Staff Retention

Universities across the country have a long history of measuring and reporting student retention and faculty retention, but less attention is given to staff retention. As reported in the February 2016 OIRAE briefing, there were 6,873 permanent staff employed by the University in 2015, accounting for 41.7% of Purdue’s faculty, staff, and graduate appointments. This briefing examines retention of Purdue University staff across time and between various categorizations. For the purposes of this analysis, only regular administrative, service, clerical, and professional staff are included in the retention calculations. Also note that University Development Office employees have been removed from this analysis due to their 2014 move to Purdue Research Foundation.

Low employee retention is costly in both time required to train new employees, as well as resources in filling vacant positions. It has also been suggested that low retention rates can cause poor morale in remaining employees due to the need to complete work left by the vacant position, in addition to their own job. On the other hand, high retention can limit the development and promotion opportunities of employees, employees can become complacent in their positions, and there is the potential for low innovation and a lack of new ideas. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the rate of separations for all industries was 41.5% during 2015, 26.8% in the Educational Services category, and 16.9% in the Government – State and Local Education category.

Retention is calculated as the number of employees remaining in a category (for example: Male/Female or Admin/Clerical/Professional/Service) after 1, 3, or 5 years divided by the number of employees who began in that category. One-year retention rates are calculated for employees who began an appointment during 2008-2015, 3-year retention rates are calculated for employees who began an appointment during 2008-2013, and 5-year retention rates are calculated for employees who began a new appointment during 2008-2011. If there was a lapse in employment or an employee moved between staff categories or units, that person would be counted multiple times, once for each of the cohorts they started in.

Staff Retention at the University

For all Purdue University employees beginning a staff appointment in 2008 or later, the 1-year retention rate is 80.1%, the 3-year retention rate is 56.5%, and the 5-year retention rate is 43.7%.

In figure 1, we can see these 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year retention rates broken down by the year in which staff were hired. While 1-year retention has remained fairly steady over the 8-year period, 3-year and 5-year retention rates have seen a decreasing trend. Of Purdue staff members who began employment in 2008, 61.5% were retained for three years, while staff members who began working in 2013 were retained for three years at a rate of 53.9%. A similar pattern can be seen when comparing the 5-year retention rate of staff beginning in 2008 and 2011, which were retained at a rate of 47.3% and 43.3% respectively.

Staff Retention by Demographics

Of the staff members who began employment at Purdue University between 2008 and 2015, 57.9% were women, 42.1% men (n=6,010). The male versus female 1-, 3-, and 5-year retention rates can be found in Table 1.

Of the staff members who began employment at Purdue University between 2008 and 2015, 9.8% were underrepresented minorities, 90.2% non-URM. The URM versus non-URM 1-, 3-, and 5-year retention rates can be found in Table 1.

Retention of Staff within Administrative and College Units

There is very little movement in staff employment between the colleges and administrative units; only 6.5% of staff employees have been hired in both between 2008 and 2016 (for example, an employee may have worked in an administrative unit from 2010-2012, then taken a position in a college from 2012-2016). Furthermore, retention rates within the administrative units and the academic colleges are similar as shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Staff Retention by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>1-Year Retention</th>
<th>3-Year Retention</th>
<th>5-Year Retention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>% n</td>
<td>% n</td>
<td>% n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
<td>3,478</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>2,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
<td>3,506</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
<td>2,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
<td>3,550</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
<td>2,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
<td>3,590</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>2,782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>79.9%</td>
<td>3,618</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>2,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
<td>3,640</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>2,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
<td>3,662</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>2,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
<td>3,684</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>3,042</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>% n</th>
<th>% n</th>
<th>% n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>3,022</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>2,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
<td>3,066</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
<td>2,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
<td>3,106</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
<td>2,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
<td>3,140</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>2,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
<td>3,174</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>2,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
<td>3,206</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>2,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
<td>3,238</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>2,849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
<td>3,270</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>2,943</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>URM</th>
<th>% n</th>
<th>% n</th>
<th>% n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>78.1%</td>
<td>1,547</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
<td>1,547</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
<td>1,547</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
<td>1,547</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
<td>1,547</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td>1,547</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>1,547</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>1,547</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Staff Retention within Administrative and College Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Administrative Units</th>
<th>1-Year Retention</th>
<th>3-Year Retention</th>
<th>5-Year Retention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>4,099</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>2,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>4,125</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>2,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>4,151</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>2,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>4,177</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>3,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>4,203</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>3,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>4,229</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>3,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>4,253</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>3,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>4,279</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>3,103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Colleges</th>
<th>1-Year Retention</th>
<th>3-Year Retention</th>
<th>5-Year Retention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>2,942</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>2,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>2,968</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>2,968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>2,993</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>2,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>3,018</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>3,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>3,043</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>3,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>3,067</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>3,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>3,092</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>3,092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>3,116</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>3,116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Seven and a half percent of staff employees who began a new appointment within the academic colleges, held appointments in more than one college during the 2008 to 2016 period (for example, an employee hired in 2008 by the College of Science, who moved to work for the School of Management in 2012). Table 3 displays the retention rates of staff employed in the academic colleges. 1-year retention rates are the lowest in the College of Pharmacy, while the 5-year retention rates are lowest in the College of Education, the College of Science, and the School of Management.

In Table 4, the administrative units at Purdue University have been broken down into the following six categories: Intercollegiate Athletics, President (including everything not reported in the other five categories such as IT and Marketing and Media), Provost, Research and Partnership, Student Life, and Treasurer. The highest staff retention rates fall under the President and Treasurer, while the categories with the lowest retention are Intercollegiate Athletics and Student Life. 8.4% of staff employees who began a new appointment within the administrative units, worked in more than one of the six areas during 2008-2016.

**Staff Retention within Job Groupings**

Table 5: Staff Retention within Job Groupings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Category</th>
<th>1-Year Retention</th>
<th>3-Year Retention</th>
<th>5-Year Retention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advisors</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Manager, Bus. Operations, Acct. Clerk</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custodial</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Service</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>87.2%</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab Tech</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Staff</td>
<td>78.4%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police, Fire, and Safety</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Retention within Staff Categories**

Figure 2 shows the retention rates within each staff category: administrative, clerical, professional, and service staff. These rates are for employees hired into one of the four staff categories during 2008-2016. The retention rates for administrative staff are higher than that of clerical, professional, and service staff at 1, 3, and 5 years.

Clerical staff have the lowest retention rates, retaining less than 30% of new hires for 5 years. Of the staff employees hired between 2008 and 2016, 9.6% have worked in 2 or more staff categories.

It is important to note that employees who have worked under multiple staff categories would be accounted for more than once. For example, if an employee worked for one year in a clerical position and subsequently worked for 5 years in a professional position, that person would be included in the 1-year retention rate for clerical staff and the 1-, 3-, and 5-year retention rates for professional staff.

**Conclusion**

Staff retention rates vary across Purdue University depending on a number of factors including the year employment began, demographics, unit of employment, staff category, and job type. When comparing these patterns in retention to published separation rates, we can see similarities occurring across the United States. As such, goals and objectives for staff retention should be aligned across appropriately segmented sectors of the University workforce in consideration of these factors. Central administrative support for aligning programs and initiatives in coordination with departmental leadership may serve to mediate undue movement within the University itself as well as address those University-level factors that may influence retention broadly.

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