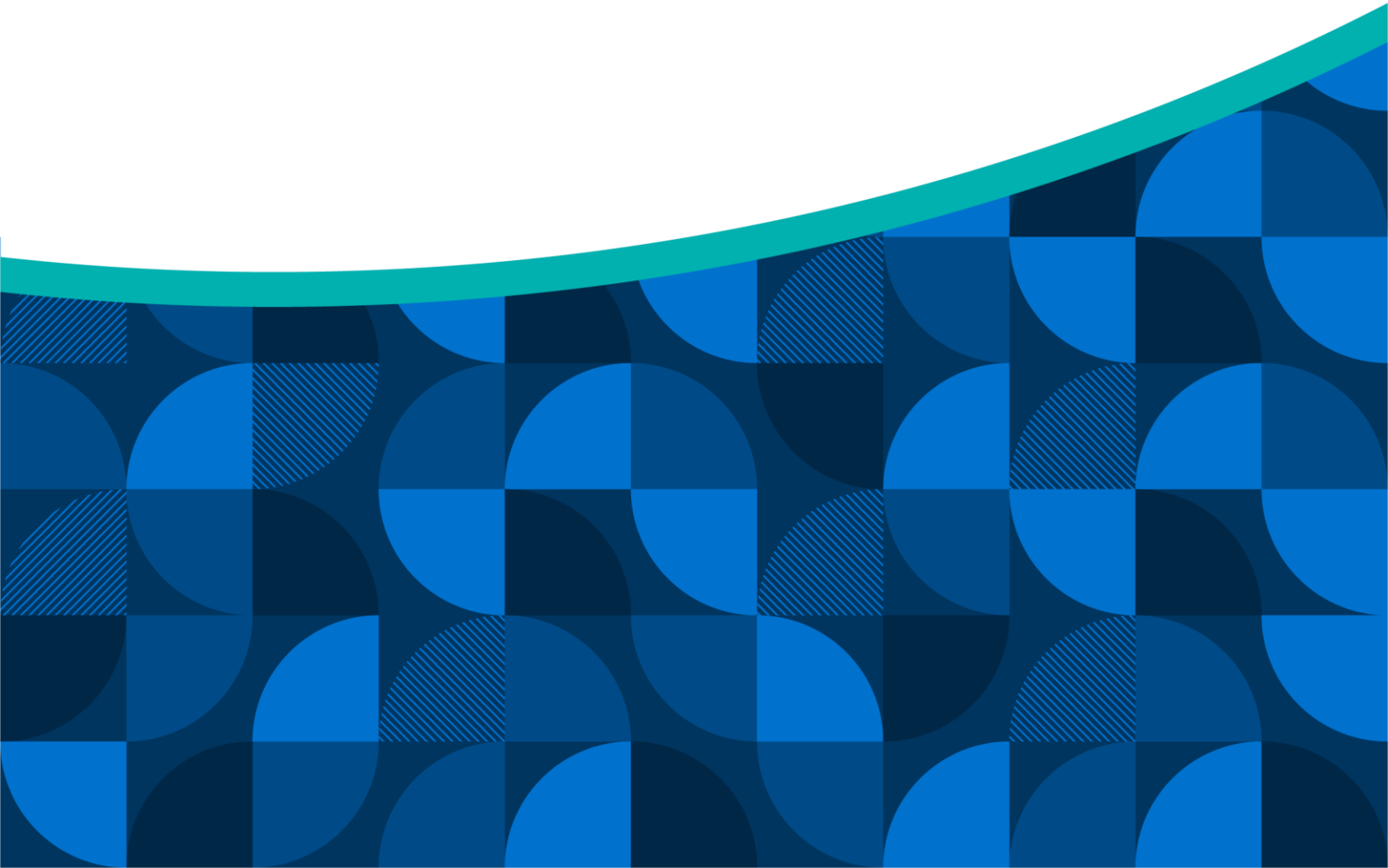**EAB**

Recruitment Strategies to Win Over Top External Talent

Playbook for Staff Recruiting, Hiring, and Onboarding

EAB

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Executive Summary

Audience

This report is best suited for Chief Human Resource Officers and their teams, division leaders, and hiring managers looking to improve recruiting and onboarding processes to attract top talent in today's competitive market.

Enhanced Table Stakes to Recruit and Onboard Quality Staff in Today's Competitive Market

High candidate expectations for streamlined hiring processes and increased competition from out-of-sector employers have made it more challenging than ever for higher ed to attract top talent. Current higher ed hiring practices miss opportunities to diversify their talent pool, overburden applicants with difficult processes, and fail to provide reasons why candidates should choose their institution over another employer. Colleges and universities must change their approach to recruiting and onboarding to meet candidate needs and compete with out-of-sector employers.

This white paper outlines the urgency drivers for why higher ed must modernize its recruiting and onboarding strategies to attract talent. Then, it provides campus leaders with 10 foundational solutions to common challenges across the major phases of the talent acquisition process that out-of-sector competitors have already implemented.

Talent Acquisition Phase	Common Challenges	Solutions
PRE-AWARENESS	Recruiting tactics fail to compel passive applicants	1. Build Active Recruiting Capabilities and Capacity 2. Segment Advertising to Target Diverse Applicants 3. Use Prior Applicant Information to Expedite Hiring for Future Vacancies 4. Tap Current Staff to Save Time and Money
DECISION TO APPLY	Recruiting materials do not "sell" institution	5. Restructure Employment Websites to Emphasize Culture 6. Redesign Job Descriptions to Attract and "Sell" Applicants
APPLICATION	Onerous process discourages applicants	7. Eliminate Common Application Roadblocks 8. Implement Mobile-Friendly Application Systems
ONBOARDING	Focused on compliance rather than engagement	9. Create Standardized Onboarding Process to Promote New Hire Success 10. Collect New Hire Feedback to Improve Onboarding Experience

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

EAB

Why It's Harder Than Ever to Attract Top Talent

- Pressure #1: Historic Turnover Perpetuates Recruitment Cycle
- Pressure #2: New Competitive Set Makes Out-of-Sector Recruiting and Hiring Playbook Essential
- Pressure #3: Changing Workforce Composition Diversifies Benefit Preferences
- Pressure #4: Talent Shortages Likely to Persist Amid Future Talent Shortages

Recruit-Hire-Turnover-Repeat

The onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic spurred many institutions to implement hiring freezes and reductions in force, collectively leading to a significant decrease in the higher ed workforce, as shown on the right.

Once in-person operations resumed, though, higher ed's need for staff quickly intensified. But this coincided with a broader reshuffling of the labor force amid the Great Resignation, making it even harder for institutions to staff back up to pre-pandemic levels. Some institutions have largely managed to recover, which is a testament to the diligence of campus leaders and HR teams.

Yet, despite nearing pre-pandemic staffing levels, campus leaders have felt little reprieve. Institutions are caught in a seemingly endless recruitment cycle as hiring intensity cannot keep pace with turnover. While higher ed hiring grew 10 percent across 2021 to 2022, turnover remained around 10 to 15 percent.

This cycle of recruiting and hiring a candidate while turnover remains high is unsustainable for HR staff, who are often not adequately structured, staffed, or equipped to maintain this level of recruiting.

Campuses Still Struggling to Stabilize Higher Ed Workforce Amidst High Turnover

Herculean Hiring Efforts Brought Higher Ed Back Near Pre-Pandemic Staffing Levels

Percent change in total employees, seasonally adjusted
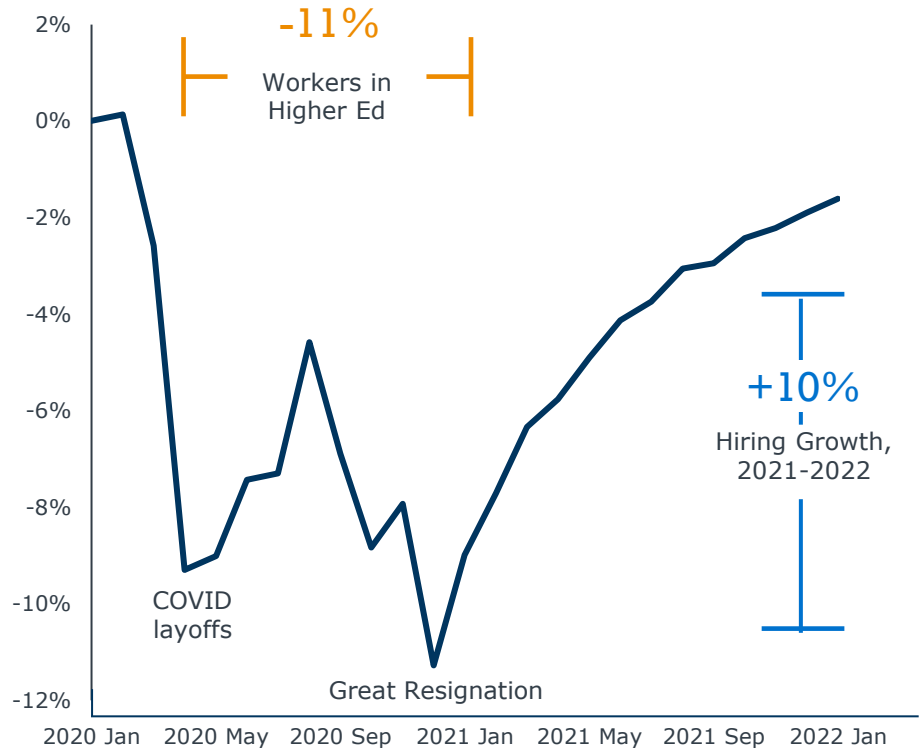
Institutions Fill a Vacancy Just for Another Role to Open

280%
Increase in job postings, Mar 2020-May 2022

10-20%
Median staff turnover rate, FY 2022[1]

1) n=67 institutions.

Source: EAB analysis of the Current Employment Statistics survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; EAB's Talent Questionnaire (2022); EAB interviews and analysis.

Your Competition Might Surprise You (Or Not...)

Higher ed increasingly competes with a bigger, more diverse, and often well-resourced competitive set, which is one of the reasons why they have struggled to recover to pre-pandemic staffing levels.

Historically, institutions largely competed with other higher ed peers in their region. Now, institutions face a nationalized and diverse set of higher ed and out-of-sector competitors for talent.

Out-of-sector employers increasingly use competency-based interviewing and hiring, which prioritizes skills rather than specific experiences. Competency-based hiring provides an opportunity for diverse applicants from across sectors, including higher ed, to be considered for a wider range of jobs.

Additionally, many out-of-sector organizations offer remote work, which has nationalized the labor market for some roles and industries. Today, employers can more easily attract many staff without historic geographic constraints.

This change in competitive set increases the pressure on higher ed to adapt its traditional recruitment and onboarding strategies to compete with out-of-sector best practices.

Out-of-Sector Companies No Longer Just Exemplars, Now Direct Competitors

Representative Example of an Institution's New Competitive Set

1) n=72 (institutions).

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

eab.com

Preparing for a Five-Generation Workforce

On top of contending with greater turnover and increased out-of-sector competition, colleges and universities must adapt to generational shifts within the workforce.

The graph on the right shows the generational makeup of the higher ed workforce from 2021 to 2031. In 2021, Boomers and Gen X comprised half of the higher ed workforce, while millennials represented a third, and Gen Z made up a minority.

As a result, institutions have catered their benefits to Gen X and Boomers.

But by 2031, Millennials, Gen Z, and Gen Alpha will comprise 70 percent of the higher ed workforce. These generations have distinct preferences for benefits like holistic well-being support (e.g., sense of community, physical health), financial security, and a focus on social issues.

Benefit Offerings Not Aligned With Shifting Generational Preferences

Boomers, Gen X Represent Small Part of Future Workforce

Higher Ed Workforce Composition by Generation, 2021-2031
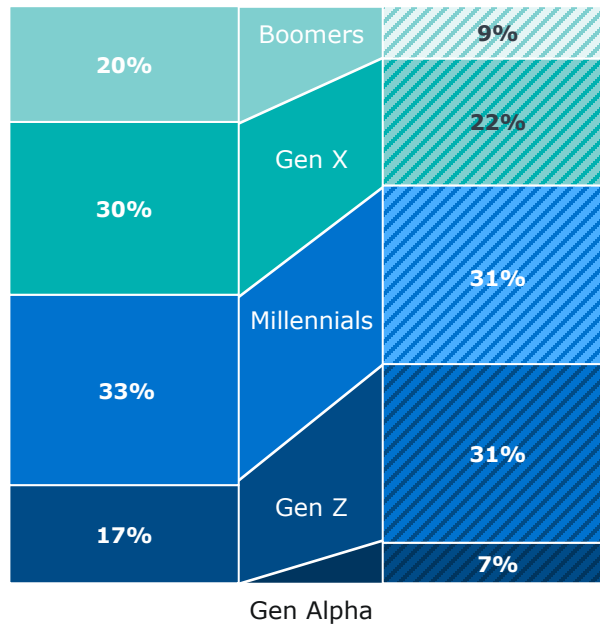
Fringe Benefits Not Calibrated to Preferences of Fastest-Growing Parts of Workforce

Gen X, Boomers Expectations	Millennials, Gen Z Expectations
$ Pension plans	Well-being support
Caretaker benefits	Student loan repayment support
Extended PTO, vacation	DEI[1] benefits
Workplace prestige and recognition	Financial advice

1) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Source: EAB analysis of labor force statistics from the Current Population Survey (2021); Paychex, How to Manage the 5 Generations in the Workplace; EAB interviews and analysis.

eab.com

The Other Side of the Demographic Cliff

While the share of Millennials, Gen X, and Gen Alpha in the workforce increases, the overall size of the working age population is predicted to decrease due to declining birth rates and shrinking workforce participation.

After peaking in 2010, the share of workers as a percent of total population is set to decline over the next 40 years with the 2020s experiencing the sharpest contraction.

By 2028, there is a projected six-million-person deficit between labor demand and supply.

This *sandsdemic* (i.e., "without people") will exacerbate recruiting challenges for all organizations, as open jobs outpace the number of workers available to fill them.

Declining Working Population Likely to Cause Continued Talent Shortages, Recruiting Challenges for Campuses

From Great Resignation to Great Sansdemic

Decline in working age population, 1980-2060
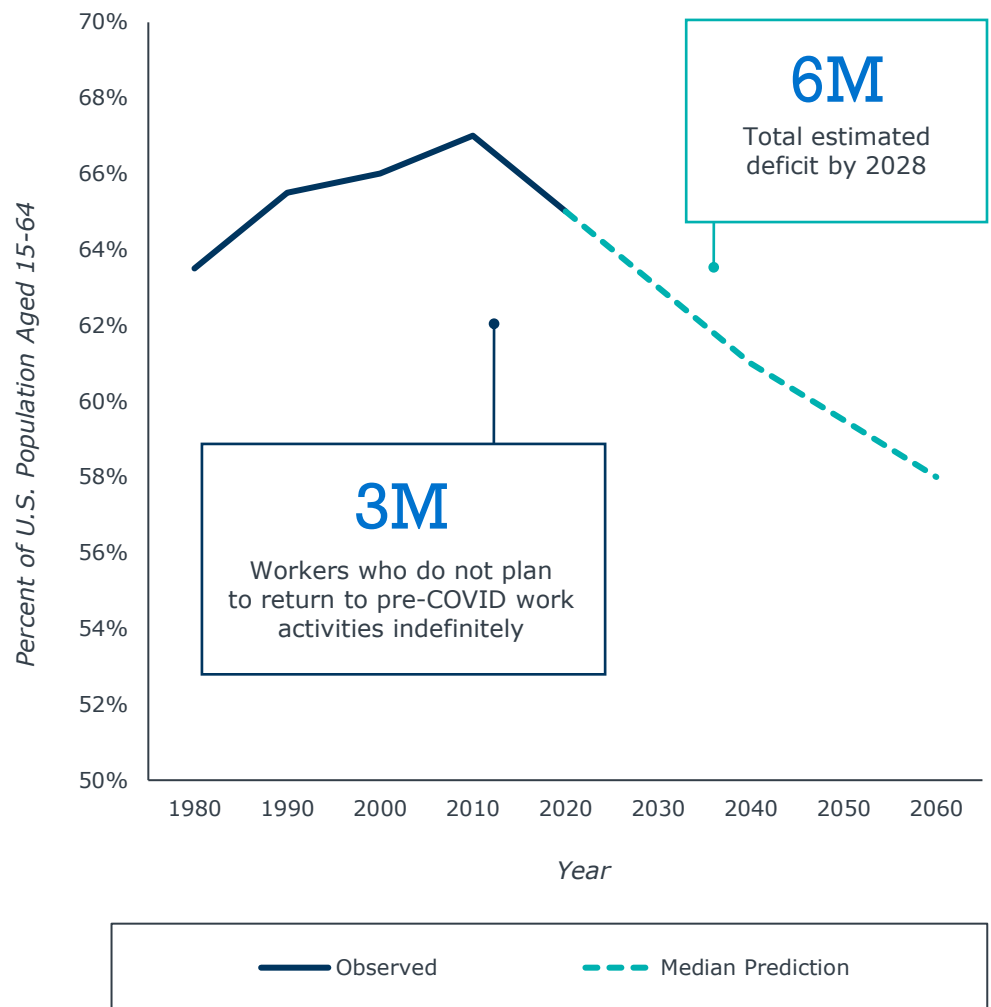
6M
Total estimated deficit by 2028

3M
Workers who do not plan to return to pre-COVID work activities indefinitely

Y-axis: Percent of U.S. Population Aged 15-64
X-axis: Year

Legend: —— Observed   - - - Median Prediction

Higher Ed's Historic Playbook No Longer Effective

These pressures have elevated the importance of a seamless and compelling recruiting and hiring process.

However, many institutions have not implemented out-of-sector best practices, like updating job descriptions or improving application accessibility.

Failing to invest in these foundational hiring practices limits how much job seekers know about open roles and deters qualified applicants from applying.

Institutions must address these flaws in their recruiting and onboarding processes to attract high quality talent and expand applicant pools, as seen on the bottom right.

Less Than Half of Institutions Investing in Foundational Updates to Hiring Practices

What initiatives related to hiring practices has your institution tried since July 2021 to improve staff recruitment/retention?[1]

Initiative	Percentage
Shortened time to hire via process improvements, tech	47%
Revised job descriptions to reduce barriers to entry	46%
Increased advertisement of open roles	36%
Updated interview process to "sell" university as employer	35%
Recruited from alumni base and/or graduating students	33%
Improved accessibility, user experience on job apps	16%
Created employee referral program	14%

Flaws in Recruiting and Onboarding Processes Unintentionally Narrow Applicant Pools

Pre-Awareness → *Challenge 1:* Passive recruiting strategies do not reach target audiences.

Decision to Apply → *Challenge 2:* Recruiting materials do not "sell" the institution.

Application → *Challenge 3:* Onerous submission processes discourage applicants.

Onboarding → *Challenge 4:* Onboarding is compliance-oriented and not aligned with employee engagement.

1) n=73 institutions.

Source: EAB's Talent Questionnaire (2022); EAB interviews and analysis.

![EAB logo]

Pre-Awareness

Shift from Passive to Active Recruiting to Target Quality Applicants in an Increasingly Competitive Labor Market

PHASE

1

- Solution #1: Build Active Recruiting Capabilities and Capacity
- Solution #2: Segment Advertising to Target Diverse Applicants
- Solution #3: Use Prior Applicant Information to Expedite Hiring for Future Vacancies
- Solution #4: Tap Current Staff to Save Time and Money

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Use Active Recruiting to Broaden Talent Pools

The first challenge in the recruiting process occurs in the pre-awareness phase when prospective applicants first discover job opportunities.

Higher ed commonly uses the "post and pray" recruiting strategy, which involves posting an open position on broad platforms and passively waiting for applicants.

In today's more competitive market, institutions must shift to an active recruiting model, as described on the right. Active recruiting strategies engage passive applicants who may not be currently seeking work and use data to inform and adjust future recruiting strategies. This type of recruiting expands applicant pools by proactively seeking talent with key skills and diverse backgrounds for current and future roles.

Enhance Applicant Pools, Diversify Talent Through Active Recruiting

Passive Strategy

Active Strategy

Passive Strategy	Active Strategy
Engage only applicants actively seeking work	Seek qualified applicants and invite them to apply
Do not conduct targeted outreach for priority roles	Target applicants with key skills, strengths, experiences
Advertise roles without using data to target outreach	Analyze data on past pipelines to adjust recruitment strategy
Post only on institutional employment page, higher ed channels, or personal networks	Diversify channels for job postings and advertisements

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

eab.com

Free Up HR Capacity for Active Recruiting Activities

Because active recruiting is time intensive, many institutions fail to implement a more active strategy. Institutions can use two approaches to address this challenge.

First, the University of South Florida (USF) has created a tiered recruiting system that prioritizes staff capacity for high priority or difficult searches.

USF offers two levels of service, as seen on the right. Basic active recruiting advertises across multiple channels, screens applicants, and processes job offers. Premier active recruiting posts roles as a "promoted job" on all basic advertising sites and on additional channels. Once applicants are recruited, USF's HR team provides more touchpoints throughout the screening process to assist hiring managers.

Second, Kansas State University (see bottom right) has standardized processes and used technology to free up staff capacity for more active recruiting tactics. For example, institutions can conduct background checks earlier in the process and leverage tech systems to increase capacity for active recruiting.

UNIVERSITY of SOUTH FLORIDA

USF's Two-Tiered System Aligns Staff Efforts with High-Priority Recruiting

Categories	Basic Active Recruiting	Premier Active Recruiting
Advertise Role	• Post position on Careers@ USF. • Automatically cross-post jobs from careers page to USF's LinkedIn, Indeed, Higher Ed Jobs, and Employ Florida.	• Post as a "promoted job" on all the basic advertising sites. • Post to additional channels (e.g., professional associations, Diversity in Higher Ed, Dice).
Review Applicants	• Screen applicants as they apply based on the minimum qualifications of the position. • Provide support for interviews as needed.	• Screen applicants as they apply based on the minimum qualifications of the position. • Recruit and communicate with potential applicants via email, phone, social media, and job sites. • Partner with hiring manager to identify top applicant. • Gather applicant information (e.g., salary, start date) and schedule final interviews.
Offer Job	• Receive and process the offer.	• Assist in negotiation process. • Process offer and documents. • Follow up during onboarding process as needed.

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Kansas State University's Strategies to Increase Staff Capacity for Active Recruiting

Formalize intake process to reduce admin burden, expedite recruiting

Standardize job descriptions to reduce time, effort to create

Use applicant tracking system (ATS) to automate processes

Create hiring toolkit that delineates tasks for TA[1] versus hiring managers

Initiate background checks earlier in process to reduce time to hire

1) Talent Acquisition.

Source: Kansas State, Human Capital Services; University of South Florida, Recruitment Toolkit; EAB interviews and analysis.

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Tailor Recruiting Channels to Expand Applicant Pool

Once HR teams have freed up staff capacity to conduct more active recruiting, they should advertise jobs in multiple channels rather than only on their institution's website and higher ed-specific job boards. This can help institutions increase and/or diversify their talent pools.

For example, advertising in technical channels like Dice can reach qualified tech professionals who may have otherwise never applied to a higher ed job. Posting jobs outside of higher ed sites can also attract applicants with transferrable skills from other industries.

Additionally, younger generations in particular use a broader array of channels to learn about roles. HR leaders can advertise jobs using social media, which is more likely to reach passive applicants than platforms specific to higher ed.

Select Advertising Channels Based on Role Type, Target Audience

Channel	Cost[1]	Target Audience	Best For…
Inside Higher Ed, Higher Ed Jobs, Chronicle	$349, $370, $435	• Higher ed-specific • Role-agnostic	Roles requiring prior higher education experience
Idealist	$195	• Non-profit-specific • Role-agnostic	Non-technical roles (project management, communications)
LinkedIn, CareerBuilder	Variable[2], $349	• Industry-agnostic • Role-agnostic	Non-technical roles (project management, communications)
Dice	$495	• Industry-agnostic • IT-specific	Highly technical roles
Listservs, conferences, etc.	Free	• Higher ed-specific • Role-specific	Specialized roles with higher ed idiosyncrasies
Social Media	Free	• Role-specific	Roles with shallow talent pools

1) Price for a single listing, typically for 30 days. Most sites offer bulk discounts. Updated January 2023.
2) LinkedIn uses a pay-per-click pricing model for promoted jobs. Users can also post one free job on their own LinkedIn account.

Source: Society for Human Resources Management, Survey: Employers Using Social Media to Find Passive Candidates; EAB interviews and analysis.

Capitalize on Prior Applicants' Interest

Once institutions have diversified where they advertise roles, HR teams can develop systems for maintaining connections with and databases of potentially interested, external talent.

Interest logbooks are an effective way to track and maintain records on passive applicants who are not currently looking for a new role and applicants who have previously applied. The logbook should include basic contact information in addition to the potential applicant's skills or previous interests.

As vacancies occur, HR teams should proactively reach out to previous applicants in the interest logbook by using a recruiting note. The four components of a compelling recruiting note are shown on the bottom right. A successful recruiting note is personalized and highlights why someone would choose to work at your institution over another employer.

Create Person of Interest Logbooks to Expedite, Bolster Outreach to Passive Talent

Identify Potential Applicants

Keep information of contacts who are not looking for jobs right now but could be good fits for future roles at your institution (e.g., met at a conference, recommendation from another staff member).

Capture Data on Persons of Interest

Track who met the person of interest and where, what positions the prospective applicant is best suited for, and their contact information.

Proactively Contact Potential Applicants

Use logbook records to craft a customized recruiting note to increase the odds of a person of interest applying to a vacant position.

Four Components to a Recruiting Note

1 **Reintroduction**

As you may recall, [person] met you at [occasion]. They were impressed with your [accomplishment].

2 **Current Opportunity**

We currently have an opening for [opening] on our team here at [institution]. Given your background, we thought you could be an excellent fit.

3 **Lure**

One of the most exciting things about working here is [distinctive benefit or recent department accomplishment].

4 **Call to Action**

Let me know if you'd be open to learning more about this opening, either for yourself or someone in your network. I'd love to find 15 or 30 minutes to chat!

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

eab.com

Solution #4: Tap Current Staff to Save Time and Money

Prioritize Hiring Internally to Maximize ROI

While most institutions focus active recruiting efforts on external talent, they should also deploy these practices for internal candidates. HR teams can more quickly and cost-effectively fill roles with qualified internal staff than with external talent.

For example, internal hiring increases HR staff capacity due to the faster hiring timeline.

To encourage greater internal mobility, institutions should adjust existing hiring policies to prioritize internal candidates, such as automatic interviews to internal applicants who meet the basic qualifications of a job. Institutions should also promote possible staff career trajectories through staff spotlights, career paths for non-managers, and training for supervisors to become better coaches.

Tallying Up the Hidden Costs of Over-Relying on External Talent

50-75%

Recruiting externally costs 50-75% of an employee's salary[1]

21%

Higher voluntary turnover rate for external hires

2-6x

Faster hiring timeline for internal candidates

Redesign Policies to Automatically Prioritize Internal Applicants

Automatically offer interviews to qualified internal applicants

University of Auckland's Internal First Policy

Give preference to internal applicants during interview process

Cal Poly Humboldt's Staff Vacancy Policy

Provide feedback to help internal applicants develop if not selected

Brown University's Brown First Initiative

Promote Latticed Career Pathways

Share unique career paths from employees across campus

University of California Berkeley's Staff Spotlights

Create career paths for both managers and individual contributors

George Washington University's Career Path Explorer

Offer resources, guides to help employees map skills and development

Champlain College's PD[3] and Coaching Workbook

Partner Intensive: *Strengthening Your Talent Pipeline From Within[2]*

Learn innovative career mobility strategies from higher ed and out-of-sector organizations to source top talent that is already on campus.

Contact your EAB Strategic Leader to learn more.

1) On average.
2) Available to partners with AAF/BAF/HESF and/or SAS/CRP.
3) Professional development.

Source: Fit Small Business, Internal vs External Recruitment; PeopleKeep, Employee Retention; University of Pennsylvania, Paying More to Get Less; EAB interviews and analysis.

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Decision to Apply

Attract Qualified Applicants by Removing Barriers, Highlighting Inclusion, and Promoting Benefits in Early Recruiting Stages

2

- Solution #5: Restructure Employment Websites to Emphasize Culture
- Solution #6: Redesign Job Descriptions to Attract and "Sell" Applicants

Is Your Employment Website Driving Applicants Away?

Once a prospective applicant is aware of the job opportunities at your institution, you must convince them why they should apply to your institution instead of other employers.

Employment websites serve as a gateway to institutions' application and hiring processes. Out-of-sector competitors intentionally design these sites to convey their work culture, values, and benefits. In contrast, higher ed employment websites are often difficult to navigate and include just a list of job postings without information about the work culture. These poorly designed websites result in confusion and disengagement from prospective applicants. Three common pitfalls in designing higher ed employment websites are shown on the top right.

Use the questions and EAB's full Employment Website Checklist (linked below) to pinpoint weaknesses and implement website improvements that will help attract and compel more job seekers to apply.

Higher Ed Employment Websites Fall Short When Compared to Out-of-Sector Competition[1]

Difficult to Find Info on Benefits, Culture	**2.5x**	Less likely to feature this info at top of page
Rarely Elevate DEIJ Commitment	**1.5x**	Less likely to provide concrete DEIJ actions, updates
Fail to Convey Value of Work Here Versus Elsewhere	**4.5x**	Less likely to feature employee testimonials

Four Questions Leaders Should Ask to Assess Effectiveness of Their Current Employment Website

✓ Is our employment website easy for prospective applicants to **access and navigate**?

✓ Is our employment website **welcoming** and **inclusive** for applicants from **diverse backgrounds**?

✓ Does our employment website showcase the **value and benefits** of working at our institution?

✓ Does our employment website **provide resources** to help applicants successfully navigate the application and hiring process?

Self-Audit: EAB Higher Ed Employment Website Checklist

Assess your institution's employment website and pinpoint opportunities to increase functionality and highlight inclusion to attraction applicants..

1) EAB assessed 15 higher ed and 15 out-of-sector (e.g., consulting, non-profit) employment websites for navigation, accessibility, content, and candidate resources.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

How Higher Ed Job Descriptions Scare Off Talent

In addition to employment websites, job descriptions represent another opportunity for employers to convince applicants why they should want to work at their institution.

However, higher ed job descriptions often fail to capture applicant attention and can even drive talent away from the institution. Not only are higher ed job descriptions much longer than those from out of sector, they also often require more experience and education for the same roles and pay less than competitors. In addition, higher ed job descriptions usually lack basic information about the benefits employees receive and emphasize why students should apply to the institution rather than why employees would want to work there. These common pitfalls are shown on the right.

These pitfalls narrow talent pools by deterring otherwise interested talent from applying.

Common Pitfalls in Higher Ed Job Descriptions[1]

1 Barriers to entry shrink applicant pools from the outset

Require more experience, even for entry-level roles

Tend to have lower salaries than out-of-sector competitors

2 Lengthy job descriptions deter and confuse prospective applicants

125 Words longer than out-of-sector competitors

Lack of bullets make job descriptions difficult to skim

3 Content focuses on the value to the student, not the employee

Higher Ed Value Proposition

"The University is recognized as one of the top public universities in the South by U.S. News & World Report… [and] **delivers a strong and affordable education for friendly, ambitious students**…"

Out-of-Sector Value Proposition

"**We offer our providers an excellent benefit package** which includes leadership pathways, reimbursement for continuing medical education, and many other benefits, volunteer opportunities…"

Partner Intensive: *Intro to Employee Value Proposition[2]*

Learn what an employee value proposition (EVP) is and how to avoid common pitfalls when crafting your institution's EVP.

Contact your EAB Strategic Leader to learn more.

1) EAB assessed 30 higher ed and 30 out-of-sector (e.g., consulting, non-profit) job descriptions across three common job titles (e.g., financial analyst) with transferable skillsets for accessibility and content.
2) Available to partners with SAS/CRP.

Source: EAB analysis of Lightcast data; EAB interviews and analysis.

Embed Skills and Institutional Value in Job Descriptions

To expand their applicant pool, the University of California Berkeley's Talent Acquisition (TA) team advises their hiring managers to refocus the job postings' required qualifications on knowledge and skills rather than years of experience. This resulted in increased internal hiring, particularly in IT and Advancement units. By emphasizing transferable skills and experiences, UC Berkeley also opens the door for out-of-sector applicants and/or applicants with nontraditional career pathways to apply.

In addition to emphasizing transferable competencies in job descriptions, UC Berkeley outlines why candidates should choose to work at their institution rather than other employers. One of the most compelling reasons is their philosophy about and commitment to professional development. UC Berkeley offers all staff at least 10 days of paid time every year to participate in professional development activities. To promote this to prospective applicants, they embedded language about their professional development commitment into every job description. In fact, about 10 percent of the job description content is dedicated to articulating the professional development opportunities employees receive. See the standard language they use on the right.

Berkeley UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

UC Berkeley's Update to Job Descriptions Promotes Transferable Competencies, Development Opps

Expanded talent pools by **updating job requirements to focus on skills** rather than years of experience (e.g., "Ability to manage high volume and complex transactions").

Less than Half of Institutions Reducing Requirements in Job Descriptions

46% Of higher ed institutions revised job descriptions to reduce barriers to entry[1]

Included professional development (PD) in all job descriptions. This elevates one of the most distinct tangible benefits that UC Berkeley offers relative to its competitors: 80 paid hours for professional development activities per year.

Standardized professional development language:

"At UC Berkeley, we believe that learning is a fundamental part of working, and our goal is for everyone on the Berkeley campus to feel supported and equipped to realize their full potential. We actively support this by providing all our staff employees with at least 80 hours (10 days) of paid time per year to engage in professional development activities. To find out more about how you can grow your career at UC Berkeley, visit grow.berkeley.edu."

1) n=77, since July 2021.

EAB's Talent Questionnaire (2022); EAB interviews and analysis.

Are Your Job Descriptions Doing More Harm than Good?

Beyond highlighting institution-specific benefits, institutions can update job descriptions to enhance readability and reduce requirements. For example, even simple formatting changes like bulleting content and limiting word count can increase the likelihood that prospective applicants will finish reading the job description and apply to your institution.

Use the checklist on the right to make immediate updates to your job descriptions so that they can better engage prospective applicants.

Baseline Updates to Make Compelling Job Descriptions

1. Enhance Navigation and Accessibility

✔ Limit job descriptions to ~650 words

✔ Use bullets to make content easier to read

✔ Audit job descriptions for biased and exclusive language

2. Reduce Education and Experience Requirements

✔ Reassess job requirements to see if they are critical for success, especially for hard-to-fill positions

✔ Focus on responsibilities instead of requirements and emphasize transferable skills to broaden and diversify your talent pool

3. Emphasize Value of Work at Your Institution Versus Elsewhere

✔ Highlight tangible benefits (e.g., health care, retirement), intangible benefits (e.g., opportunity for creativity, autonomy), and work culture

✔ Rework job descriptions to balance what employees will be expected to give to the organization (e.g., responsibilities) and what they will get in return (e.g., experiences, connections)

Self-Audit: Job Description Checklist

Assess your institution's current job descriptions and identify improvement opportunities that will help increase the number of qualified applicants in your talent pool.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Application

Reduce Burdensome Application Processes to Increase Application Rates and Improve the Candidate Experience

---

3

- Solution #7: Eliminate Common Application Roadblocks
- Solution #8: Implement Mobile-Friendly Application Systems

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Help Job Seekers Submit Applications Faster

Once applicants have been convinced to apply to a higher ed job, they often face confusing and onerous submission processes that can discourage them from completing an application. When prospective applicants are unsure of their next steps to submit an application, they rely on HR to answer common questions, which takes staff time away from active recruiting.

A more efficient way to address prospective applicant questions is to develop a simple frequently asked questions (FAQ) page on your employment website. This foundational practice is simple and easy to implement, yet very few institutions have guidance for prospective applicants.

The University of Oregon provides frequently asked questions and answers about the hiring process on their website. This aids applicants and allows them to get answers to common questions quickly, instead of relying on responses from HR managers. By offering these frequently asked questions online, the University of Oregon also frees their HR unit's time to focus on higher priority work.

Use the sample FAQ list from the University of Oregon, on the right, as a starting point for your institution's resources.

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Simple FAQs Boost Odds of Completion While Simultaneously Freeing Up HR Staff Capacity

Who can I talk to if I need more information on the job I want to apply to?

I want to **change my cover letter** or other submitted application materials; how do I do that?

I started an application but didn't submit it. How do I go back to **finish my application**?

How long does it take departments to **review applications**? When will I know if I moved on in the search process?

What veteran form is needed to receive preference?

How can I check the **status of my application**?

How do I **receive notification about new job opportunities**?

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Modernize Application Process for Seamless Experience

Many institutions' application processes are unnecessarily long and burdensome, which deters interested applicants. Moreover, applicants rarely get status updates, increasing the odds that they will look for or accept positions elsewhere. To address these issues, institutions need to create a more seamless and digital-first experience. They should eliminate duplicative application components and ensure that job seekers receive regular status updates throughout the entire process.

Application technology systems can help institutions achieve this without overburdening HR staff. For example, the University of Maryland invested in a new electronic application system that streamlined the submission process and reduced the number of pages applicants needed to complete.

Similarly, the University of Massachusetts Amherst used a new online application system that automatically sends submission confirmation and a timeline of next steps to candidates.

Implement a Frictionless Application System

Outdated Application Processes Deter Talent

Onerous Application Processes

- Online applications longer than out-of-sector orgs
- After submission, applicants receive **no status updates** until interview

Frictionless Application Systems

- Dynamic online applications allow job seekers to **easily navigate between sections** and reduce duplicative sections (e.g., uploading resume and requiring applicants to fill-in experience section)
- Candidates receive regular notifications and updates on application status

Addressing Common Challenges to Completing Applications

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

✖ *Problem: Application Length*

Job seekers abandon application before submission due to multi-page length, manual resume input

✔ *Solution: Remove Duplicative, Burdensome Steps*

Working group recommends new system, process to auto-fill resume and expedite completion

UMassAmherst

✖ *Problem: Lack of Feedback*

Millennial candidates accept out-of-sector offer before hearing higher ed offer due to opaque and slow application review

✔ *Solution: Send Automatic Application Updates*

New application system automatically sends applicants confirmation of submission and outlines next steps

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Mobile Application Systems No Longer Optional

Today, many applicants search for jobs on their phone. Job seekers are more likely to apply to jobs advertised as "mobile-friendly" over those with lengthier, less efficient application systems.

However, to be effective, mobile applications must be short and user-friendly. Difficult mobile application processes that take more time for prospective applicants to navigate result in less interest.

Many higher ed mobile application systems remain difficult to navigate, which deters qualified job seekers.

Use the checklist on the right to offer a mobile-friendly application experience that engages job seekers. This checklist is organized from lowest to highest implementation effort to implement to help your institution prioritize mobile-friendly investments.

Applications Labeled "Mobile-Friendly" Attract More Applicants

% Increase in Started Applications

Mobile-Friendly: 12%
Non-Mobile Friendly: -2%
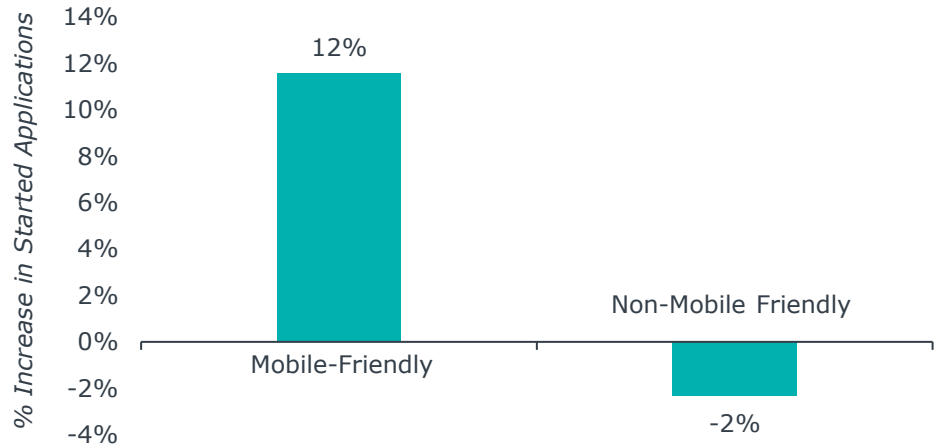
Five Ways to Unlock the Benefits of Mobile-Friendly Applications

✓ **Indicate "mobile-friendly" on the job posting** after testing the mobile application option.

✓ **Minimize the display of unnecessary text and speed up navigation** by using accordion-style organization.

✓ **Limit the number of tabs that open during the application process** to reduce applicant confusion.

✓ **Include "easy apply" options**, such as the ability to upload a resume from the cloud or integration to a LinkedIn profile.

✓ **Reduce the length of the application** and **allow applicants to save their application** and come back on their mobile device.

EAB

Onboarding

Set New Hires Up for Long-Term Career Success to Improve Retention and Productivity

4

- Solution #9: Create Standardized Onboarding Process to Promote New Hire Success
- Solution #10: Collect New Hire Feedback to Improve Onboarding Experience

eab.com

Structured Onboarding Helps New Hires Beyond Day One

While the hiring process officially concludes once a candidate is selected and accepts an offer, the savviest organizations recognize how critical onboarding is for avoiding early turnover and setting the new hire up for long-term success.

Effective, standardized onboarding increases employee productivity and enhances retention, as shown on the top right.

Yet, current onboarding practices in higher ed often fail to provide new hires with important information about opportunities at the institution and hold supervisors accountable to guide new employees, as illustrated on the bottom right. Higher ed onboarding also tends to focus almost exclusively on compliance.

Instead, onboarding should immerse a new hire in the institution's culture, provide a platform for them to build meaningful relationships, and clearly convey why they should want to stay at the institution.

Strong Business Case to Invest in Engaging, Standardized Onboarding

Effective Onboarding Drives Retention and Performance

70%

greater new hire productivity when organizations consistently apply standard onboarding practices

69%

of employees who experienced structured onboarding are more likely to remain in-seat for three years

Where Current Onboarding Practices Miss the Mark

❌ **Emphasizes compliance instead of engagement** in culture, mission, and their new role

❌ **Does not hold supervisors accountable** to fulfill onboarding expectations (e.g., explain how job relates to the success of the department, institution)

❌ **Fails to inform new hires of career advancement**, professional development, or other internal opportunities

❌ **Does not reaffirm why new hires made the right choice**, should want to stay at the institution

> **Toolkit:** Manager's Guide to Remote Onboarding for Higher Ed
>
> Access tools to create onboarding plans that uniquely support remote employees through communication, networking, and community building.

eab.com

Provide Resources, Relationships to Guide Progress

Managers should use onboarding plans to ensure new hires have organized, engaging, and tailored onboarding experiences.

At Northwestern University, managers focus on building relationships within the new hire's department, as departments have the most impactful results on new staff productivity and retention.

West Virginia University goes a step further by providing resources that guide new hires from their first day all the way through their first year. For example, before a new hire's first day, West Virginia provides a "Need to Know" resource that outlines frequently asked questions and common acronyms unique to the institution.

This helps new hires understand how their career can progress in their first year and provides a tangible resource that lasts beyond onboarding.

Northwestern University
Northwestern's Three-Pronged Onboarding at Department Level Strengthens New Hire Network

Build Manager-Employee Relationship

• Bolsters most significant relationship in an employee's work life

• Enhances productivity, retention, and loyalty when managers take time to meet with new hires frequently

Provide a Peer Mentor

• Creates social connection with someone who can answer common new hire questions

• Promotes retention, efficiency, and community

Introduce to Department Director

• Sends positive and motivating message to have early exposure to senior management

• Strengthens employee's connection to university

West Virginia University
WVU's New Employee's Guide Preps New Hires for a Successful First Year

Before Day 1

• Review First Year Checklist
• Assess "Need to Know" resources

Month 1-3

• Receive position-specific training
• Seek feedback on progress

Day 1-Month 1

• Learn standard operations, norms for team and department
• Receive ongoing support, training

Month 6-12

• Gain self-sufficiency and understand responsibilities
• Review performance

Use New Hire Feedback to Improve Onboarding Process

HR teams can also better support employees and improve the onboarding process by collecting data from new hires.

Oberlin College collects new hire feedback after onboarding, to gauge access to information and gather suggested improvements. They also ask questions to inform why new hires chose Oberlin as an employer to improve recruiting strategies.

Institutions can go a step further by also conducting a pre-onboarding survey. Pre-onboarding surveys help HR teams gather data about the new hire's background and experiences to tailor the onboarding experience to their specific needs.

OBERLIN
COLLEGE & CONSERVATORY

Oberlin College's Post-Onboarding Surveys Provide Feedback Loop for Future Processes

Welcome to Oberlin College Survey (Excerpt)

1. How would you rate your onboarding experience in general?

O	O	O	O	O
1	2	3	4	5

2. How satisfied were you with the support and information you received before your first day in your new role?

O	O	O	O	O
1	2	3	4	5

3. Did the information you received before your first day help you know what to expect and where to go?

O Yes

O No

4. Why did you choose Oberlin College as a new place to continue your career?

☐ Better salary

☐ Better benefits

☐ Better opportunity for advancement

☐ Institutional culture

☐ Feeling of inclusion

☐ Better work-life balance

5. Did you find Oberlin College to be a welcoming campus since you have arrived?

O Yes

O No

Source; EAB interviews and analysis.

ABOUT EAB

At EAB, our mission is to make education smarter and our communities stronger. We work with thousands of institutions to drive transformative change through data-driven insights and best-in-class capabilities. From kindergarten to college to career, EAB partners with leaders and practitioners to accelerate progress and drive results across five major areas: enrollment, student success, institutional strategy, data analytics, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). We work with each partner differently, tailoring our portfolio of research, technology, and marketing and enrollment solutions to meet the unique needs of every leadership team, as well as the students and employees they serve. Learn more at eab.com.