



## Working in higher education; recognition, communication and change

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## Working in higher education; recognition, communication and change

This issue brings together articles from the USA, Europe and the UK which provide insight into the experiences of working within universities today. They surface the importance of recognising the contributions and experiences of a diverse workforce, the value of open and transparent communication and lessons for managing projects and change.

We begin with Andrea Sell's thematic review of the literature on staff morale, satisfaction and well-being in the USA. Sell highlights five factors that emerge from the existing literature – recognition, work-life balance, mentorship, collegiality and transparency – and considers each in turn to draw out implications for higher education leaders.

Brian Cherry, Brent Graves and Nathan Grasse expand the investigation of staff satisfaction, by focusing on the perceived satisfaction of mid-level university administrators, deans and department heads in relation to academic reorganisation. They suggest that there were higher levels of staff satisfaction when institutional restructuring resulted in staff groupings organised by expertise or discipline, and where strategic planning tools were used to increase the transparency of the rationale and desired outcomes. Additionally, they highlight the importance of communication in delivering change, to enable a shared understanding of the reasons for change, how decisions will be made and the intended outcomes.

The third contribution from the USA explores the operations of ombuds offices in the State of Texas. Imane Hijal-Moghrabi and Rachel Martin Harlow set out the historical evolution of ombuds offices in the US and Europe and the challenges that emerged delivering these services during the Global Covid-19 Pandemic. It illustrates how organisations can adapt when responding to social and environmental factors, and offers a different view on a process used by staff and students.

Moving from the US to Europe, the next article examines the features of research project management within European higher education institutes. The authors, Richard Twohig, Emma Leahy, Dorieann Wallace and Laurina Saint-Fleur, offer a practitioner's perspective on research project management. They report the fundamentals of tasks involved in research management arising from their survey, and they

compare research project management with 'standard' projects. They suggest that managing research projects requires a facilitative approach, highlighting the importance of managing stakeholder involvement and working together collaboratively.

In the next article, the focus turns to UK higher education as Shane Dowle considers the merits of progress reviews on doctoral student completion. The article offers new insight into the effect of institutional policies on the doctoral student experience, and in doing so surfaces implications for higher education leaders in the management of doctoral education; there is a need for clear communication about the purpose of progress reviews, effective channels for concerns to be raised and a need for transparency on how issues are taken forward.

The final article of this provides a critical and reflective account of using micro-secondments to recognise and harness the skills and experience of disparate parts of the workforce to deliver a project to improve the student system. Helen Matthews and Robbie Macaulay describe the initiative, the benefits to the organisation and the individuals involved, and provide a checklist for practitioners who may want to introduce micro-secondments within their institution.

This issue concludes with Emily Yarrow's review of the 2022 book 'LGBTQ Leadership in Higher Education' edited by Raymond E. Crossman.

### Notes on contributors



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## References

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