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Reimagining the Workforce: Strategic Priorities and Drivers in Education

Using Data to Boost Talent Performance, Recognition, Satisfaction, and Retention

Contents

Introduction

As organizations shift to remote and hybrid work models, the role of human resources (HR) is changing. HR was once confined to training, onboarding, and compliance enforcement. Today, HR is a strategic partner in workplace innovation and adaptation. As educational institutions navigate a return to the classroom, HR plays a critical role in ensuring that teachers, faculty, and staff feel safe, supported, and engaged.

The private sector has responded swiftly to evolving employee expectations and the new world of work—spurred by both the global pandemic and new technologies. To attract and retain top talent, the public sector must also respond with speed and agility—or risk losing talented employees and stagnating its talent pipeline.

Now more than ever, data can help drive transformation. As educational institutions manage their most valuable resource—people—strategic, data-driven human capital management is essential for hiring, managing, training, rewarding, and retaining talent. From K–12 to higher ed, education must reimagine HR functions through the lens of data. Organizations must build a foundational Data Culture to facilitate data-driven decision making. Doing so will help to streamline operations, achieve better efficiencies, and empower the workforce—whether they're working at school or on campus, at home, or a combination of the two. Only by addressing these strategic HR priorities will education be equipped for future success.

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> For every year we fail to use data effectively … we threaten the financial sustainability of our institutions. The stakes are too high."[1]
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> **Change with Analytics joint statement from The Association for Institutional Research (AIR), EDUCAUSE, and the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO)**

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1   Change with Analytics joint statement from AIR, EDUCAUSE, and the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO): three national associations collectively serving nearly 2,500 institutions and representing over 80% of postsecondary students in the US (22 million students).

Workplace challenges and concerns in the pandemic era

In a letter to Congress, the American Council on Education outlines the existential crisis facing higher education. It estimates that the COVID-19 pandemic has cost colleges and universities at least $120 billion.[2] As higher education budgets suffer from declining revenue and rising expenses, employee expectations are also changing. Attracting and retaining talent requires higher ed institutions to provide attractive career options—including flexible and hybrid work arrangements. In a survey by Accenture, 73% of higher-education employees want to increase how much they work remotely. 59% believe their jobs can be done just as effectively remotely—and the number jumps to 68% for employees younger than 35.[3]

Andy Johns, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Research at University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill, found that the post-pandemic workforce expects hybrid and remote work options. Johns believes that if institutions don't find ways to adapt, they won't be able to recruit the best talent, especially in a hot market where talent is in high demand. In an interview with the Tableau public sector team, he shared, "There's a major transformation going on across our whole institution. Pre-pandemic, we assumed the only way to do business was for employees to come to the office five days a week. The pandemic taught us that we can be very effective in a remote and hybrid work situation."

UNC and other higher ed institutions can use data to better understand faculty sentiment, repurpose resources such as physical space to better fit needs, measure staff productivity, and create better solutions for routine, time-consuming work processes. This digital transformation in personnel management will help UNC and other colleges and universities stay competitive, allowing them to drive the innovation today's employees expect and attract and retain the best talent.

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2 Pandemic's Impact On Higher Education Grows Larger; Now Estimated to Exceed $120 Billion, Forbes, September 2020

3 Post-pandemic higher ed: ushering in innovation, An interview series by Accenture, February 2021

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> "
> If we really embrace this notion of remote work, the grand opportunity in front of us is to cater to ... a strong desire of the workforce to have a hybrid model and in turn, strengthen our institution because we're no longer confined to geographical barriers and limitations. We can hire the best talent."
>
> **Andy Johns, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**

In addition to transforming how educational employees work, the pandemic also changed how they think about work, mental health, and personal safety and wellbeing. According to a report from the Center for State and Local Government Excellence (SLGE) at ICMA-RC, nearly 40% of K–12 employees— roughly three-million education workers—considered changing jobs in 2020, and the same number rated their morale as "somewhat" or "strongly" negative. K–12 employees are also putting in more hours. 41% are working "significantly" or "somewhat" more than pre-pandemic levels and they are disproportionately more likely than other public-sector employees to care for children while working.[4]

Happy educators boost employee retention, but they can also boost student achievement. A study by the American Journal of Education followed a "nationally representative sample" of students from kindergarten through middle school. The study authors found that when teachers enjoyed teaching and felt they were making a difference, students had higher levels of reading achievement by the fifth grade. The authors included a call-to-action for policymakers to improve teacher job-satisfaction.[5]

Personal safety is a concern, too. 60% of K–12 employees surveyed feel they risk exposure to COVID-19 at work, and more than 50% say they're not paid enough to assume that level of risk.

Those concerns are mirrored in higher ed. In a survey of 1,122 professors conducted by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, nearly three-quarters of tenured professors moved up their retirement dates since the start of the pandemic. More than half of faculty surveyed are considering retiring or leaving higher

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4   Many Stressed K–12 Education Workers Consider Changing Jobs, Governing.com, March 2021

5   Study: Teacher Satisfaction, Collaboration Are Keys to Student Achievement, EducationWeek, 2017

education altogether. And, similar to K–12 employees, more than two-thirds of respondents—especially women—are bearing the weight of more work and dwindling work-life balance.[6]

According to *The Chronicle*, journal submissions by women faculty dropped during the pandemic and women with young children cut their work hours more than their male peers. Women are also plagued by pay gaps and career progression roadblocks. A CUPA-HR report found that when women stay in the same job long-term, their pay increases fall short of raises paid to men.[7]

For faculty and students alike, the ongoing racial reckoning and gender equality movements have highlighted diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) shortfalls. High numbers of Black (70%) and LGBTQ (60%) Americans don't view higher ed as a "comfortable" place to work—a perception that's compounded by the low representation of Black, Hispanic, and female professors.[8] A mere 6% of full-time faculty at degree-granting higher ed institutions were Black in 2017, despite Black Americans comprising 14% of the U.S. population, according to the previously cited CUPA-HR report.

An independent analysis of Los Angeles (LA) Unified secondary students' online-learning activity at the outset of the pandemic revealed consistently lower engagement from Black and Hispanic or Latino students or those living in low-income households, with a disability, or classify as an English learner or homeless. The data enabled the study authors to make informed, data-driven recommendations for future remote and hybrid instruction and how to better advocate for student needs. The study authors urge districts to use the data on participation gaps in "every discussion and plan" for strategies to increase student participation and to inform decisions around parity between remote-only and in-person learning offerings.[9]

6   On the Verge of Burnout: Covid-19's impact on faculty well-being and career plans, Fidelity Investments, 2020

7   The Challenges of an Aging Higher Ed Workforce, CUPA-HR, August 2019

8   What's Next for the Higher Education Workforce?, Higher Ed HR Magazine, Spring 2021

9   Student Engagement Online During School Facilities Closures: An Analysis of L.A. Unified Secondary Students' Schoology Activity from March 16 to May 22, 2020, Independent Analysis Unit, July 2020

Data Culture and the power of dashboards

Educational institutions must view data as a key asset and manage it appropriately to build a robust Data Culture. A survey conducted by IDC and sponsored by Tableau asked 1,100 global respondents how their organizations use data. Only 15% of organizations in the government and education industries were considered "data-leading" with a strong enterprise-wide Data Culture. In the same industry segment, nearly 45% are still in the very early stages of their Data Culture journey.[10] Organizations must build a culture that prioritizes data-driven decision making to realize transformation that fully leverages data and analytics technology.

Employees with technical data skills will be in high demand as data is woven into the fabric of the organization—from manipulating and analyzing data to soft skills like assessing challenges, communicating outcomes, and managing relationships. Though advanced data skills will be at a premium, basic data training will suffice for most employees if the data tools are intuitive and user-friendly. Institutions can help employees leverage and increase their data skills to complement self-serve analytics dashboards and platforms by:

- Expanding existing roles to include data responsibilities
- Providing training and upskilling opportunities to staff with basic backgrounds in data and analytics
- Facilitating a leadership-led Data Culture where employees share data-driven success stories that improve processes and efficiencies

Analytic dashboards that increase operational efficiencies are critical to HR's success in helping institutions achieve their strategic goals. Data-driven dashboards offer intuitive capabilities to manage the employee lifecycle and provide dynamic, rapid insights. When integrated with modern HR platform data, dashboards can offer a 360-degree view of employee profiles, giving HR visibility into worker history, benefits, leave, compensation, and pay.

Dashboards can inform short- and long-term decisions with insights on factors like class size, social-distancing constraints, faculty numbers, and building-maintenance challenges. As faculty expectations change alongside the learning environment, educational leaders can use data to meet the dynamic needs of students, faculty, and staff.

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10 How Data Culture Fuels Business Value in Data-Driven Organizations, IDC, sponsored by Tableau, May 2021

Educational institutions also have a unique opportunity to create a more equitable and inclusive workforce. Research from Fidelity Investments[11] found that the pandemic challenged many longtime tenured professors. There is an opportunity to diversify faculty as they choose to retire. Data dashboards can expose gaps in hiring practices and provide actionable insights to hire talent from diverse, underrepresented groups.

Analytic dashboards can help educational institutions:

- Define appropriate staffing models and budgets (position, headcount, or job management) for an institution or entity

- Budget for and track specific positions and view budgeted, committed, and available funds for each position

- Manage the process for recording faculty appointments, tenure attainment, and academic affiliates who are paid by another organization

- Assign workers to multiple organizational types, including departments, cost centers, regions, projects, committees, teams, and custom organizations

- Easily restructure organizations and reporting relationships as needs change

- Track IT operations, such as viewing the use of digital content to identify the most effective resources to address dropout and graduation rates[12]

Case study: UT Austin lands the best talent with data-driven human resource management

The University of Texas (UT) at Austin is one of the country's top public research universities. With an annual research budget upwards of $650 million, UT Austin is home to more than 50,000 students and 24,000 faculty and staff. To maintain its success as a world-class research and academic institution,

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11   On the Verge of Burnout: Covid-19's impact on faculty well-being and career plans, Fidelity Investments, 2020

12   Why K–12 Schools Should Establish a Data-Driven Culture, EdTech, April 30, 2020

UT Austin needed to leverage data to provide its leadership with strategic insights in key areas of growth and study.

Shiva Jaganathan, Head of Institutional Research and Information Systems at UT Austin, focuses, in part, on informing the recruiting and retention of top-performing faculty. Jaganathan analyzes data on teaching effectiveness, research projects and funding, student demand, and salary to help the university achieve the right balance of faculty. His work enables UT Austin to accommodate evolving class sizes and availability, even as the pandemic demands hybrid formats.

The university relies on data from student and faculty surveys to inform short- and long-term decisions about class structure and the best use of campus spaces. "We model our student and space data. It's how we manage the space across every building and how we planned for adequate social distancing," says Jaganathan.

> **"**
>
> Tableau dashboards allow us to shape the post-COVID strategy for a hybrid instruction model. The goal is to maintain continuous operations with limited disruptions."
>
> **—Shiva Jaganathan, Head of Institutional Research and Information Systems, University of Texas at Austin**

As UT Austin navigates a return to campus, Jaganathan says they're using data to plan for the "what ifs," such as which buildings are most crowded at what times to determine cleaning, maintenance, and other safety staffing needs.

"We still don't know if this vaccine will 100% work," Jaganathan adds. "We need to plan near term and plan for the 'What ifs'—and drive every conversation with the data. Without knowing the full repercussions of COVID-19, data helps take the guesswork out of it."

The university is also using data to forecast. Dashboards can model response options for future pandemics or other emergency scenarios, so UT Austin can continue to respond with resilience, speed, and flexibility.

Jaganathan makes use of data the university already has, where it is now—rather than waiting to connect all its enterprise data sources in a data warehouse for analysis. Decision-makers can benefit from insights and generate data demand—a core component of Data Culture—by expediting analytics ahead of a complex, time-consuming data-management effort.

Dashboards also give university leadership insights into faculty DEI metrics. While prestigious awards nominations of faculty across racial and gender lines are consistently strong, the university identified and addressed gaps in the award-nomination process.

The data also helps leadership understand how competitive UT Austin is with other Association of American Universities members for faculty awards, aiding recruitment and retention efforts. "We want to make sure that we are recognizing the faculty research productivity and nominating them for major awards and retaining those faculty," Jaganathan explains.

Jaganathan's team wanted to provide leadership with a better view of faculty productivity, so they collaborated with Academic Analytics to develop a "non-award scholarly research index" score. It includes metrics such as journal articles, citations, awards, and other indicators of productivity, then normalizes that data by years of experience.

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The Awards Analysis Tableau report has proven to be a great dashboard to quickly identify under-awarded faculty in each department, and the options to drill down to race/ethnicity and gender dimensions provided opportunity for greater equity in the prestigious awards nomination process."

—Shiva Jaganathan, Head of Institutional Research and Information Systems, University of Texas at Austin

As a result of this partnership, the team developed a Tableau dashboard (shown below) for university provost and senior leadership to easily identify under-awarded faculty in each department and build a more equitable nomination process. This has generated even more interest in data as university leadership navigates this time of significant change. Jaganathan intends to standardize data use and boost data literacy across the university, focusing on easy-to-read dashboards and data-skill training. In addition, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) deployment will help scale the use of data to make insights more readily available and enhance decision-making capabilities.
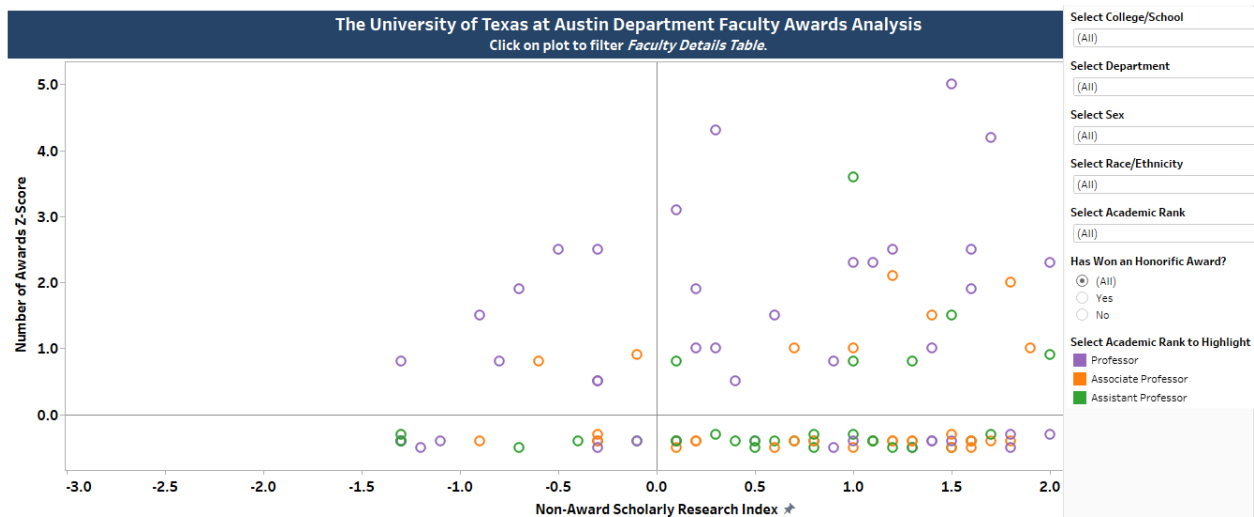
Data will help UT Austin react to change, Jaganathan believes. He and his team are putting data insights into the hands of decision makers to foster the university's Data Culture and improve its performance, no matter what changes lie ahead.

The time for change is now

Education must invest in both Data Culture and technology to infuse data-driven decision-making throughout educational systems and institutions. The powerful combination of culture and tech changes how HR makes decisions—and contributes to their success. Data Culture encourages people to be inquisitive, challenge ideas, and use data—not just intuition—to make decisions. Data dashboards and enterprise-wide technology solutions can truly empower the workforce when data-driven decision-making is woven into the fabric of an organization, from operations to employee mindsets.

Resources

Learn how educational institutions are making an impact with data:

- [Equal Opportunity Schools' New, Data-Driven Framework Advances Inclusion in Schools](#)

- [Putting Data to Work in the Public Sector](#)

- [Five Dashboards Improving Student Achievement](#)

- [8 Ways Universities Are Making an Impact with Data](#)

Get started with Tableau resources & communities:

- Learn from like-minded leaders and change agents with the [Data Leadership Collaborative](#)

- Build a data-driven organization with the [Data Culture Playbook](#)

- Inform DE&I efforts with insights from the [Racial Equity Data Hub](#)

About Tableau

Educational institutions and organizations around the world are using the Tableau platform to see and understand data using the power of visual analytics. Find out how Tableau can help you make better decisions and improve the staff and faculty experience with data-driven insights. [Try Tableau](#) for free today.