3.3 percent of the respondents. The divisions/colleges that are not as accurately represented are Athletics; the Office of Information Technology; and Research, Innovation and Economic Development; and the College of Engineering, which are slightly underrepresented, and the Division of Student and Academic Affairs and NCSU Libraries, which are slightly overrepresented.

Table 2: Survey Response Rate and Margin of Error; Overall and by Division/College

Division	Survey Population		Survey Respondents		Response Rate	Margin of Error
	N	%	N	%	%	+ / -
Overall	5,860	100.0%	3,162	100.0%	54.0%	0.8
Chancellor's Division	42	0.7%	53	1.7%	75.3%	3.3
Athletics	175	3.0%	65	2.1%	37.1%	7.6
Provost	70	1.2%	53	1.7%	75.7%	3.3
Academic Outreach & Entrepreneurship	205	3.5%	122	3.9%	59.5%	3.6
Academic Strategy & Resource Management	128	2.2%	79	2.5%	61.7%	4.2
Division of Student & Academic Affairs	408	7.0%	244	7.7%	59.8%	2.5
Finance & Business	1,341	22.9%	708	22.4%	52.8%	1.7
NCSU Libraries	181	3.1%	118	3.7%	65.2%	3.1
Office of Information Technology	239	4.1%	112	3.5%	46.9%	4.9
Research, Innovation & Economic Development	172	2.9%	67	2.1%	39.0%	7.3
University Advancement	85	1.5%	51	1.6%	60.0%	5.5

Table 2: Survey Response Rate and Margin of Error; Overall and by Division/College (continued)

Division	Survey Population		Survey Respondents		Response Rate	Margin of Error
	N	%	N	%	%	+ / -
College of Agriculture & Life Sciences	1,415	24.1%	750	23.7%	53.0%	1.7
College of Design	30	0.5%	18	0.6%	60.0%	9.2
College of Education	100	1.7%	62	2.0%	62.0%	4.7
College of Engineering	396	6.8%	196	6.2%	49.5%	3.5
College of Humanities and Social Sciences	97	1.7%	56	1.8%	57.7%	5.5
College of Natural Resources	92	1.6%	55	1.7%	59.8%	5.3
College of Sciences	189	2.2%	104	3.3%	55.0%	4.3
College of Textiles	68	1.2%	38	1.2%	55.9%	7.0
College of Veterinary Medicine	365	6.2%	200	6.3%	54.8%	3.1
Poole College of Management	62	1.1%	34	1.1%	54.8%	7.6

Table 3 provide response rate information broken out by employment profile, specifically, job classification (EPA vs SPA), occupational classification, whether the employee works on- or off-campus (e.g., in an extension office), and the number of years the respondent has been employed at NC State. Overall, the employment profile of respondents closely mirrors that of the survey population, with the notable exception that those classified as “clerical” are slightly overrepresented among respondents (making up 20.1% of the population but 22.6% of respondents), and those classified as “service/maintenance” are slightly underrepresented (making up 11.7% of the population but only 9.0% of respondents).

Table 3: Survey Response Rate and Margin of Error; by Employment Profile

Employment Profile	Survey Population		Survey Respondents		Response Rate	Margin of Error
	N	%	N	%	%	+ / -
Job Classification						
EPA	1,909	32.6%	1,033	32.7%	54.1%	1.4
SPA	3,951	67.4%	2,129	67.3%	53.9%	1.0
Occupation						
Administrative	19	0.3%	11	0.3%	57.9%	12.4
Instructional*	236	4.0%	132	4.2%	55.9%	3.8
Professional	2,583	44.3%	1,419	45.1%	54.9%	1.2
Technical	826	14.2%	428	13.6%	51.8%	2.3
Clerical	1,171	20.1%	711	22.6%	60.7%	1.4
Skilled Crafts	313	5.4%	165	5.2%	52.7%	3.6
Service/Maintenance	681	11.7%	283	9.0%	41.6%	3.4
Campus Location						
Off Campus	763	13.0%	420	13.3%	55.0%	2.1
On Campus	5,097	87.0%	2,742	86.7%	53.8%	0.9
Years Employed at NC State						
Less than 2 years	790	13.5%	458	14.5%	58.0%	1.9
2yrs to less than 5yrs	833	14.2%	443	14.0%	53.2%	2.2
5yrs to less than 10yrs	1,609	27.5%	876	27.7%	54.4%	1.5
10yrs to less than 15yrs	1,128	19.2%	592	18.7%	52.5%	1.9
15yrs to less than 20yrs	736	12.6%	390	12.3%	53.0%	2.3
20yrs or more	764	13.0%	403	12.7%	52.7%	2.3

*While the survey population excluded those classified as “instructional,” exceptions were made to include those falling in that category who work in the Libraries or extension offices.

Table 4 provides response rates broken down by sex, race/ethnicity, and the age of the respondent. Males, who had a response rate of 46.9 percent compared to 59.6 percent for females, are notably underrepresented among survey respondents. Males make up 44.2 percent of the survey population but only 38.4 percent of respondents. In addition, white respondents are overrepresented among survey respondents, and each of the other racial/ethnic groups slightly underrepresented.

Table 4: Survey Response Rate and Margin of Error; by Demographic Profile

Demographic Profile	Survey Population		Survey Respondents		Response Rate	Margin of Error
	N	%	N	%	%	+ / -
Sex						
Female	3,271	55.8%	1,948	61.6%	59.6%	0.9
Male	2,589	44.2%	1,214	38.4%	46.9%	1.5
Race/Ethnicity						
Black / African American	929	15.9%	442	14.0%	47.6%	2.4
American Indian / Alaska Native	22	0.4%	10	0.3%	45.5%	16.9
Asian	214	3.7%	94	3.0%	43.9%	5.7
Hispanic (any race)	245	4.2%	105	3.3%	42.9%	5.5
White	4,159	71.0%	2,341	74.0%	56.3%	0.9
Not Specified	291	5.0%	170	5.4%	58.4%	3.1
Age						
Under 35 yrs old	1,374	23.4%	755	23.9%	54.9%	1.6
35 to 44 yrs old	1,517	25.9%	781	24.7%	51.5%	1.7
45 to 54 yrs old	1,612	27.5%	871	27.5%	54.0%	1.5
55 yrs old and over	1,357	23.2%	755	23.9%	55.6%	1.6

Appendix A: Survey Announcements, Invitations, and Follow-up Reminders

- 1) [Pre-Notification Letter](#) (English language, on-campus example) (*April 7, 2014*)
- 2) [Flyer](#) posted around campus
- 3) Initial email invitation to all staff with a valid email address who are 1) [not classified as skilled crafts/service/maintenance](#); and 2) [classified as skilled crafts/service/maintenance staff](#) (*April 15, 2014*)
- 4) [Cover letter](#) included with initial paper survey packet to all skilled crafts/service/maintenance staff and all others without a valid email address (English language [also sent in Spanish]) (*April 15, 2014*)
- 5) First follow-up reminder: Email to 1) [all non-respondents](#); and 2) [all partial-respondents](#) with a valid email address (*April 24, 2014*)
- 6) [Postcard](#) follow-up reminder: Sent via campus or US Mail
 - a. 1st follow-up reminder to all skilled crafts/service/maintenance non-respondents (*April 24, 2014*)
 - b. 2nd follow-up reminder to all non-respondents not classified as skilled crafts/service/maintenance (*May 7, 2014*)
- 7) [Cover letter](#) included in follow-up survey packet sent to skilled crafts/service/maintenance non-respondents (English language [also sent in Spanish]) (*May 7, 2014*)
- 8) 3rd follow-up reminder: Email to 1) [all non-respondents](#); and 2) [all partial-respondents](#) with a valid email address (*May 22, 2014*)