



Preliminary Report 2017 Staff Engagement Survey Administered by The Executive Boards of APA & PSSO

To fulfill their missions and contribute to the academic excellence goal of The Gold Standard 2020, Western Michigan University's Administrative Professional Association (APA) and Professional Support Staff Organization (PSSO) periodically solicit input from employees by surveying their memberships. APA and PSSO are non-bargaining groups that represent the interests of hourly and salary employees at Western Michigan University (WMU). The two groups collaborated on the development of an employee engagement and satisfaction survey that was open to ALL of the University's benefits-eligible non-bargaining staff members governed by the Staff Compensation System. The goal of the survey was to use the information and data collected for future advocacy efforts for both groups.

Survey Administration

The 2017 Staff Engagement Survey for non-bargaining employees was administered in October 2017. The survey was open to all Staff Compensation System employees, who are defined as benefits-eligible non-bargaining University staff members governed by the Staff Compensation System at WMU. It was open for 31 days and took 20-30 minutes to complete. The survey was comprised of multiple choice questions and open-ended items. Participants had the opportunity to provide an open-ended response at the end to capture their final thoughts. All responses were anonymous; therefore, no personal information will be reported. A substantial portion of the survey was adapted from Cornell University's Employee Survey, which was developed by that institution to better understand staff engagement. It was adapted with permission from the Director of Institutional Research at Cornell. Additional sections related to professional development interest and service activities of APA and PSSO were added to the end.

Implementation of the survey was a grass roots effort in many ways. APA and PSSO were not permitted by senior leadership to e-mail the survey to all eligible participants. Active members of each organization received an e-mail invitation to participate in the survey. Prior to the launch of the survey a town hall meeting was held by both groups to discuss the reasoning for conducting the survey and to create buy-in. The survey was advertised through approved University Channels (WMU News, Western News, WMU Today) and interested participants who were eligible to take the survey were directed to a webpage to request a survey link.

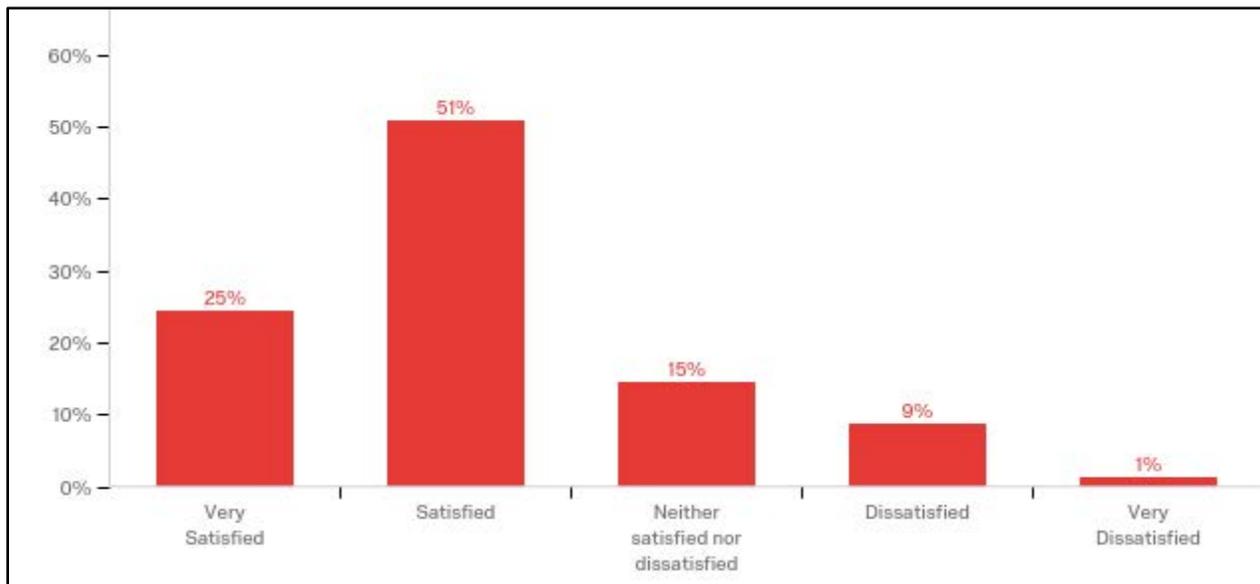
Survey Response Information

Eligible Members	1,278
Active Members & Eligible Employees Who Received Survey Electronically	630
Employees Interested in Survey	49.3%
Survey Participants	459
Survey Response Rate	72.9%
Survey Response Rate of Overall Eligible Population	35.9%

The useable survey response rate is 33.9% (n=434). Over 70,000 individual responses to questions and 1,112 survey comments were submitted. The goal was to surpass the 2013 Campus Climate study rate by 10%. The Campus Climate study initial survey response rate was 26.8% and the useable survey response rate was 19.9%. University Leadership deemed the completion and useable rates for the Campus Climate Study as acceptable for a campus-wide survey. The survey response rate for the 2017 Staff Engagement Survey surpassed the participation and completion rate of the Campus Climate study.

Overall Job Satisfaction

Overall, how satisfied are you with your job at WMU?



“I enjoy the work I do because I help the students, but WMU doesn't provide the adequate support needed to support its employees.” – Survey Respondent

“WMU has its positives and negatives. I do enjoy my role, but there are many obstacles that hinder me from being the best I can be...The campus is inefficient, there is so much money wasted, and we subsidize areas that charge too much for the services they provide, yet we are forced to use them, but don't have the budget to support paying that much for services. There is not an office to support institutional effectiveness, which is much needed. Unfortunately, to move the needle, sometimes staff need to be told they have to change. Many staff in our department work the jobs of two people, and don't have the appropriate title or pay to support what they do every day at WMU. The Aon Hewitt review was very disappointing. Like positions to mine, just looking in Michigan, pay salaries that are \$15k to \$20k higher. I would recommend WMU as a good place to work, but this is with many reservations, some which have been noted above.” – Survey Respondent

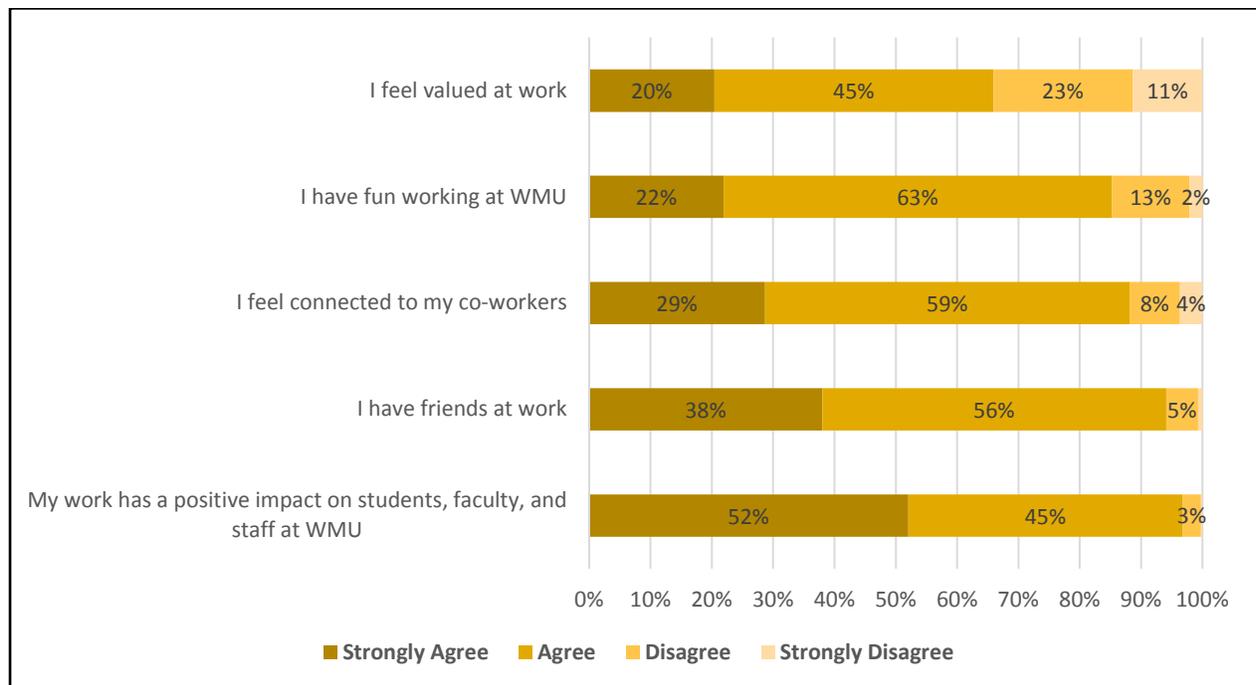
“I feel truly valued by the other staff in my unit, as well as my Chair and Faculty. However, I do not feel valued by the administration. We hear again and again how important we are to

the University, but I don't see that in decisions that have been made by the administration in the past.” – Survey Respondent

The quotes above help tell the story behind this question. One of the most encouraging results of the survey was assessing employees’ answers to this question. Approximately 75% of employees are satisfied or very satisfied with their job at WMU and 15% fall in a neutral place regarding their employment. “Employee morale is low” is a statement made often at WMU. This statement is not necessarily supported by the responses to this question; however, there were some themes that emerged from the open-ended comments that demonstrate that while employees are satisfied with their jobs overall there are opportunities for WMU to improve in its support of staff.

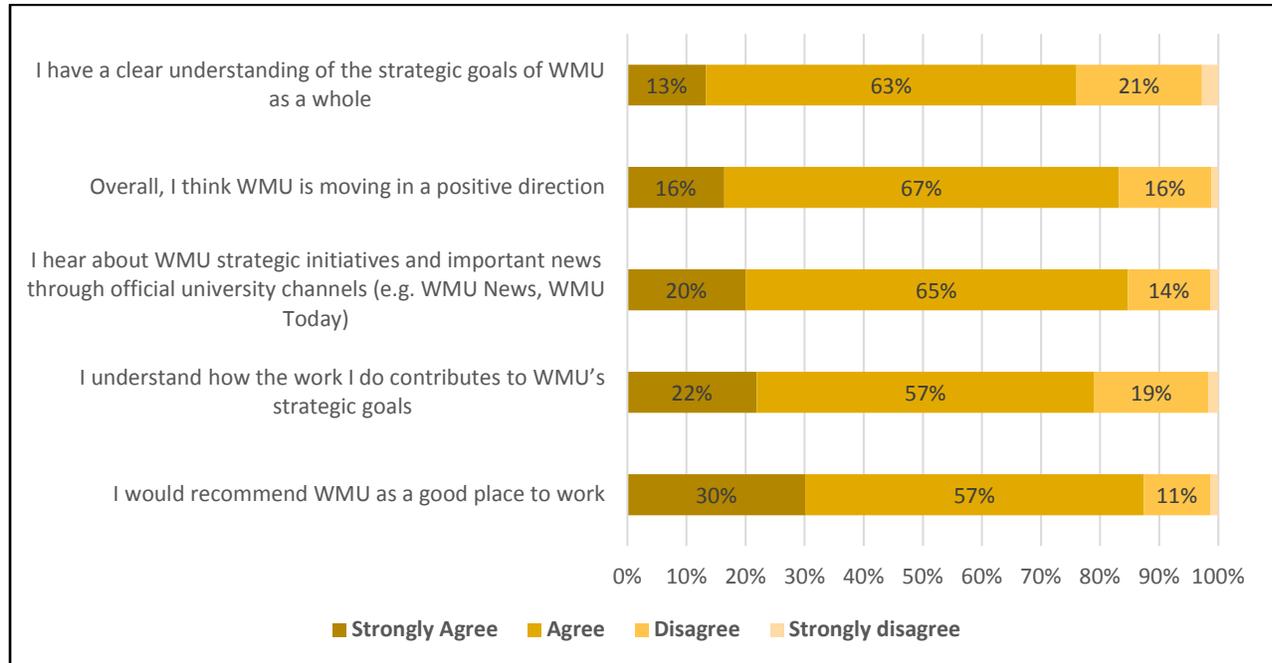
Employees Engagement (Connection to WMU)

Most employees feel WMU is a good place to work based on the relationships developed with others at WMU. They feel connected to their co-workers, they have built community among their colleagues, enjoy the work they do and for the most part feel valued. They find value in supporting students and the University’s vision of being learner centered, discovery driven and globally engaged. The people at WMU are what make it positive and special, as evidenced by employees overwhelming positive respond to “my work has a positive impact on students, faculty & staff at WMU”.



Employees Overall Impressions of WMU & Its Strategic Direction

Employees have a solid sense of WMU strategic goals, are able to connect their work to the mission of the University, and generally hear about the strategic initiatives through appropriate communication channels. Overall, survey participants think WMU is a good place to work and would recommend WMU as a workplace to others. Open-ended responses suggest that these recommendations are largely based on relationships developed with colleagues and students, and the benefits package (i.e. retirement, healthcare coverage, tuition remission, etc.) available to employees.



Employee Workload and Compensation

As mentioned previously even though employees are stating they are satisfied with their jobs overall, are engaged with the University, and trustful the University is moving in the right direction, there are two areas that present opportunities for improvement. Employee responses to survey items related to workload and compensation starkly moved away from the positive trend in responses. Employees concern about fair compensation, previous attempts to provide equity in compensation (Comp 2000 and Staff Compensation System project 2015), and workload are evidenced by the number of open-ended responses regarding these topics. Of the 810 open-ended responses from the front half of the survey, almost a quarter of the responses were related to compensation and workload. More specifically, employees stated:

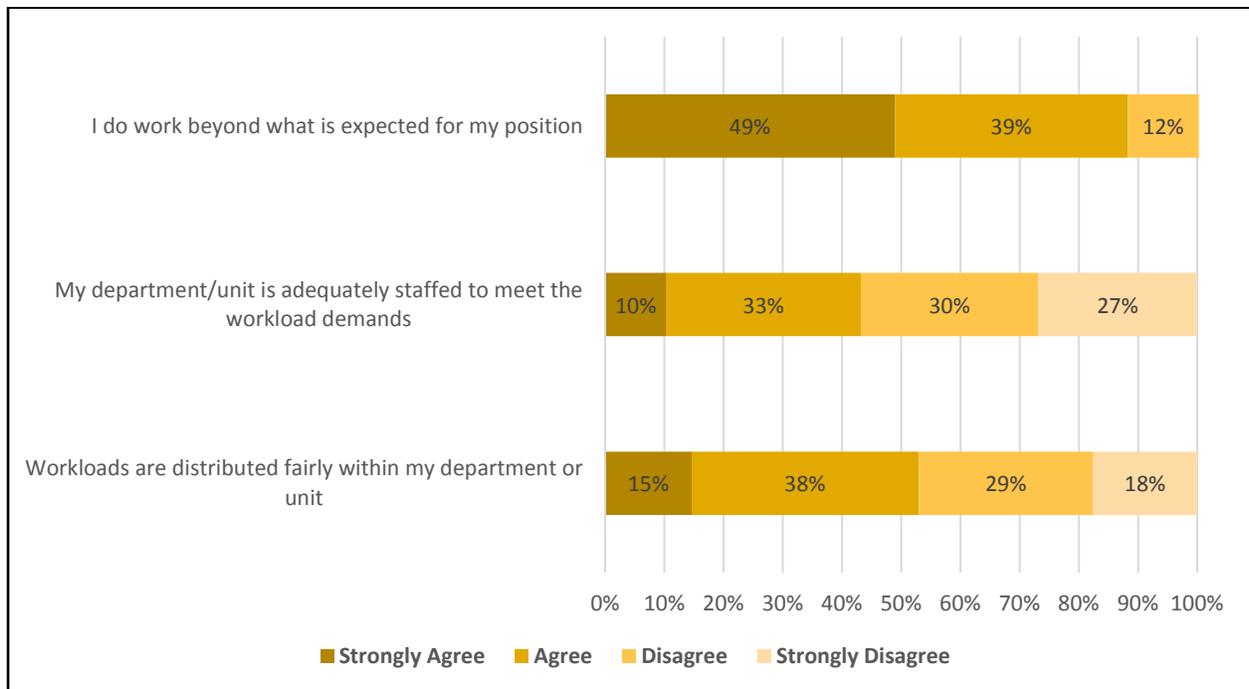
- They do work beyond their position requirements **(88%)**
- Their unit is not adequately staffed to handle workload demands **(57%)**
- Workloads are not distributed fairly within their unit **(47%)**

Many employees indicated their heavy workloads are a direct result of unfilled positions and understaffed departments. These workload/staffing issues existed before the implementation of the Staff Compensation System Project (SCS project) and employees were very hopeful that the project would address those concerns. Unfortunately, many employees had a deep disappointment with the SCS project implementation, as workload and unit staffing did not improve.

“Workloads have increased for various reasons - usually budget cuts - and we do what we need to do in order to keep things working.” – Survey Respondent

“I feel valued and appreciated by my department chair, staff and faculty. The workload continues to increase w/no additional support from the College or University. Training opportunities are rare, it's hard to volunteer for a committee or group when you are already skipping lunch, breaks and working overtime just to keep up. I feel extremely competent in my position but policies/procedures change at a pace that it's hard to keep up.” – Survey Respondent

Employee Workload



In 2015 the Staff Compensation project concluded and the recommendations from Aon Hewitt were implemented by the University. Many employees felt they were demoted through this process, that their years of services to WMU was undervalued, the financial resources allocated to the third party vendor Aon Hewitt to conduct this project was excessive and ultimately, they felt demoralized by the project. The disappointment in this process is evidenced by the level of details many employees provided in the open-ended comments regarding the project three years after the implementation.

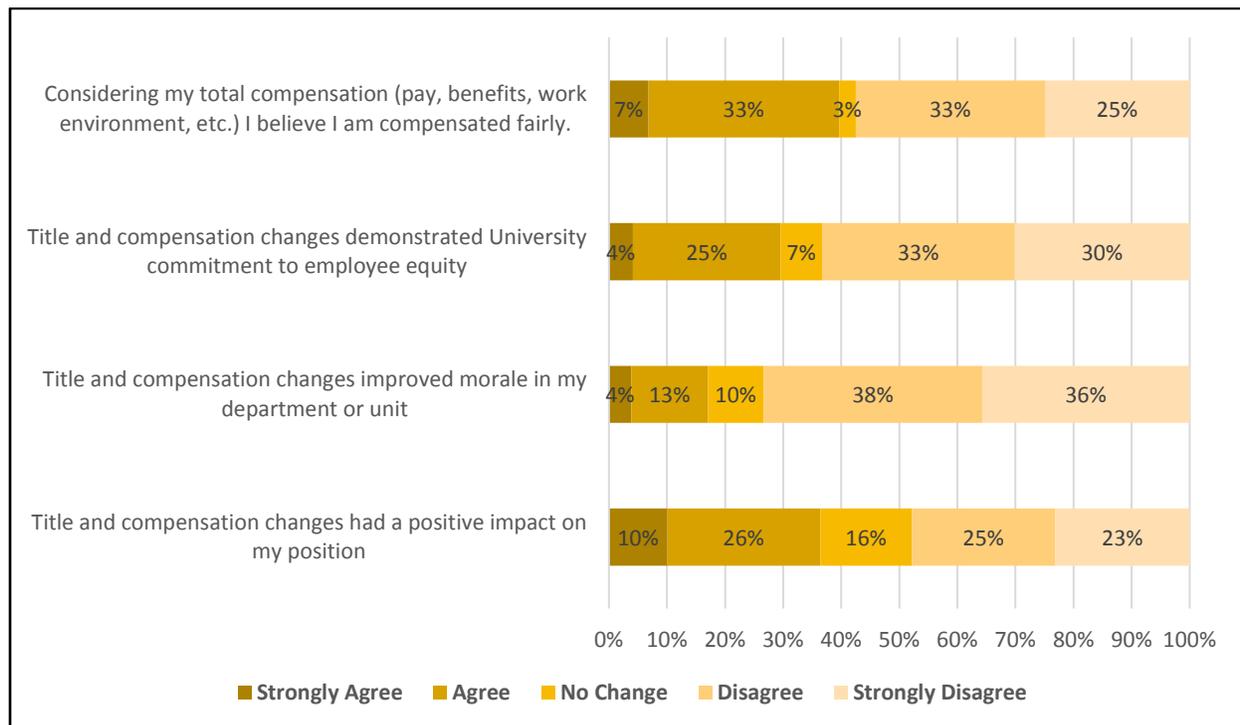
Employees would like to see WMU adopt merit pay for staff who exceed performance goals. The lack of merit and limited options for internal promotion is a barrier to employees. More specifically:

- Staff Compensation project had a negative impact on the survey respondent **(48%)**
- Disagreed that the Staff Compensation project had a positive impact on morale **(74%)**
- Disagreed that the changes demonstrated the University’s commitment to equity **(63%)**
- Believe their total compensation package is fair **(58%)**

The open-ended comments help delineate what employees felt made the compensation package fair. It generally was all other benefits outside of pay.

“My compensation system status is an A -- raising my status has been talked about for years, and even though my job has changed and I've been given other duties, I continue to have the lowest status on campus. I feel that a lot of the work that I do is above my pay grade. There have been times that I would go to work on the weekend or bring work home in an effort to stay caught up with my workload. Because I'm at the top of my pay grade, I no longer get a pay raise -- I just get a one-time bonus each year.” - Survey Respondent

Employee Compensation



What aspects of your employment are important to you?

Respondents ranked the following aspects of employment in their top three:

1. Wages (Selected in top 3 by **68%** of respondents)
2. Health/Life Insurance (Selected in top 3 by **56%** of respondents)
3. Job Security (Selected in top 3 by **38%** of respondents)
4. Advancement Opportunities (Selected in top 3 by **28%** of respondents)
5. Duties/tasks associated with your job (Selected in top 3 by **25%** of respondents)

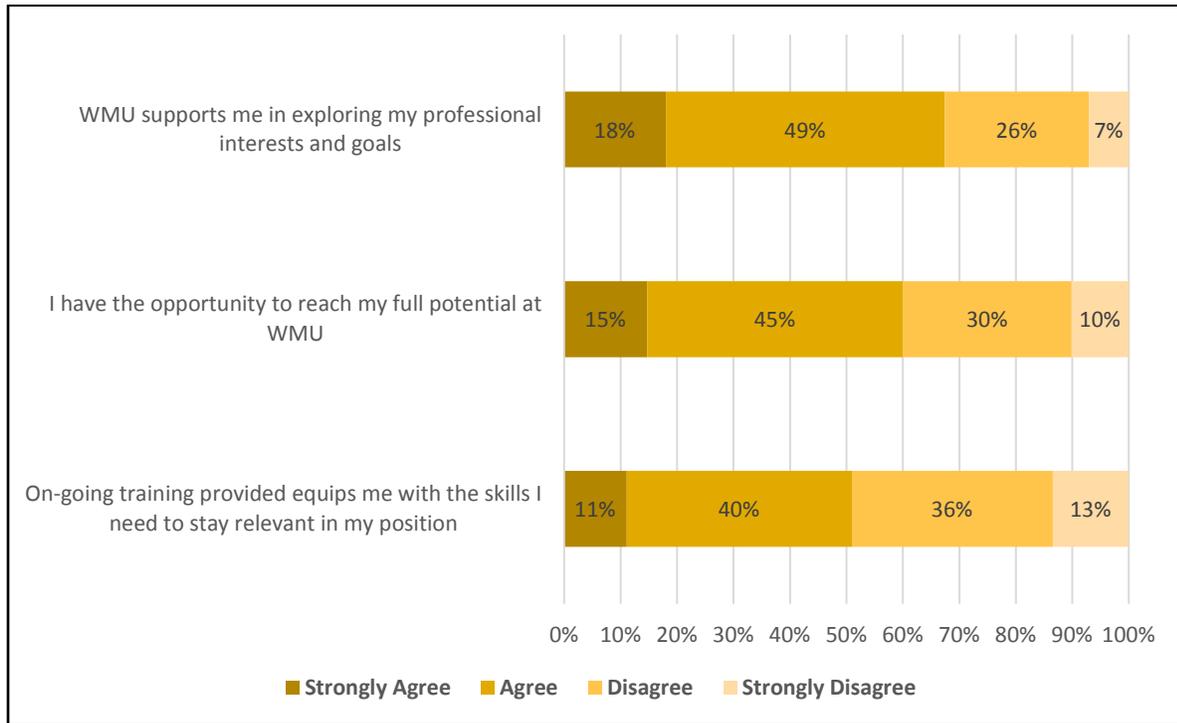
Professional Development & Training

A theme that resonated throughout the survey was employees' desire for more professional development and training. Though nearly 70% report that WMU supports them in exploring their professional interests and goals, only 50% of employees report that ongoing training provided equips them with the skills needed to stay relevant in their positions. It was clear that WMU as whole does not provide on-the-job training, and the level of support from units is inconsistent. In addition, most units do not have adequate funds to allow employees to engage in professional development outside of the University. The support offered from Human Resources via online modules is very limited. Due to the lack of support in this area, employees have concern about their ability to advance within the organization, despite their interest, willingness to put in the effort to advance, and additional degrees they have obtained as an employee benefit.

"There have been great strides forward in trying to update/renovate software and processes for hiring, travel, etc. I deeply appreciate the time it takes for the good folks in Accts Payable and Human Resources to do what they need to do! That being said, I wish we had more comprehensive training on how workflows work for the hiring, travel, and a guide for policies and procedures from the Provost Office that is up to date." – Survey Respondent

"I came to a position which had been vacant for quite some time. It seemed that the expectation was for me to "figure it out." Coming from a non-education background to an educational environment was quite an adjustment. I was surprised there was not training provided for new employees up front to orient to Banner, Peoplesoft, Cognos, etc to lay a foundation for the work I do. That an educational institution did not provide this education in a standardized way was surprising to me. It would seem a next logical step after a new employee orientation would be orientation to operating systems utilized regularly by the university. My immediate boss was only vaguely familiar with my job and I basically pieced together what I needed to do. Over a year later, I still run across things are a bit of a mystery to me. Fortunately within our building everyone is more than willing to answer questions and help me navigate, but there was no formalized method for learning the ropes." – Survey Respondent

"Training is available within my unit. There is not anything available at the university level. On going training is on-the-job learning. Much of the information available at the university has not been updated to reflect the most current information such as training slides created 10 years ago." – Survey Respondent



What are the topic areas where you could use additional training?

1. Leadership Development
2. Banner (all functionalities)
3. Microsoft Excel
4. Other Microsoft Programs – OneDrive, Outlook, PowerPoint, Access, etc.
5. Peoplesoft – All functionalities

Final Thoughts

“I love my job, I love the students, I love WMU. I don't think we PSSO or APA ask for too much for all we do here at WMU. We do more than what is on our job descriptions. I think that is what gives the University a more personal feel. The faculty may be the ones teaching but it's the staff that keeps it all together.” – Survey Respondent

Many staff members echo the feelings of our colleague quote above. As staff members, we hope that our contributions to the university are valued, not only with words of appreciation but also **with action**. Many people make WMU a special place to work and our students are amazing. We would like to build on those positive factors and continue work to collaboratively improve the environment for all staff members, particularly non-bargaining employees. Through this survey, staff have identified some areas of improvement that are needed. We hope the University Leadership will work actively with APA and PSSO to make improvements.