MEMORANDUM
June 28, 2024

To: University of Oregon Officers of Administration

From: Officers of Administration Council

Re: 2024 OA Survey Results

Executive Summary
On March 15, the OA Council sent out an email to OAs with a link to a Qualtrics survey and asked OAs to complete the survey by the end of March. The survey consisted of 17 questions. 12 of the 17 questions were multiple choice questions that forced a response, and the remaining 5 questions were prompts with an optional text response. The questions built on the 2023 survey, and themes of importance to OAs based on what the Council has heard from constituents. There were 495 responses to the survey, which represents approximately one third of OAs on campus.

Two overarching themes arose throughout the survey results: OAs feel that their pay is not keeping pace with other employee groups and inflation and about half of the OAs surveyed expressed interest in unionization.

Years of Experience of OA Survey Respondents
We received 495 responses from OAs with a good mix of years of experience at UO:

OA Work Arrangements and Wellness
The Council wanted to know what kinds of work arrangements OAs are working under and whether those work arrangements have changed since our last survey. Based on the results it appears that working arrangements have stayed fairly stable, and that about 40% of the OAs who took the survey are working in person, or in the office full
time, while 51% are working under a hybrid arrangement, either on a set schedule or with more flexibility, and the remaining 9% work fully remotely.

We asked OAs how much they felt their work arrangement supported their well-being. 78% of OAs felt that their work arrangements probably or definitely supported their well-being. Another 12% were neutral, and 10% felt their work arrangement probably or definitely did not support their well-being.

We also wanted to know if, based on all of the hiring that has happened over the past year, OAs felt like their work life had improved. Many people (40%) felt like it was about the same, which we attribute to the fact that even if there is more help, it takes a while for that help to receive the necessary onboarding and training to be able to alleviate the vacancy strain on other employees. 33% of respondents felt things had improved and 27% felt that things had gotten worse.
Pay and Benefits

We asked OAs how important it is to them to have a communicated plan for OA pay increases. The overwhelming majority (91%) of survey respondents felt it was very or extremely important.

When asked about how much advance notice they would like to have of planned pay increases, most respondents (69%) wanted to know what they would be getting with at least six months’ notice every year, or what the plan for increases would be every two years.

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<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would like 6 months of advance notice every year (of that year's increase)</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>184</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would like to know what the plan is for annual pay increases every 2 years</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>149</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would like to know what the plan is for annual pay increases every 3 years</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to know what the plan is for annual pay increases for more than 3 years</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is not important to me</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>69</td>
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We invited OAs to provide feedback on last year’s merit pay increase, which was reflected on January 2024 paychecks. A text response was optional, and 392 OAs responded. Here are some of the themes reflected in those responses:

- OAs felt merit would best be handled under a separate process, and not paired with, or offered in place of, across the board increases, for the following reasons:
  - Consistency: Merit increases are inconsistently used for actual merit, and the process of distributing merit is cumbersome.
  - Transparency: The current merit increase process lacks transparency and consistent application across departments.
  - Morale: The small percentage and inconsistent process negatively affect morale.
- Inflation Gap: The 3% increases fall short of keeping up with inflation costs.
- SEIU vs. OA Increases: OAs expressed concerns about how recent SEIU increases compare to OA salaries.
- Dollar Impact: Some commented that percentage increases disproportionately benefit OAs with higher salaries.
• Gratitude Despite Concerns: Despite these issues, several OAs expressed gratitude for the increase, acknowledging the impact on tuition costs due to the underfunding of higher education in Oregon.

The Council also wondered if the implementation of Paid Leave Oregon had impacted how OAs felt about the sufficiency of the leave available to them. The survey asked whether OAs felt that UO offers sufficient paid leave for OAs overall, including Paid Leave Oregon, vacation, holiday and sick leave. Many respondents (72%) felt that UO either definitely or probably provides sufficient leave. 11% were neutral, and 19% of respondents felt that UO either probably or definitely does not offer sufficient leave for OAs.

Next, we asked how important it is to OAs to have paid emergency or bereavement leave available to them, as bereavement leave has regularly been brought to the Council as an area of concern for OAs. We clarified that this would be in addition to current available leaves. Despite many respondents feeling that UO provides sufficient leave, just over 50% of respondents felt that having paid emergency or bereavement leave was either very or extremely important to them.

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<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important - the other available leaves cover my needs</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly important</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately important</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely important - OAs really need this!</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>139</td>
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**Unionization**

The Council has been receiving a lot of interest in OA unionization. To be clear, as the OA Council receives funding from the University of Oregon, state law does not allow the Council to support or hinder a unionization process, but we wanted to be responsive to the concerns of our fellow OAs, so we included a question soliciting thoughts on unionization with an optional text-based response. About half of respondents expressed support for unionization. Slightly less than a quarter were in opposition, and slightly more than a quarter had mixed or neutral feelings or felt they needed more information to answer the question.
OAs supportive of the idea believe that a union could provide better bargaining power, primarily around pay, and job protections. Many OAs expressed concern that their pay and benefits are falling behind all other represented employee groups, including in some cases staff they supervise. A few respondents expressed feeling taken advantage of as the only non-unionized group on campus and that, because their increases happen after everyone else’s, they end up with less. Some respondents mentioned that they would be more interested in unionizing if increases continue to be well below inflation. Others expressed discomfort that their pay increases tend to match UA when OA roles are distinct from faculty.

Here are some of those voices:

- “I think that in an environment where most other employment types are unionized, OAs not being unionized results in our needs coming after those of other groups and having to be grassroots organized by volunteer effort as opposed to collectively bargained and prioritized by the institution. If the institution would give us defined sense of what to expect (planned colas/defined merit structure so we can always know in advance what to expect for the coming 3-5 year period, ongoing/regular listening to OA council, demonstrate commitment to valuing OAs), then I would feel less like we had to unionize to attain the same rights as other employee groups, but in the absence of that, it feels like not unionizing puts OAs at a disadvantage compared to other UO employees.”

- “I 100% support collective bargaining and unionization. It is scary to think that we are the only group on campus that does not have a union advocating for us. I think our benefits are good, but the idea that they could potentially just take them away or change them without warning or notice is unnerving.”

- “Yes, I think we need to. At this point we will be the only employees on campus without one. Everyone is getting increases except us. Who is looking out for our interests? If they published increases three years at a time we wouldn’t need a union, but I don’t think that will happen.”

- “YES. I was very negatively impacted this year because WE DON’T get paid bereavement leave while all other employees do. This is still negatively impacting me, I had to go into negative sick leave, and suffer for this months later. I have a family with small kids, and any time we’re sick/I’m sick I still have to come in to work.”

Those in opposition expressed concern regarding paying dues, uncertainty about the need, concern about the practicality, structure and leadership of unionization. Some OAs also expressed concern that unionizing would increase student tuition, and that they don’t want to be in an antagonistic relationship with UO administration.

Here are some of those voices:

- “I’d rather UO leadership take the lead and provide fair pay.”

- “I do not want to unionize, but feel the institution treats OA Council like a union, but with none of the leverage. The institution needs to work more with OA Council if they want to prevent a union, so OAs feel their voices are actually heard by the administration, and OAs are not left behind all other employee groups that do have union support in terms of pay and benefits.”

- “I absolutely do NOT want to be part of a union! From previous employment I have years of insight into the leadership and governance of unions. I respect their value in our democracy and think they are critical for some employee groups, but they are not for me. I am not comfortable paying dues and being at the mercy of political influence and majority rule when it comes to life-changing decisions such as strikes. I prefer to make my own choices.”
• “Rather than put effort into unionizing OAs, I would like to see UO leadership recognize that OA work is not the same as faculty work and so whatever is negotiated with UA should not automatically apply to OAs.”

A number of respondents continue to express mixed feelings or neutrality about unionization. They see both the potential benefits and drawbacks. Some of these respondents feel that they don’t know enough about unionization to form a solid opinion.

Here are some of those voices:

• “I think the most important thing is to have effective means to advocate for OAs. If that's a union, great. If that’s not a union, also great. I hope university leadership recognizes how important OAs are and the precarious position they're in with the gains that unionized groups are getting (GTFF and SEIU in particular).”
• “I don’t have strong feelings either for or against. Mostly, I'm interested in having better transparency about OA classification and compensation structures. And if there is also a transparent, structured approach to merit/COLA increases, that would cover my motivation for wanting a union.”
• “I have mixed union feelings. I would generally be against them for OAs. But, where we are not able to navigate the work environment like a corporate employee could, I understand and support the need for a union. It's like we're partially unionized anyway since I can't walk into my boss, explain why I need an X% raise right now and get it. The bureaucracy gets in the way and therefore I need the support.”
• “I'm on the fence, neither directly opposed to it or in favor of it. I do feel strongly that OAs are constantly the group being forced to take on additional responsibilities and work extra hours/weekends to get the job done with no additional direct benefit. I would support anything that can help capture a better work-life balance for OAs.”

Engagement and Belonging
We asked OAs how engaged they felt with their work. Consistent with the results from the IDEAL Climate Survey, many OA survey respondents (85%) feel either somewhat or extremely engaged with their work.

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<tr>
<td>Extremely disengaged</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disengaged</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither engaged nor disengaged</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat engaged</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely engaged</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>224</td>
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The Council also wanted to get a better understanding of whether OAs were feeling valued and appreciated by their units and by the University. A majority (70%) of OAs felt extremely or somewhat valued and appreciated by their units. However, only 31% of respondents felt extremely or somewhat valued and appreciated by the institution.
We asked OAs if they could think of anything that would help them feel more valued and appreciated, either by their unit and the university, and here are some of the themes from those responses:

- **Better compensation** (this was mentioned the most).
  - “With new classified contract and students unionizing we are facing pay equity issues to be a reality in the next 18 months. This concerns me as a person who manages several OA positions.”
  - “It was great when we had a transparent three-year plan mapped out for COLA/merit raises. It showed that there was a commitment to OAs”
- **Improved sense of institutional identity.** Some ideas mentioned include: Provide UO branded clothing/gear, require units to use common systems and tools, give units staff engagement budgets for things like team building workshops and branded merchandise, hire for and reward good leadership, as defined by more than task productivity. “We need to ask leadership to model dropping the cynicism and give us common goals, common messaging, and a common vision.”
- **Clarify advancement/promotion opportunities** (finish the OA job family framework).
  - “For those of us who are doing very similar things, having more standardized titles/title groupings and position descriptions would enhance the perception of equity across peer groups and speed up HR processes (when setting up a new role, getting ready to refill a job, comparing for retention, etc.). There is too much "creativity" permitted. People compare themselves to each other too much- the haves and have nots-- and this erodes trust”
  - Promote the advancement of internal candidates (“work experience as a university employee counts for very little but outside experience seems to count for more.”).
- **Better onboarding for OAs**, especially for those coming into public higher education from other sectors.
- More institutional investment in affinity groups and more cross campus collaborations and connections.
- **More efficient central systems and processes.** Central HR processing delays were mentioned a number of times.
- **Recognition of the work** – feeling seen and heard. More emphasis on campus collegiality and appreciation of one another.
• Flexibility around remote work: some predictable period of time where the work slows down and allows for stress-free time off. A number of OAs expressed appreciation for the “quiet week” in late December and would like to extend that to all term breaks, or at least twice a year.

• Increased benefits:
  o OA sabbatical program
  o 4 day/32 hour work week
  o Bereavement/emergency leave
  o Inclement weather pay
  o “The UO should offer families more access to childcare options or housing subsidies, instead of only offering retirement benefits.”
  o “More paid vacation time after 10 years of service and a raise.”
  o Some sort of employee appreciation, like a winter bonus or gift. Duck bucks?

Finally, we asked OAs what the council could do to facilitate more connection with other OAs across campus, and how the council could enhance the work experience for OAs on campus. We received a huge number of creative and thoughtful ideas that we are in the process of sorting through, and the Council will use that input to shape our work in the coming year.

Recommendations

1. Continue to offer flexibility to OAs with respect to remote work.
2. Work with the Council to come up with a plan for the next 2-3 years of pay increases.
3. Separate merit into its own process apart from across-the-board increases.
4. Complete the OA Job Family Framework project.
5. Develop and promote a clearer sense of institutional identity and belonging.