

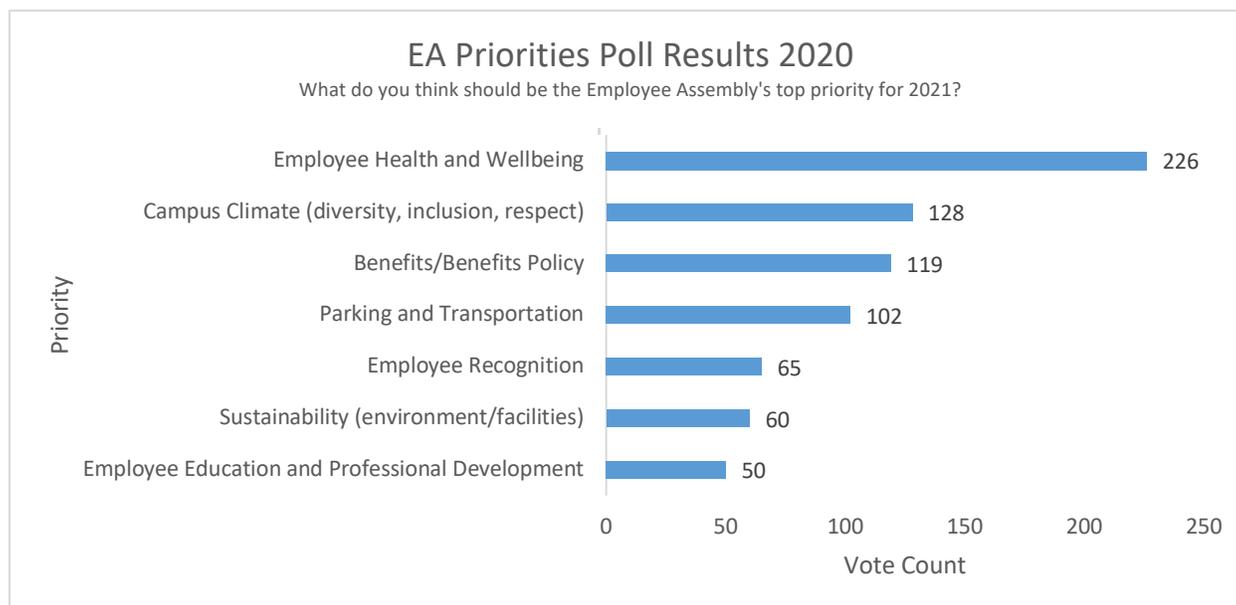
2020 Priorities Poll Summary Report

OVERVIEW

In the Fall of 2020, the Employee Assembly (EA) conducted a brief poll of Cornell staff members, asking “What do you think should be the Employee Assembly's top priority for 2021?”. Respondents were also given an opportunity to provide comments on their selection. Our goal was to gain insight into staff concerns and to ultimately use the aggregated data collected to better drive the work of the EA. EA members will be presented with a report of the Priorities Poll Results, each committee chair will receive a comprehensive report on the commentary related to their committee.

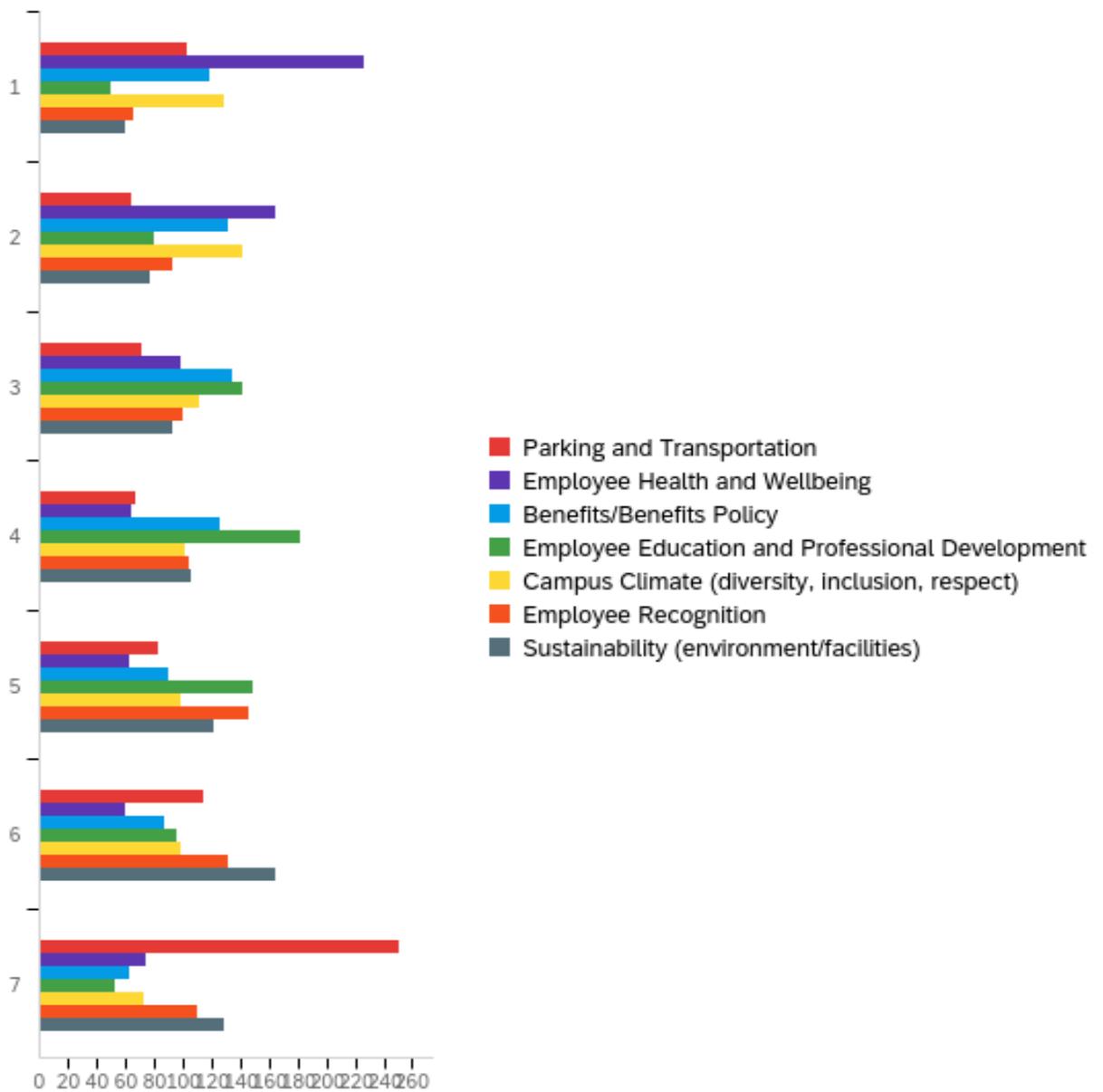
RESULTS

We received 750 responses, a 21.4% increase since the 2019 Priorities Poll. The total response this year represents roughly 10% of the Cornell Staff population, based on University Factbook data.



This year, Employee Health and Wellbeing received the most votes (226 votes/30% of votes), while Campus Climate: Diversity, Inclusion and Respect received the 2nd most votes (128 votes/17% of votes). Those two priorities combined account for 47% of the response. In comparison last year, Employee Health and Wellbeing was also the #1 priority but by a much smaller margin (138 votes/22.33% of votes), over Parking and Transportation (137 votes/22.17% of votes). COVID has changed how we work, where we work and as such, some of the issues we previously faced appear to be less of a focus over issues of Employee Health and Wellbeing. For example, Parking & Transportation has historically been a key pain point for staff members (2019's 2nd Priority, 2020's 4th Priority) and Employee Education and Professional Development which was a top 3 Priority in 2019 has become the lowest priority (2019's 3rd Priority, 2020's 7th Priority).

What do you think should be the Employee Assembly's top priority for 2021? Please rank each option from 1 to 7 (1 = highest priority, 7 = lowest priority).



NEXT STEPS

This year's Priorities Poll provided insight and perspective that the Employee Assembly will utilize to better represent the broader staff community. Moving forward, committee chairs will be given the detailed commentary from the poll and will work through the feedback within their committees. While we recognize that not all suggestions can be implemented (there are realistic constraints on what is possible), we hope to work closely with campus partners to address the issues highlighted by the respondents, with particular focus on employee health and wellbeing. The EA Executive Team will present findings to Vice President and Chief Human Resource Officer, and hope to partner with units across campus to share feedback and work together to address staff concerns.

Employee Health and Wellbeing

KEY THEMES IN EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

Covid Related Concerns

Ensuring Safety / Focusing on Employee Health and Wellbeing

With COVID cases increasing both locally and nationally, respondents have noted the importance of focusing on Employee Health and Wellbeing. Respondents have touched on the need for safe work conditions/environments, health benefits and training.

"Given the current health crisis, the switch to remote work and the struggles many of us are dealing with, employee health and well-being is critical."

"the pandemic is escalating and the workspaces in some places on campus are still frequently overcrowded due to necessary working conditions... please push for respirator access and training for ALL staff remaining on campus"

"Employee health and wellbeing as well as Benefits are the top areas I feel need EA's attention. Making sure each employee has adequate health benefits and safe and inclusive working conditions is very important."

"As the global pandemic is predicted to continue well into 2021, I think advocating for employee health and well being should be a priority, especially since cost-cutting measures may continue to fall to employees (e.g. lack of support for home office work, reduction in retirement match, etc.)."

"Equitable and safe vaccination plan for the entire Cornell community"

"I think Cornell is doing an amazing job at prioritizing employee health and wellbeing, but feel it needs to be kept in the forefront as we move through Covid and the different work model any employees are experiencing."

Mental Health / Staff Burnout

Respondents who selected Employee Health and Wellbeing as a top priority have noted the need to deal with the impacts of COVID particularly on staff member mental health. The feedback touched upon issues of staff burnout, anxiety and stress particularly as it pertains to essential staff members / staff members on campus (ie. researchers, building coordinators, facilities personnel, etc). Respondents have also noted how difficult it is to delineate work and personal life, as the work place has now been altered, the need for work life balance has been highlighted. Respondents have noted challenges faced from understaffing, feeling burnt out, feeling the pressure to work more now than ever before.

"Employees' mental health is especially important given the advent of living through a collective trauma (C-PTSD), resulting from anxiety, stress, anticipated and present grief/loss, etc... Additionally, folks who are at higher risk for COVID and their families are most likely experiencing more stress, anxiety, etc., related to the presence of COVID and the politics being played with their lives, especially folks of color, LGBTQ+ folks, folks with disabilities, and folks living in New York."

"Employee health and well being should be a top priority. This also includes mental health as some of us have been on campus and working as "essential" employees since the beginning of the Covid scare. These are the employees that have been taking the risk and dealing with day to day issues without much recognition or notice. There are staff that have been worked tirelessly to have things ready and available for the return of students,

professors and even co-workers. These employees I feel are the backbone of the operations and deserve some type of recognition or a thanks at the least. This list includes everyone from building coordinators to custodians to laborers to shop crews, grounds workers, and more. A mental health day isn't always enough for some these employees to get back on track."

"The Cornell current response to Covid etc. lacks a healthy mental environment component. This is especially true for those of whose jobs, research or personality require interaction with others. It's time somebody recognizes that seeing talking heads on a computer screen is not even close to being equivalent to one's ability to work through an idea or problem with other real live human beings."

"I believe, especially with the recent pandemic, the mental and emotional health of employees are a priority. Our campus needs more balance between work and home. Too often our work crosses over and sneak into our time with friends and loved ones."

"While I recognize that not all are "in the same boat," many staff are working harder than ever, under challenging circumstances, and typical rewards are not possible at this time. Nor is the current pace sustainable, for those currently overwhelmed. I'm deeply worried about the mental health and well-being of our staff (and many of our faculty). I do believe Cornell leaders are doing A LOT to demonstrate empathy and understanding of the situation, but it just feels like a breaking point may come soon."

"I think it's important to talk about wellbeing for over-worked employees and ways to support those employees. Personally, my understaffed team has been working at at least 150% since March, and there's no end in sight. There's so much on our plates that we are hesitant to even take one day off, because making up for that time off can take a lot of time. How can we be supported, and support ourselves in the long-term?"

"Employees are feeling truly burned out, but still pushing to get their work done. Majority of us have not had a break and keep pivoting to accommodate the many changes to keep the university running at top capacity. I think employees should also have the wellness days off in March and April just like the students. Or maybe we can have the days during the summer."

"Our team is overwhelmed with work. We struggle to find a balance right now with the increasing work load."

Support Staff / Community Building / Staying Connected

Several staff members have noted feelings of isolation, empathy for those going through hardships, similarly other staff members have expressed the need to build community, stay connected and find means to support one another. Among this feedback there appears to be a common sentiment of care for the community and desire to participate in programs, events or efforts to support staff.

"With all the change that has resulted from the pandemic and continued restrictions and mandates the health and wellbeing of Cornell's employees should absolutely be a top priority. There are so many incredible people in the campus community that truly care about their work and the students that it would be tragic to lose the talent, hard work and empathy of a number of individuals in ALL areas across campus. Any programs, events or other means of supporting staff is such a blessing right now."

"I feel really lucky in the way that I and my family have been able to function throughout the pandemic and current societal unrest. I realize that is an incredible privilege that not all employees have. I hope that there are more and more ways that EA and employees can support each other, especially those hit hardest by the current circumstances."

"I am feeling very removed from the campus community. I don't live in Tompkins County, I don't have a lot of meetings with other staff or groups, I mostly am at home doing my work surrounded by a spouse and children. I do not know how to change that feeling, I think it's just something to get through at this point and maybe next year things will be different."

"It's been an extremely hard year. The more we can support employee health and wellbeing, the better. People are tired out, frustrated, and sad. They need to feel supported, able to make positive impacts, and to get the assistance they need to achieve work/life balance."

"Many people are struggling financially, mentally, and emotionally. How can we help?"

"Going through this time of a pandemic, with most working remotely but not everyone has good online connectivity, I am concerned about members of our units in terms of their wellbeing. Some have gone through deaths or illnesses of their own or in their family and friends, possibly more by 2021, and we should be sure that people are being kind and compassionate towards one another first and foremost as we get through this time together."

Parenting

COVID has impacted staff but especially those who have to take on the added responsibility of childcare / providing educational support for their children. Several respondents have noted the difficulty in trying to balance home school and work.

"As a working parent, Employee Health and Wellbeing is extremely important as I try to balance home school and work on top of the stresses of the pandemic and uncertainty."

"Right now, with COVID, our health and well-being is so important. Dealing with kids learning from home, helping elder parents, etc. is overwhelming. Feeling valued is so important to keep an good employee- so parking, recognition, help with professional development are so very important."

"We are months into a mismanaged response to the pandemic; staff are exhausted and scared (and more and more are grieving), and we are heading into winter. If K-12 goes online and/or daycare closes again, families will once again be struggling with childcare while balancing work. Things have been hard so far but they may very well get harder over the next few months."

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Remote Work Post COVID

Several respondents provided their perspective on the benefits of working from home and hope that the paradigm of how we work can be shifted, to accommodate more support for work flexibility, particularly as it relates to remote work. Respondents have also noted that encouraging remote work, post-COVID, would aid in other missions of the University such as sustainability, parking, transportation and employee health and well-being.

"Working remotely has been a huge gift. It has completely changed the working dynamic in a positive way in my department. There are far less interpersonal conflicts as there are far fewer personal interactions. I accomplish so much more work, I am far less stressed, and any previously strained relationships with colleagues have been transformed so that we are able to focus on the work that we do and the mission of our organization without the need for people to have to engage socially/personally on personal matters with colleagues they would

normally choose not to due to "water cooler" situations... I hope that the employee assembly will work with management to re-envision the way we work and the need for people to be on campus given that the rest of the private sector world is doing that."

"In my remote work environment, I feel less stress and more productive, and have truly enjoyed the ability to work at home during the pandemic. Within my department, remote work was never widely accepted and I'm hopeful that senior administrators will now see and understand that individuals can be just as, if not more, productive and happy working remotely. And honestly, it seems that if more individuals worked remotely, it would aid Cornell in many of its missions including sustainability, parking and transportation, and employee health and wellbeing."

Recognizing Staff / More Paid Time Off

Respondents have noted the importance of recognizing/acknowledging and rewarding the efforts of staff members, especially essential staff members. Some respondents have made requests for more paid time off which would provide them with respite, and enable them to work on their mental and physical health.

"Essential employees really need to be recognized for their unseen sacrifices during COVID-19. We have had to juggle working, childcare, erratic schedule changes, and commute changes that have caused unusual sacrifices to our wellbeing and financially as well."

"It is most important to keep people that work at CU healthy and able to perform their jobs. There benefits are very important and it is terrible that to cut the budget that retirement was cut or salary cut. In these times everyone needs their benefits event more. It is difficult enough working remotely or on campus. No raises, benefit cut or salary cut is NOT the way to go. Rewarding staff is even more important now then ever with the difficulties due to COVID."

"Employee health and wellbeing is all over the map during the pandemic. I believe that employees should be given a few more paid days off to use as needed for mental health as well as physical health."

"...working harder than before, often with fewer resources. Both Public and Endowed employees need to be given shorter working weeks, or else considerably more paid time off to balance the strain of powering through and sustaining the lift."

Provide More Services to Staff / Improve Existing Services

Not all staff members are requesting more time off, some would appreciate opportunities to promote well-being, whether that is through expanded counselling services, expanded amenities or increasing/improving programing for staff members. One respondent called for an improved means to locate all the available resources.

"Extra days off are nice, but for those of us in working labs with living organisms/animals, this doesn't benefit us as much as others, particularly when this causes more stress in staffing additional holiday/days off from the University. Any opportunities to promote well-being in various methods is greatly appreciated."

"Expand the counselling services and increase number of counselors at FSAP, increase access to athletic activities like free skate and wall climbing (even during the pandemic, can do it while the students are off campus) and create special times when employees can socialize or participate in social/athletic events"

"We are going through a challenging time and everyone is dealing with this differently. There are people with varying home lives that have to be able to adjust and maintain balance and sanity. Some have large families to

distract and others are living a solitary existence. We have to have programs and outlets for them to find assistance even if they are not asking for it.”

“I would like to be able to get access to campus amenities that are currently only available to students such as fitness centers and the climbing wall. It is frustrating that these things are only available to students while staff are working hard to support them during this difficult time.”

“There are tons of resources about Health and Wellbeing... but it's very difficult to find what you need. Asking for help is not easy for most people. I would like to see the resources that exist be easier to find... the complex web of information on the HR website is not very user-friendly.”

“HR needs to develop more sophisticated programs that allow for honest conversations on stress and related mental health issues tied to the pandemic. Right now, it seems like the go-to HR move is handing out a pamphlet or sending a link.”

“2020 has been a challenging year for many, and I think 2021 will continue to be with the residual effects of COVID and its impact on daily life. From my perspective, as a permanently remote worker, the majority of resources for employee health and wellbeing have been very campus-focused - in-person workshops, Ithaca-focused messaging, etc. It would be nice to see Cornell transition its resources to reflect the new reality that there are many more workers who will continue to be remote after COVID has passed. It's still the minority, but there are certainly more than there used to be.”

Campus Climate (diversity, inclusion, respect)

KEY THEMES IN EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

Prioritize Diversity/ Capitalize on Momentum

Staff members provided strong support in favor of prioritizing diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. Staff are noting that the general climate nationally and locally has highlighted the importance of prioritizing diversity and want to see the University capitalize on the momentum created during this time.

“It will never be a "good" or "convenient" time to address systemic injustices that exist in our community; however, in some ways, this issues is related to all of the other issues named in the survey. By prioritizing this one, it can be come a lens through which to view all the others. I believe that a land-grant institution like Cornell has a moral obligation to be a publicly engaged force for positive, inclusive social change - and the past six months have laid bare the need for racial justice.”

“I greatly appreciate the required diversity & inclusion trainings that have recently been launched. Our nation is SO divided right now and it seems like the very most important place upon which to place our concentrated efforts.”

“We are currently making great progress to improve the campus climate. I want to see the momentum continue.”

“We have momentum around campus climate -- it is important to capitalize on this momentum this year.”

“DEI must continue to be the university's highest priority. We are constantly losing too many talented staff of color!”

"I think Cornell has made great strides in addressing this but this work is never done and we must not lose motivation related to this issue."

Impactful Change

Some staff members have made note of the Belonging and Cornell Survey and mandatory trainings, however they have stated that actual changes have not been implemented, there have been voices requesting initiatives that are more impactful.

"Despite the Belonging at Cornell survey and follow-ups that have occurred over the past months, I don't personally feel that any changes have been implemented and it doesn't seem that feedback has been taken seriously. As part of a minority group, it's disheartening to see issues swept under the rug or actively scoffed by supervisors and division leadership."

"Enough training on diversity and inclusion. Focus on a couple of initiatives that could have a lot of impact on how we work together."

"Based on what we have experienced globally with the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, I can see that there is a lot of tension on campus. Things are not being addressed and a book club does little to effect change. We need to be able to talk about how everyone at Cornell is being impacted and implement change where needed. We do not need to set up committees, but rather groups that are willing to take action."

"I see a lot of movement and discussion about these issues as they relate to faculty and students, but I am dissatisfied with what is being offered to staff - they are either left out of the conversation entirely, or given programming like the six part online class, which I have not yet taken myself but have heard is unengaging. It feels like the University is either unwilling or afraid to really engage with staff on these issues, and I hear similar sentiments from many of my colleagues."

Respect of Differing Opinions

Staff have made calls for a more inclusive environment, and this includes being mindful and respectful towards those with different opinions.

"The campus speech climate has degenerated to the point where even moderate views are seen as inappropriate, and outright absurd views have become common among the undergraduate population."

"I think respect has been lost in society and feel if campus climate can start trying to get it back it can be passed on as well as diversity and inclusion."

"Campus Climate - no one should feel disrespected and with regards to that, Inclusivity should also include differing opinions."

"I think respect has been lost in society and feel if campus climate can start trying to get it back it can be passed on as well as diversity and inclusion."

"Diversity and inclusion and respect are all a top priority for me. However, please continue to encourage the community to respect those who have a different opinion, cultural background, and may have a different viewpoint on life than others. We are one community who can set an example for other communities. Showing love and respect for other people is what we do best and we should continue to do that."

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Staff provided feedback and suggestions for improvement such as reviewing pay equity for BIPOC staff members, requests for the EA to do more in support of a culture of DEI and finding means to address racial disparities at Cornell.

“There is a gross amount of pay inequity at the institution. We should advocate for a review. Silence and leaves room for the problem to persist. It only benefits the employer. It is not in our best interest not to discuss and demand review. Particularly when it come to the pay of people of color and women.”

“I think HR should take a hard look at the relative percentages of women and URMs in entry-level versus middle management and leadership positions, also at pay equity across at each level. There's a lot of talk about climate and staff training and community reads, but I would like to see Cornell also holding itself accountable for hiring, talent development, and compensation practices.”

“I would love to see the Employee Assembly push the envelope on equity and inclusion, having trouble making headway in my particular division.”

“Any steps to learning respectful conversations locally will help us nationally and globally.”

“Please keep momentum on the subject of promoting an inclusive campus climate. Acknowledge areas where faculty and staff members of color can be supported and discuss active steps we can take to address retention rates - particularly ones for women of color.”

“We need to continue to address racial disparity at Cornell, and actively work to recruit, retain, and support BIPOC faculty and staff at every level. Cornell should be an example of inclusion and equity.”

“Especially during this unsettling time of COVID-19, Cornell employees need to be reassured that supervisors, leaders and faculty are compassionate about others, good listeners and above all respectful of staff and reports. Respect and appreciation of staff is a top priority.”

“I believe the climate in the region and even the country overall has become toxic and it's more important now than ever to positively reinforce the culture of diversity, inclusion, and respect that Cornell values and cultivates.”

Benefits and Policy

KEY THEMES IN EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

*Please note, this Priorities Poll was initiated prior to the 11/17/2020 email announcement from President Pollack indicating the University will **“again begin providing full retirement benefits and salaries**, effective Jan. 1, 2021”. Therefore, direct requests to return retirement benefits and salaries will be excluded from this report, as that has been addressed.

Improve Benefits

Staff members noted that benefits were one of the main reasons for working at Cornell, and have noted it would be difficult to justify working at Cornell when other employers are offering comparable benefits. Many staff members asked for reinstatement of benefits and salaries but they also noted the importance of benefits and have even provided suggestions for improvements to our existing benefits.

"I think that benefits are one of the most important aspects of my job and while I think Cornell does a great job, there is more work to be done. A vision plan would go a long way in making me and many other employees I know happier. I also think that the dental plan is very restrictive with the in-network providers and all the ones I have tried I feel misused and treated like cattle. I no longer go to a dentist in-network, but now have to pay out of pocket and then get a small pittance as a reimbursement. Additionally, I have to call and fight with the insurance company every time I go to bill my insurance correctly. I know Cornell is not responsible for this, but they certainly have more leverage than I do to get the companies to act fairly."

"The community loves to espouse that Cornell has great benefits, and compared to other Ithaca employers, yes. But compared to competing institutions or large companies, Cornell leaves a lot to be wanted. I believe that Cornell could be more liberal in dispersing bonuses, comp days, free staff meal plans, and other measurable benefits that employees would find immediate value in. Many staff work hard to contribute to university operations, and a movie ticket or hoodie once a year doesn't recognize their contribution enough."

"One of main reasons for wanting to work here were the benefits. It is hard to continuing to justify working at Cornell when there are many employers who pay more and have similar benefits"

"Focus on the pandemic is crucial to its elimination. Meanwhile health insurance remains critical to both bodily health and mental health. Thank you got keeping healthcare benefits fully available through all this madness."

Improve Staff Retention / Staff Morale / Recognize Staff

Staff members have expressed layoff concerns, have noted retirements and changes to benefits which all contribute to a sense of decreased morale. Staff have noted that it is important to find some way to bring the community together or recognize staff contributions. Please note the Communications Committee will also receive feedback in regards to Recognizing Staff/Improving Staff Morale.

"At this point my first priority is NOT being laid off. After that, I'd like to at least maintain my current salary, and would hope that post-pandemic we could see an increase. I'd also really like to see our retirement contributions restored. But all of that is secondary to maintaining my job!"

"Seeing numerous employees pushed out, demoted, or overlooked for no apparent reason causes stress and affects morale on the job."

"With the recent Covid outbreak, there currently is a hiring freeze and a reduction of pay/retirement benefits in place. People are doing way more with less and for less more than ever. Moral is low and something needs to be done to increase the sense that staff matter."

"I can see that employee moral, on campus as a whole, is a bit confused. Even though everyone is pulling forward, there is a need to bring something to make us laugh and feel warm in a winter of Covid. Difficult as it may be, a personal touch, small thoughtful gestures and such can be so welcomed to people in uncertain times."

"With limited resources, it is more important than ever to have the ability to recognize staff who have done so much to keep the university running during a pandemic. Many staff have taken on extra work with no extra compensation. This, compounded by the hiring freeze, has crippled units ability to recognize with added pay incentive. Further, through the awardco, you are limited on how much you can award. Staff are stressed, morale low, and doing more with less AGAIN. Having the pay and retirement decrease reversed will help surely, but some additional options would help leaders."

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Staff provided feedback and suggestions for improvement such as reviewing the existing benefits, promoting remote work post-COVID. Staff on the contract college side have noted frustrations with increased rates and asked if there were alternative options or supplemental support that could be provided. Please note the Welfare Committee has also received feedback in regards to promoting remote work post-COVID.

"Flexibility in the workplace. I am hoping working from home will continue to be an option when campus reopens."

"I am frustrated that the contract college health insurance rate quadruples if I add my husband to my policy. I know this is NYS and not Cornell but it doesn't make any sense. What are alternative options?"

"I'd love to see something in the way of health & wellness incentives for the contract college health insurance system but perhaps that is bound to what the state provides."

"The benefits across the University are different. Has there been any consideration to relook or renegotiate the contract college dental insurance? I consider dental and eyecare as part of health insurance but it seems that the coverage is not the best. How often is this reviewed?"

"The employee experience is influenced by their individual department/unit's climate as well as their direct supervisor. While Cornell University is an exemplary employer, we all know that we each have a different experience based on where we work and for whom we work. While I don't know exactly how to address this from the EA perspective, I believe making it a topic of conversation will allow us to each share and acknowledge that this is a valid employee concern."

"I would love more options for remote employees; for example, I saw there was a wellness bootcamp via Zoom, but it was only open to members of the gym...which I wouldn't be a member of because I'm out of state. Throwing random ideas out there: open the Zooms to out of state employees for fitness/wellness, maybe we can do a bulk buy of FitBits for a discount, FitBit challenges for employees all over the US, could we do a remote spin class for employees with a home exercise bike?"

"Benefits and Benefit policies need to be a top priority, especially the statutory benefits program. The health insurance options are not represented well from our standpoint on the state level. We should have more of a say in the process with greater accessibility to insurance plans that are better than just single option or family option."

"Any opportunities to promote well-being in various methods is greatly appreciated. Also, I'd like to feel like staff are given the same consideration as faculty and students, and not feel like we are always the "last on the list"."

"I would like to be able to get access to campus amenities that are currently only available to students such as fitness centers and the climbing wall. It is frustrating that these things are only available to students while staff are working hard to support them during this difficult time."

Parking and Transportation

KEY THEMES IN EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

Parking and Transportation Limitations

Staff have historically found Parking and Transportation to be a top priority for the EA, however this year, because many people have transitioned to remote work, the feedback has decreased. But we are still seeing staff voice concerns about the cost of parking, the availability of parking, and the importance of using this time to reimagine what the future of parking and transportation might look like post-COVID.

“Parking and transportation has always been a sore subject for those of us who have worked at Cornell a long time and for those of us who are new as well as those who come to campus visiting. There is no other university or college in the area that charges for parking or at the cost that we pay. I know it may seem redundant but parking on our campus is very limited. I live outside of Tompkins County, in Tioga County and we do not have any other source of transportation except for our own vehicles or carpooling - which doesn't help because many of us have varied hours. I honestly do not know what the best practices would be but it should always be reviewed and looked at.”

“Why does the parking permit need to cost so much for faculty and staff?”

“There appear to be many parking and transportation streamlining opportunities that could save the unit a lot of money that they could pass along to other employees by reducing the extremely high parking fees.”

“When we come back to campus this impacts staff every day. It is a cost for coming to work and can cause stress and frustration on a daily basis.”

“The cost and unavailability of staff parking is the most stressful day-to-day frustration for me (and many other staff members). Last year, on several occasions staff parking was given to visitors for special events, leaving staff in the cold. Many staff commute; we simply have to be able to park when we get here. Transportation Services has shown themselves to be uncaring and callous as to staff parking problems. If you commute and can't park, then you probably take a sick day and go home -- and overall productivity suffers. Parking is the biggest staff problem.”

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Staff have provided suggestions for improvement including streamlining opportunities, incentivizing staff to ride the bus, expanding parking offerings, and promoting remote work post-COVID.

“Really appreciate my buss pass, I do not want to drive, really appreciate Cornell support for TCAT. From my perspective, keep parking on campus high \$ and keep incentivising people to ride the bus.”

“We will eventually see a return to campus for the majority of workers, and now is a great time to re-envision how to make parking better for employees. The current options are very limited, far away, and/or expensive, and many of Transportation's procedures seem outdated with paper forms, etc. I think there is general dissatisfaction among staff about parking, and it is so frustrating to pay in time, money, or both just to be able to come to work. ”

“Parking - both in downtown (Seneca Place) and on campus is always a pain point. I would also put remote work at the top of the list. Many have proven that their jobs can be done (in many cases even done better) from home/remotely. I would love to see more flexibility surrounding this.”

Employee Recognition

KEY THEMES IN EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

Improve Staff Retention / Staff Morale / Recognize Staff

Staff members have noted early retirements and changes to salary/benefits all contribute to a sense of decreased morale. Staff have noted that it is important to find some way to bring the community together or recognize staff contributions.

“Employee Recognition - with pay reductions, need to find ways to recognize those who haven't missed a beat and have worked just as hard if not harder from their remote locations, while others (understandably in some cases) have been able to collect a paycheck and the expectations/responsibilities are not there at this time.”

“Its always about recognition and communication. People that have been here a long time don't seem to be recognized. Or others who do outstanding work go unnoticed. ”

“Seeing numerous employees pushed out, demoted, or overlooked for no apparent reason causes stress and affects morale on the job.”

“With limited resources, it is more important than ever to have the ability to recognize staff who have done so much to keep the university running during a pandemic. Many staff have taken on extra work with no extra compensation. This, compounded by the hiring freeze, has crippled units ability to recognize with added pay incentive. Further, through the awardco, you are limited on how much you can award. Staff are stressed, morale low, and doing more with less AGAIN. Having the pay and retirement decrease reversed will help surely, but some additional options would help leaders. Thank you for your efforts. ”

“With the recent Covid outbreak, there currently is a hiring freeze and a reduction of pay/retirement benefits in place. People are doing way more with less and for less more than ever. Moral is low and something needs to be done to increase the sense that staff matter.”

“I can see that employee moral, on campus as a whole, is a bit confused. Even though everyone is pulling forward, there is a need to bring something to make us laugh and feel warm in a winter of Covid. Difficult as it may be, a personal touch, small thoughtful gestures and such can be so welcomed to people in uncertain times.”

“With limited resources, it is more important than ever to have the ability to recognize staff who have done so much to keep the university running during a pandemic. Many staff have taken on extra work with no extra compensation. This, compounded by the hiring freeze, has crippled units ability to recognize with added pay incentive. Further, through the awardco, you are limited on how much you can award. Staff are stressed, morale low, and doing more with less AGAIN. Having the pay and retirement decrease reversed will help surely, but some additional options would help leaders.”

“Due to the additional stress this year caused by COVID, the related work disruptions, and the pay reduction I feel that employee recognition and employee health and wellbeing are critical right now. All of the topics listed are important, but given the current situation focus should be on supporting our current employees the best we can.”

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Staff noted that the Employee Appreciation Portal provides a way for staff to recognize one another but this appreciation isn't shared broadly, amongst the staff member's workgroup/organization. Staff have shown support for recognizing our staff members, especially our essential staff workers.

"There are many recognition avenues at Cornell, but it still feels inconsistent.

When you use the Employee Appreciation portal for example, it seems only the recognized Employee gets a notification. Having that recognition reach a supervisor, workgroup, or organization would be more effective. While there are multiple tools out there, we need to promote the use of one or two primarily for all employees, and make sure the recognition goes a long way."

"Outstanding employees should be continually recognized and should serve as an example for others to strive for."

"Specially for 2020! All staff with job descriptions that could not work from home and kept the university working HAVE to be recognized. Additionally, increase compensation bands for these folk since we saw first hand how they showed up and performed when it actually mattered!"

"Employee recognition is spotty around the university. Some groups seem to have it figured out, while others don't seem to get it. Clearly the recognition portal is a good start, but it's underused. Faculty seem to have an endless list of awards and recognition available, while outside of service awards, I'm not sure what exists for staff."

"After 20+ years as an employee of Cornell, there are many times when I feel employee recognition is lacking....not as a general all-employee appreciation, I think Cornell does a pretty good job at recognizing the staff as a unit. Individual recognition is still lacking and merit pay raises and bonuses are almost non-existent. There is little incentive to work above and beyond without individual recognition and compensation. A few snacks and an annual luncheon are nice, but it celebrates all staff without highlighting those who work hard and are loyal to their units and the University."

"There are so many employees that go unrecognized especially right now during this pandemic. Several essential personnel have taken on additional responsibilities/jobs to cover for the jobs that went vacant when others opted for early retirement. It has been draining especially with no raises, decline in pay/benefits, etc. Although the pay and benefits will be reinstated, it doesn't address those who have been there since the beginning of this pandemic; going to campus everyday to keep it running and keep it safe. ."

Sustainability (environment/facilities)

KEY THEMES IN EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

Climate Change

Staff members have noted the importance of sustainability, indicating the time sensitive nature of addressing issues of climate change. Staff have noted climate change is a threat to our health and wellbeing.

"Sustainability of facilities and processes at Cornell is critical. Without it, Cornell will literally cease to exist sooner or later, and all of these other issues will become moot, because the world will no longer be capable of producing the human and natural resources to support a large university like Cornell. A focus on sustainability can make the difference between a world, and a university, that lasts another 30 years and one that can last forever."

“We have about 8 years to put in place the structures and policies to reduce energy use and switch off gas and to renewables - otherwise we hit tipping points from which we cannot return.

This is a crisis unfolding all around us, and must be addressed in ways that also address racism, Covid, and the economic crisis.”

“Climate change is the most important threat to our collective health and wellbeing, and large, influential institutions like Cornell can make a significant impact in shifting our culture toward renewable energy and sustainability.”

“Play whatever part we can in preventing our inevitable demise from climate catastrophe.”

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Staff noted a need for consistency throughout the different Units of the University, and have noted staff members need more opportunities to take ownership over sustainability efforts. Staff have also made calls to support remote work Post-COVID.

“There needs to be consistency throughout the different divisions of the university with respect to sustainability efforts. Each area should have a committee of employees working towards improving this aspect of each division, not unlike the DEI efforts underway throughout the university. Employees need more opportunity to take ownership over these efforts, and it needs to be encouraged from the top down with greater emphasis than it is currently.”

“We have maybe 10 years before out of control climate change. This has to be a world priority for every community, every organization, every individual.”

“Work from home as an official policy, encouraged from the top down.”

Employee Education and Professional Development

KEY THEMES IN EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

Staff Retention

Staff members have noted the importance of investing in Employee Education and Professional Development, especially as it pertains to staff retention. Providing educational and professional opportunities can be a good way to keep staff members engaged and invested in Cornell.

“Education is so important and so for an institute of higher education to NOT prioritize or promote the education benefits we do have is disappointing. Because supervisors ultimately get to decide how one spends their work time, many do not approve such missing time which is a shame, this structure needs to be alleviated somehow for education, professional development, and wellness opportunities, it is not enough for the institution to call these priorities when they are not enacted by every supervisor.”

“Employees need to feel that there are opportunities for professional growth within the organization that they work for. Employees will stay if they feel their needs are met. In organizations where there is turnover it relates back to employees not feeling recognized, no room to grow professionally, and not being compensated appropriately.”

“You will keep best employees in your organization, because they will see a future. Investing in their development will create our future leaders.”

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Staff requested additional support for Educational and Professional Development opportunities (higher benefits for education, more professional certifications, etc). Staff made a call to revisit and perhaps update the existing promotion process, providing more mentorship opportunities and creating a culture that encourages staff to learn new skills.

“The university should offer higher benefits to employees that seek to further their education outside of Cornell.”

“Making sure that paths for career advancement continue during the pandemic and with remote work. ”

“Because I am an older employee I am glad to see the employee education and PD finally being made available to all. I would like to see it made even more available and in some cases mandatory for all staff to have to do much PD every year..”

“It is so hard to be a proud Cornell employee when considering education for myself. Institutions like Columbia have outstanding education benefits for their staff. Being here so long, getting a certificate is great but earning credits is my goal.”

“Pre-pandemic I found the professional development opportunities at and through Cornell to be almost overwhelming. Going to conferences, attending Harold Craft Leadership Program, etc. have been very helpful in my development. In the pandemic environment these opportunities are less with limited funding, Zoom options, Zoom fatigue, etc. Re-establishing a culture of professional development and opportunity would be my #1 priority.”

“Would like more Employee Education and Professional Development opportunities, including free on-campus in-house trainings on Safe Zone/LGBT, Diversity and Inclusion, Employee Health & Well Being, How to Support Students' Mental Health, Professional Certifications such as the Strong Interest Inventory, etc.”

“Employees play a large role in shaping the University. The topic of promoting from within has long been discussed, however, there still doesn't seem to be a clear path for that to happen (especially for leadership roles). This appears to be due in part to each College/Department/Unit being different enough, that making "One Cornell" is difficult to achieve. How can we really help our employees/staff/co-workers achieve their goals and align them with progressive promotion within the University (which typically is outside their current College/Dept/Unit). How can we have similar duties/use of skills, while still recognizing the individual difference in each College/Dept/Unit?

Perhaps more mentoring for like roles and a more welcoming environment for staff to ask questions to learn skills that will be needed for progressing toward the next level?”

“Related to employee education, I think there needs to be frank and open discussion about everything we've observed in recent months about practices we can abandon for good, and processes we need to continue (e.g. more virtual events and videoconferencing when it's more convenient and can reach a broader audience) and how that relates to our current skills and which skills employees and supervisors need to gain. I think some supervisors need to increase their abilities to discuss with their teams which processes need to change and guide how to change them, and how they interact with the departments they collaborate with.”

“It is difficult to advance professionally at Cornell. Options to advance are limited to begin with, people tend to stay in their positions for 20-30 years, plus it is hard to move from an academic department to a non-academic unit or vice versa. I think an emphasis on educating the workforce at all levels plus free professional development would improve performance in current roles and help people position themselves for their next move.”

“Cornell is a big employer in a rural area where they could assume many employees don't have lots of other options, so it can get complacent thinking its employees are 'stuck' when in reality the majority have talents that go un-noticed or underutilized by their supervisors. What about having an informal 'interview' process to evaluate talents and experience by new supervisors who might 'inherit' employees when they are promoted to new positions?”

“More advertising and opportunities for employee education and professional development that is delivered at the supervisor, college and university levels.”