MANAGING VACANCIES IN THE RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

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RESULTS

> Timeframe to fill vacancies
  - Vacancies filled in 8 months or fewer, on average (75%)
  - Perception that vacancies are not filled within a reasonable amount of time (53.5%)

> Research administration office’s control over human resources matters
  - Lowest averaging control items (rating average):
    □ salary/pay scales (1.36)
    □ head count (1.54)
    □ position classification/grading (1.54)
    □ promotions of existing staff (1.58)

> Vacancy management strategies
  - Predominantly reactive
    □ Vacancy or workload inequity must arise before the office takes action to address issues (68%)
    □ Workload temporarily shifted to existing employee(s) (89.1%)

> Effects of vacancy management strategies used by the Research Administration office
  - Always or sometimes an effect
    □ Burden on coworkers (96.9%)
    □ Burden on leadership (88.2%)
    □ Decrease in quality and/or timeliness of service (86.6%)
    □ Gap in service (83.1%)

> Workforce and succession planning
  - Predominantly reactive
  - Perceptions of vacancy management strategies, workload inequity, and the amount of time (55.3%)
  - Timeframe to fill vacancies
  - Vacancies filled in 8 months or fewer, on average (75%)
  - Perception that vacancies are not filled within a reasonable amount of time (53.5%)

> Inclusion criteria: At time of survey completion, all respondents were Research Administrators in a Research Administration office.

> Duration: Survey remained open for thirty calendar days.

> Participants: 304 consenting individuals. Dominant sample characteristics:
  - Organization is a public university or academic medical center (63.6%)
  - Office geographically located in the United States (95.7%)
  - Respondent works in a central Research Administration office (71.8%)
  - Respondent is a mid-level manager; Director (45.2%)
  - Total number of employees in the Research Administration office is between 1 and 25 (71.8%)

> Most likely to occur:
  - Workload permanently reassigned to existing employee(s) without promotion
  - Vacancy or workload inequality must arise before the office takes action to address issues
  - Timeframe to fill vacancies
  - Vacancies filled in 8 months or fewer, on average

> Level of control the Research Administration office leadership has in the office’s personal matters and decisions

> Identify wider organizational constraints
  - Incompleteness between strategies Research Administration offices want to execute and perceived ability to actually execute
  - Identity institutional barriers; assess the extent to which these can be changed or mitigated

> Bridge the gap between succession planning and actual implementation
  - While ~58% of respondents agree the office prepares employees for career progression, only ~32% affirm the existence of clear career paths and/or real opportunities for advancement
  - Strengthen the pipeline of skilled employees (true career development vs. training) as an approach to mitigating vacancy impacts

> Promote from within, or otherwise incentivize workload shifts
  - Approx. 48% of respondents would prefer to see a formal promotion accompany a permanent workload shift.
  - If temporary workload shift is unavoidable, employers prefer to be incentivized (e.g.: monetary; time-in-lieu).

> Other:
  - Incentives would not necessarily address or alleviate the negative effects identified as accompanying temporary workload shift (e.g.: coworker burden and decreases in quality/timeliness of work).

> CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

> METHODS & PARTICIPANTS

> Instrument: Data collected through a fifteen (15) question web-based survey distributed through online Research Administrator forums, including the RESADML listserv and LinkedIn groups (incl.: SRA; NCURA; EARMA; ARMS).

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