University of Denver

Digital Commons @ DU

8-2023

Investing in Your Employees: Understanding the Impact Organizational Commitment Has on Staff Retention

Vanessa Lynne McWhirt
University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd

Part of the Higher Education Commons, and the Higher Education Administration Commons

Investing in Your Employees: Understanding the Impact Organizational Commitment Has on Staff Retention

Abstract

High employee turnover in higher education has been an issue for decades, and successfully integrating newly hired staff (NHS) into their new job and the organization can be challenging for human resources and leadership. New employee orientation and onboarding programs can assist NHS. The author of this paper conducted a Utilization-Focused evaluation of the Thriving at DU program at the University of Denver (DU) to improve the program. The study examined the perceptions of how 12 student and academic affairs professionals made meaning of organizational commitment in the workplace throughout their onboarding experience.

The major findings of this evaluation aligned with Meyer and Allen's (1991) Three Component Model of Commitment, and the three components are Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment, and Continuance Commitment. The evaluation findings revealed that NHS felt overwhelmed during orientation, and most attended to learn about employee benefits. NHS's organizational commitment was impacted by feeling siloed and overworked; hindrances around inclusivity, diversity, career growth, and compensation; employees' loyalty to DU through connections, supervisory leadership, and rewards.

Document Type
Dissertation in Practice

Degree Name
Ed.D.

First Advisor
Michele Tyson

Keywords
Higher education, Staff retention, Employee orientation, Newly hired staff

Subject Categories
Education | Educational Administration and Supervision | Higher Education | Higher Education Administration

Publication Statement

Investing in Your Employees: Understanding the Impact Organizational Commitment

Has on Staff Retention

_____

A Dissertation in Practice

Presented to

the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

_____

by

Vanessa Lynne McWhirt

August 2023

Advisor: Dr. Michele Tyson

Author: Vanessa Lynne McWhirt
Title: Investing in Your Employees: Understanding the Impact Organizational Commitment Has on Staff Retention
Advisor: Dr. Michele Tyson
Degree Date: August 2023

Abstract

High employee turnover in higher education has been an issue for decades, and successfully integrating newly hired staff (NHS) into their new job and the organization can be challenging for human resources and leadership. New employee orientation and onboarding programs can assist NHS. The author of this paper conducted a Utilization-Focused evaluation of the Thriving at DU program at the University of Denver (DU) to improve the program. The study examined the perceptions of how 12 student and academic affairs professionals made meaning of organizational commitment in the workplace throughout their onboarding experience.

The major findings of this evaluation aligned with Meyer and Allen's (1991) Three Component Model of Commitment, and the three components are Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment, and Continuance Commitment. The evaluation findings revealed that NHS felt overwhelmed during orientation, and most attended to learn about employee benefits. NHS's organizational commitment was impacted by feeling siloed and overworked; hindrances around inclusivity, diversity, career growth, and compensation; employees' loyalty to DU through connections, supervisory leadership, and rewards.

students who have given this degree visibility and have shown the power of practicality and

knowledge to improve outcomes.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter One:

Introduction

In this study, I frame the relationship between organizational commitment and retention to emphasize how an evaluation of orientation and onboarding contributes to understanding staff retention. Then, I will introduce the problem statement and discuss the purpose of the evaluation. I follow this with the evaluation questions and an overview of the conceptual framework and methodologies used in this study. I conclude with a review of the significance of the evaluation and define key terms relevant to the evaluation. The following study was conducted during COVID-19 and throughout the pandemic when the world shifted to telecommuting and caused catastrophic turnover among businesses and organizations, including higher education.

"The Great Resignation," coined by Texas A&M University's Anthony Klotz, was introduced in 2021 when the U.S. saw more than 24 million American employees leave their jobs (Sull et al., 2022b). The pandemic caused people to reassess their lives and find new employment that fits around their personal lives rather than fitting their personal lives around work (Smith, 2022; Morales, 2022; Sull et al., 2022). The Great Resignation impacted higher education, with over half a million employee exits since the beginning of 2022 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). Many reasons employees left were burnout, low compensation, lack

of flexible work hours, and remote schedules (Kuzior et al., 2022). The pandemic taught us that many positions could be remote and successful, and when employees are in control of their circumstances, it profoundly impacts their organizational commitment (Zackal, 2022). On top of it all, inflation is high, and paychecks are not keeping up, which can increase an employee's chance of leaving. With the pressure of taking on additional tasks and covering for vacant positions, campus leaders and employees are leaving for a rival college or the higher education field.

Toxic work culture became one of the biggest predictors of turnover during the first six months of the Great Resignation (Sull et al., 2022a). A year before the Great Resignation, toxic workplaces cost U.S. employers $50 billion (Sull et al., 2022a). While reaching a consensus on what constitutes a toxic culture is difficult, employers /leadership should address core issues with employees that have caused the most pain and led them to disengage and quit. Luckily, some signs and factors can predict a toxic culture. There are five toxic culture attributes: noninclusive, disrespectful, unethical, abusive, and cutthroat (Sull et al., 2022a).

These five toxic traits had the highest negative impact on employee turnover throughout the Great Resignation. Noninclusive refers to the lack of representation of diverse group employees (Sull et al., 2022a). Company culture is how employers respect their employees, and when an employee feels disrespected at work, it has a huge negative impact on retention and culture. Unethical behavior is when employers lie, mislead,

deceive, or make false promises. Cutthroat refers to competing with and sabotaging colleagues rather than working together, and abusive cultures involve bullying, belittling, condescending, or talking down to employees (Sull et al., 2022a). Working in toxic environments elevates stress, burnout, and physical and mental health issues. While the Great Resignation continues, institutions must be innovative in promoting the employee experience and attracting and retaining top talent (Setterberg et al., 2022).

Problem Statement

Employee turnover has been well-researched to help with retention efforts for every type of organization, especially within higher education. Higher education institutions (HEIs) impacted by high turnover due to COVID-19 are seeing roughly 35% employee turnover (Umpierrez, 2021), furthering the great resignation. High turnover is likely due to employees struggling with work/life balance and career dissatisfaction (Umpierrez, 2021). HEIs have discussed faculty turnover and its impact on the student experience. However, there has yet to be a discussion on staff turnover and the impacts high staff turnover can cause an institution. With staff being the fastest-growing component of the higher education workforce (Miller & Murry, 2011), retaining these top talented employees is imperative to avoid high turnover costs.

Employee engagement and retention have been researched together; however, there is minimal research on organizational commitment's impact on employee retention, specifically student and academic affairs professionals. Organizational commitment is employees' engagement and dedication toward their jobs and the organization. Previously, organizational commitment has been looked at historically on how to improve for the future. However, leadership needs to start asking employees what they need now instead of asking when it is too late to retain staff. Retaining top employees is crucial in avoiding high turnover costs, low morale, and burnout. To increase retention, human resources and leadership need to address the factors associated with organizational commitment by understanding the experiences of current employees.

Job satisfaction and motivation are the most common predictors of employee turnover, along with a sense of community, work/life balance, and compensation (De Sousa et al., 2018). An institution's success depends on the support of the staff, and without their support, there can be a surge in turnover due to job dissatisfaction (Manogharan et al., 2018). Another factor that plays into employee turnover is low wages, which incentivizes staff to leave for a competing institution (Manogharan et al., 2018). Overworked staff can become exhausted, easily persuading them to leave for other institutions that offer better task distribution (Manogharan et al., 2018). This research study adds to the literature on employee retention and increases awareness of staff's organizational commitment.

Background of Study

A 2021 staff annual report by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) found that 12% of full-time staff and 9% of part-time staff voluntarily left their position, while 5% of tenured faculty and 6% of non-tenured faculty voluntarily left their position. The highest turnover of 16% comes from non-exempt part-time staff (CUPA-HR, 2021a). From these statistics alone, it is clear there is a higher turnover rate among staff compared to faculty. Because of that, there is a need to understand staff turnover intentions, separate from faculty. Research on the impact of organizational identification on staff retention is limited (He & Brown, 2013); therefore, organizations need to move in a new direction and include staff in future research on employee retention within higher education.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, employee turnover in higher education institutions increased by 35% because of work-life balance issues (Umpierrez, 2021). Technical and paraprofessional positions within higher education saw the highest decrease, from 3.4% in 2020 to 1.3% in 2021 (CUPA-HR, 2021b). The Staff in Higher Education Annual Report saw a 17% decrease in retention for part-time non-exempt staff, while full-time non-exempt staff saw a 3.2% decrease (CUPA-HR, 2021b). Additionally, there was an overall decrease in retention within all staff positions in higher education between 2020 and 2021. It is too

early to assume whether staff turnover is permanent or temporary once positions resume on campus.

CUPA-HR conducted a 2022 higher education employee retention survey to understand better the workforce at risk of leaving, why they want to leave, and what strategies to implement to increase retention (p. 1). Data was collected on 3,815 higher ed employees, with 31% being human resources employees, 20% being student affairs employees, 9% being academic affairs professionals, 7% being financial aid and business affairs professionals, and 4.5% being enrollment managers (CUPA-HR, 2022). However, 35% of higher education employees are looking for other job opportunities, and an additional 22% are somewhat looking for new employment (CUPA-HR, 2022). Therefore, "higher ed institutions are at risk of losing half of their current employees in the next year" (CUPA-HR, 2022).

CUPA-HR (2022) found that 75% of employees are looking to leave for higher pay/salary increases, followed by 42% looking for a remote opportunity, with 31% needing a flexible schedule and 30% wanting a promotion or more responsibilities. 73% of Higher ed employees are absorbing additional responsibilities from staff who have left, which led to 25% being dissatisfied with their jobs. Additionally, 46% of higher ed employees do not feel they have opportunities for advancement, 45% believe they are paid unfairly, 39% believe their institution is not invested in their career development, and 24% feel they are not recognized for their contributions (CUPA-HR, 2022).

6

Employee discontent areas include career development, advancement opportunities, recognition, parental leave, childcare, and schedule flexibility (CUPA-HR, 2022). CUPA-HR recommends providing salary increases whenever possible, especially since higher education employers provided little or no pay increases during the pandemic and have not kept up with inflation (CUPA-HR, 2022). Employers must offer more remote options and flexible schedules but align with the employees' wants. If their work arrangement differs from what they want, they are likely to leave.

CUPA-HR (2022) members mentioned that "leaders are not shifting from a culture of exclusively on-campus work to a culture of increased flexibility" (p. 21), and they need to weigh the importance of retaining talent with the importance of being on-campus. General behavior, such as poor employee treatment, lack of support, and lack of communication, has increased in the last year (Work Institute, 2021). Alongside all the other challenges 2020 presented, career issues were still the number one reason employees voluntarily quit.

Voluntary turnover continues to add high operational costs to organizations while compromising institutional growth and profit because employers are not communicating with employees regularly to prevent voluntary turnover. In 2019, more than 27 out of every 100 employees quit their jobs, and if this trend continues, one in three workers will voluntarily quit by 2023; however,

this was before COVID-19 and the pandemic. By February 2020, unemployment was at 3.5%, with seven million vacant jobs, and then, in April, unemployment rocketed to 14.8% (Work Institute, 2021). The pandemic incited layoffs that affected nearly 20 million employees from March to April 2020 (Work Institute, 2021).

COVID-19 and the global pandemic had a major impact on the U.S. workforce, and during June 2021, turnover was at its highest, with 4.1 million workers quitting; however, they were quitting to work elsewhere (Work Institute, 2021) because unemployment was trending down. According to Work Institute (2021), 63% of departures were preventable, and the reasons employees left are: career (18%), health and family (12%), work-life balance (10.5%), retirement (10%), job/career (10%), manager (7.8%), environment (7.7%), relocation (7.7%), rewards (7%), involuntary (6.7%), and general employment (2.3%). The pandemic caused stress for employees because they were asked to do more, and employers need to help facilitate a less stressful work environment to help reduce turnover (Work Institute, 2021). Manager behavior saw a downward trend due to the pandemic because employees felt the need to settle and accept their manager's behaviors because of many unknowns about job availability (Work Institute, 2021).

Work Institute's 2022 Retention Report showed that 2021 had the highest voluntary turnover than any other year since 2001, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics began tracking the Quit Rate. On average, Work Institute (2022) found that the cost of

turnover per employee was $15,000. Exit interviews were used to gather data on employee turnover, but the interviews failed to identify the real cause of an employee's departure (Work Institute, 2022). With exit interviews lacking the full reasoning for turnover, stay interviews are an option to understand issues occurring and address or correct a situation. Implementing stay interviews allows employers to manage their employees' career growth, present them with new opportunities to grow within the company, and develop new skills to attain a promotion, increase retention, and reduce turnover risk. Pay tends to be a leading cause of turnover, while stay interviews give the employer a chance to find out if that is a reason the employee is considering leaving.

Work Institute (2022) discovered that to retain the workforce now, employees want to learn and grow in their jobs, explore different career paths, have supportive and transparent communication, have manager support with clear work expectations, are treated professionally, and viewed holistically. Throughout the report, Work Institute (2022) questions if employees moved on because they were ready to or because the organization needed to show the employees what they could do to rectify the situation. While institutions were going to great lengths to retain their employees throughout the pandemic, employers quickly returned to pre-pandemic ways, and employees took notice and went looking elsewhere (Work Institute, 2022).

Another business report by Work Human (2022) stated that employees do their best when they feel seen, appreciated, and valued. Employees who are viewed as valuable contributors to the organization are more committed and motivated to their work and the organization. Furthermore, when employees feel connected to their work and peers, they are likely to feel appreciated and more willing to stay. Work Human (2022) suggests providing recognition and praise immediately rather than waiting for the formal review to express appreciation. Stay interviews allow for a chance to provide recognition and praise and reaffirm an employee to stay with the organization. Employers need to start viewing their employees as *the* company rather than part of the company.

> *"People are not the most valuable asset in your company. People are your company." – Adam Grant*

Employees feel more engaged and committed to colleagues rather than the company culture. Human resources and business leaders need to make work less transactional and more personable by doubling down on connection, community, and belonging to mitigate turnover (Work Human, 2022). Showing gratitude and recognition to employees can spill into other benefits like feeling appreciated, respected, connected to colleagues, and safe to share ideas and opinions. Recognition is also associated with less burnout and stress. Workplaces grounded in respect, appreciation, and gratitude retain high-level employees.

HEIs have never been able to compete with for-profit salary ranges but try to make up for it in benefits; however, with newer generations entering the workforce, they want different benefits than what has been provided.

> *"If we're never going to win the war on pay, what can we do to make sure that our employees don't want to leave?" – Dr. Allison Vaillancourt, former VP of Human Resources at the University of Arizona.*

One potential benefit that employees are looking for is a promotional track they can follow and be aware of what steps they need to take to receive a promotion. Institutions that invest in their employees have less turnover and can retain top talent. HEIs must show employees job pathways and progression throughout the organization to help with retention. With the workforce changing due to the pandemic, it is time to reconsider how higher education institutions can retain and grow their employees more intentionally and continuously.

Purpose of the Study

HEIs have been focusing on student retention to determine the institution's worth; however, employees should be the main focus since they *are* the institution. Without employees, the institution would crumble, which is why there is a need to evaluate employee programs to see if retention strategies are in place. It is important to determine when retention begins, and for this study, it began the day the employee attended orientation and continued throughout their first six

11

months. New employee orientation tends to be the first encounter new hires experience at their new place of employment.

This study evaluated the new employee orientation and onboarding program known as Thriving at DU. This program was evaluated to explore the effectiveness of orientation and onboarding in retaining NHS by developing their organizational commitment to the University of Denver (DU). The purpose of this study was to complete a program evaluation on orientation and onboarding to improve the program. The goal of the recommendations and improvement for the program was to serve NHS better, create a more meaningful orientation and onboarding experience, and best prepare NHS for their first year of employment. The evaluation focused on the NHS's experiences and commitment throughout their first six months of employment. This study sought to answer:

1. What are newly hired staff's perceptions of orientation and onboarding?

2. What influences organizational commitment?

3. How can orientation and onboarding be improved to enhance organizational commitment?

4. What are the factors that contribute to greater organizational commitment?

The evaluation questions address how NHS experienced orientation and onboarding through the lens of organizational commitment. To address the broader topic of staff retention, the first evaluation question explored the perceptions of NHS after

12

orientation and onboarding and how those experiences can be utilized to enhance the program for future NHS, which addresses the third evaluation question. The second evaluation question is intended to understand what influenced NHS' organizational commitment after they completed six months of onboarding and how those experiences can help contribute to greater organizational commitment, addressing the fourth evaluation question.

Significance of the Study

High employee turnover increases expenses and harms morale, which is why institutions need to address staff retention separately from faculty retention to improve retention strategies. Implementing a retention program can effectively ensure that staff remains employed while balancing and maintaining job performance and productivity. This research study adds to the literature on retention and commitment by increasing awareness around newly hired staff.

This study is significant because it contributes to the knowledge base of organizational commitment and student and academic affairs professionals. However, this study comes from an orientation and onboarding perspective focusing on newly hired staff (NHS), which is specific to the program. I selected the qualitative method to provide a deeper explanation of the experiences and feelings of NHS who went through onboarding and attended orientation. And

make meaning of organizational commitment and the factors that contributed to the commitment and retention of NHS.

Human Resources and Inclusive Community (HRIC) should continuously evaluate the orientation and onboarding program to ensure NHS are knowledgeable and prepared to be successful. The U-FE model allows HRIC to onboard NHS to the university while addressing personal, professional, and social preparation to succeed in their first six months. The next chapter will review the literature, including predictors of turnover and retention, orientation and onboarding, and the conceptual framework that guided this study's methodology.

Meyer and Allen's (1991) three component conceptualization of organizational commitment model was used to frame the study of orientation and onboarding. The model was created to discuss how commitment has three components corresponding to different psychological states. The three components are affective, continuance, and normative commitment. These components are distinguished by the employee's feelings of need and want. Commitment can attach itself differently to an employee and their position, department, or organization. Commitment plays a huge role in employee and employer workplace outcomes.

Organizational commitment was the ideal framework to guide this evaluation because it explores the linkage between the employee and the organization (Mowday, 1998). It allows us to understand how employees view and express their relationship with

the organization and how they identify with it or even the department. Organizational commitment can be the connection to the organization, the position, or the people. This framework is being used because the level of organizational commitment can help predict employee engagement and satisfaction (Jay, n.d.), which are predictors of retention.

Evaluation Model

Michael Patton's (1978) Utilization-Focused Evaluation (U-FE) model guided this study. The evaluation specifically focused on the experiences of NHS and understanding NHS' organizational commitment and thoughts on orientation and onboarding. These two questions met the stakeholders' expectations and the evaluator's, which follows the U-FE model. The stakeholders, the University of Denver and the Human Resources & Inclusive Community wanted to understand the experiences of NHS during orientation and how the program can be improved to increase engagement and retention. U-FE requires engaging stakeholders throughout the process to create a sense of buy-in (Patton, 1978), and the stakeholders are more likely to utilize the results.

A pragmatic approach was used to test the effectiveness of the program (orientation and onboarding) by collecting data (interviews) that provided conclusions about the program's effectiveness (Mertens & Wilson, 2019). Ethical considerations were discussed to have an effective evaluation, and with a

15

pragmatic perspective, the ethics of caring were emphasized (Mertens & Wilson, 2019). With a sense of caring, this evaluation will gain knowledge in pursuit of desired ends (Mertens & Wilson, 2019), meaning HRIC gained knowledge on staff retention and organizational commitment through interviews after NHS' six-month anniversary. Ideally, pragmatists' axiology is the value of something based on its consequences or how the intervention is used and the results of that use (Mertens & Wilson, 2019). The ontology is not to discover the "truth" about the intervention but to demonstrate that the results worked. The epistemology of pragmatists is the ability to study what interests them in whatever way they deem appropriate so they can utilize the results to bring about positive improvements (Mertens & Wilson, 2019).

Definition of Terms

The following section provides terminology to help readers understand the context of these terms throughout the study.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction can be emotions, attitudes, or personality traits an employee has towards the organization and their job. Job satisfaction is associated with organizational identity and has been discovered as a powerful work-related attitude, which is a concept of organizational identification (Van Dick et al., 2004). Since job satisfaction and organizational identity are similar concepts, both are predictors of turnover (Van Dick et al., 2004). Van Dick et al. (2004) proposed that organizational identity is associated with turnover, and the relationship is mediated by job satisfaction.

16

Pay, working conditions, and organizational policies (Slatten et al., 2020) affect job satisfaction. Generally, if employees are satisfied, they are less likely to leave (Young, 2012). Other factors contributing to job satisfaction include perceived fairness of promotions, leadership, and social relationships (Bhebhe & Maphosa, 2016).

Job satisfaction is critical to understanding turnover and retention because it allows one to comprehend employees' lived experiences. Satisfaction comprises positive and negative feelings employees experience towards their job regarding internal and external factors. Employee performance and organizational effectiveness relate to job satisfaction; if employees are dissatisfied, they are more likely to leave their jobs. There are individual and organizational factors when it comes to job satisfaction. Individual factors include sex, age, education status, marital status, work experience, personality, intelligence, and skills (Grucer et al., 2014). The most researched organizational factors include job duties, promotion possibilities, communication, colleagues, work environment, job security, and leadership.

Employee commitment & motivation. Employees play a key role in the organization's success (Slatten et al., 2020), and employee commitment motivates an individual to complete a task. Employee commitment is where an individual forms a psychological connection to their employer/organization, and this internal

bond they develop can help organizations understand retention and lower turnover intentions (Slatten et al., 2020; Bhebhe & Maphosa, 2016). Human resources and managers can use employee commitment to track feedback and maintain successful relationships, which can improve job satisfaction and retain employees (Slatten et al., 2020). Employee engagement is the extent to which an employee is committed to their organization and how hard they work for the organization.

Motivated employees put their feelings, effort, and energy into their work to achieve individual and organizational goals. Motivation drives employee commitment and attracts employees to their work while allowing for open communication, rewards, and career development (Bhebhe & Maphosa, 2016). There are four drives to ensure commitment and motivation, which include acquiring, bonding, learning, and defending (Bhebhe & Maphosa, 2016). Regarding career development, benefits can be an incentive to motivate an employee to pursue promotion and give back even more to the organization. Benefits enhance job satisfaction and retain employees, which reduces hiring and training costs (Bhebhe & Maphosa, 2016).

Onboarding. Onboarding is an ongoing process of getting new employees acclimated to their new roles, departments, and organizations. A successful onboarding experience can increase retention by 50% (Georgiev, 2023), while a negative onboarding experience can hinder a new employee's experience. Due to onboarding being a continuous process, higher education institutions must ensure that their onboarding

18

programs run longer than a month. There are four phases of onboarding that can affect a new employee's organizational commitment. The four phases are preboarding, orientation and welcoming new employees, training, and transition to the new role (Georgiev, 2023).

Orientation. The term orientation is defined as (a) activities, programs, or processes that are designated as an orientation by institutional authorities and (b) training designed to prepare professionals for a new job (Dean et al., 2011). For this study, new employee orientation occurred on the employee's first day or a week after they started. Ideally, new employees should attend orientation on their first day of work. Additionally, onboarding does not have set parameters, but this study included onboarding starting from orientation through the first six months.

Organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is why people commit or feel committed to their work. Meyer and Allen (1991) defined commitment as "a psychological state that (a) characterizes the employees' relationship with the organization, and (b) has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization" (p. 67). Meyer and Allen's three components of commitment model explains that commitment has three components that affect employees' feelings toward their place of employment. The three components are:

Affective commitment: Affective commitment is "the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 67). In other words, they have a strong emotional attachment to the organization and the job duties while thoroughly enjoying their work. To simplify the term, affection toward one's job.

Continuance commitment: Meyer and Allen (1991) defined continuance commitment as "an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization" (p. 67). Employees weigh a pro and con list on whether to stay or leave and if the loss is greater than gaining a new role. Continuance commitment tends to occur more with established and seasoned professionals who have been promoted within the organization. In simpler terms, fear of loss(es).

Normative commitment: This is "a feeling of obligation to continue employment" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 67). Employees stay because they think it is the right thing to do based on how much time and money they have invested into the organization. Employees could also feel obligated to stay because they are receiving some form of reward, such as tuition reimbursement.

Retention. Retention in higher education measures the number of students who reenroll from one year to the next. HEIs look at student retention to judge the school's effectiveness over time. Retention can be viewed similarly when it involves employees by judging their ability to become integrated and involved within the institution. The

integration allows for a match between the institutional environment and the employee's commitment.

      Sense of community. If employees have high job satisfaction, work in a positive environment, and feel a sense of community (Slatten et al., 2020), turnover is lower, and retention is higher. When employees receive support from their organization, they work harder, have positive attitudes, and develop a strong sense of community to the organization (Slatten et al., 2020), which can retain employees. Actions, policies, and procedures are centered around building commitment to the organization (Slatten et al., 2020) and aim to develop relationships between employees to reduce turnover. A sense of closeness among colleagues allows for experiences of mutual support, trust, and respect (Lu et al., 2017).

      Student & Academic Affairs Professionals (SAAP). Administrators and professionals responsible for students' co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences while at college. SAAPs hold positions in advising, student life, residence life, financial aid, athletics, advancement, alum relations, volunteer engagement, and more. Duties vary drastically depending on the position, and some roles may require a professional to work non-traditional hours. For this study, the employees ranged from entry- to senior-level professionals who hold positions in a student or academic affairs role within the university.

21

Summary

This study is necessary to ensure that NHS have an effective orientation and onboarding experience. Orientation and onboarding need to help NHS feel prepared and successful throughout their first six months of employment. Orientation programs tend to be NHS's first encounter, making them a vital piece to success and organizational commitment. If NHS do not feel some commitment to their work, organization, or people, there is a higher chance of turnover. With the results, HRIC can adjust its orientation and onboarding program to increase commitment and retention.

In Chapter Two, I review existing literature relevant to predictors of turnover, turnover among student and academic affairs professionals, voluntary turnover, retention, and orientation and onboarding. To conclude the literature review, I further expand on organizational commitment concepts to explain NHS' experiences throughout orientation and onboarding. Chapter Three explains the methodology and methods used to learn about NHS' organizational commitment in this evaluation. Chapter Four provides the analysis of data and the findings from research questions 1 and 2. Chapter Five begins with a discussion of the findings and addresses research questions 3 and 4 since the participants offered improvements for orientation and onboarding; therefore, the recommendations follow and are co-structured between the NHS and the researcher. The study concludes with implications for future studies.

Chapter Two:

Literature Review

Newly hired staff (NHS) bring many expectations and needs when starting a new position. When those needs are fulfilled, the employee identifies with the organization, and when they go unmet, employees are at a greater chance of turnover (Brum, 2007). Within the first six months, a new employee's morale drops significantly, which makes NHS a critical population to observe. When employees are satisfied with their jobs, feel a sense of commitment to the organization, and feel a part of it, they are more likely to remain. In opposition, disengaged employees may lack organizational commitment and feel like they do not belong, ultimately leading to their departure. This literature review will cover general employment trends, the importance of orientation and onboarding for NHS, employment turnover in higher education, and turnover among student and academic affairs professionals, concluding with the conceptual framework that guided this study.

General Employment Trends

Employee Turnover

Turnover is described as "a conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organization" (Tett & Meyer, as cited in Lu et al., 2017). Turnover is an employee's cognitive shift when they detach from their work and organization

23

(Mullen et al., 2018). Turnover is a significant problem and disruption to the workplace, employee retention, and productivity. Netswera et al. (2005) found that non-competitive compensation, toxic work environment, lack of benefits, and employee development are predictors of turnover. Additionally, De Sousa et al. (2018) revealed intrinsic factors such as training and development, organizational commitment, and job security can influence retention. Work Institute's 2020 retention report gathered data on the business sector and found ten major categories of turnover, seven of which are preventable.

The categories include career development (20%), work-life balance (12%), manager behavior (12%), job characteristics/duties (10%), well-being (10%), relocation (9%), compensation and benefits (9%), retirement (6%), involuntary (6%), and work environment (6%). Additionally, negative work culture and unsafe environment, communication, and job duties were other reasons employees left their positions in 2019 (Work Institute, 2021). Manager behavior as a predictor of turnover has fluctuated since 2010; in 2019, twelve out of 100 employees resigned for manager behavior (Work Institute, 2021). With turnover being changeable rather than static (Lu et al., 2017), meaning one's feelings, attitudes, and organizational commitment are constantly changing instead of staying stagnant, it is important to research turnover intentions and reevaluate retention programs consistently.

Voluntary Turnover

Voluntary turnover is when an employee leaves or resigns from the organization and terminates their employment. When there is an increase in voluntary turnover, there is a negative effect on organizational productivity and morale, which occurs when employees are not satisfied with their jobs or do not identify with their organization (Lu et al., 2017). Employees not engaged in their work lack commitment and passion for their jobs, harming the organization and its morale (Bhebhe & Maphosa, 2016). The biggest cost of voluntary turnover is accounting for the high cost of replacing exiting workers, which is between 50% and 200% of the employee's annual salary (Gallup, 2023). Institutions losing employees incur additional expenses for advertising, recruitment, orienting, and training the new employee. These offsets decrease productivity among colleagues and cause a potential loss of key stakeholders such as other top-performing employees or students.

Jo (2008) studied voluntary turnover among midlevel women student affairs professionals in higher education. Midlevel professionals were chosen since they comprise the largest group within higher education institutions, and women tend to change jobs more frequently than men (Jo, 2008). Men tend to voluntarily leave for higher-paying jobs, whereas women leave for noneconomic reasons such as family and relationships (Jo, 2008). There is a stereotype that

employees seek new employment for higher pay, but Jo's (2008) study found that employees left because of conflicts with supervisors.

    "People join companies and leave managers." – Marcus Buckingham Employees are pulled into an organization based on the pay and the benefits, but the supervisor relationship pushes employees to leave. High turnover can largely be based on supervisory skills, and human resources should assist with developing these skills among supervisors and managers. HEIs need to understand that the supervisory relationship is just as important as wages for employee retention. Ultimately, how long an employee stays depends on the relationship with their supervisor.

    There is growing research on linking voluntary turnover and conflicts with supervisors (Jo, 2008; Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Holmes, 2001; Smith, 2001; West, 2000; Branham, 2000). Jo (2008) found that the number one reason for voluntary turnover is an employee's dissatisfaction with their supervisor. The relationship between employee and supervisor can help determine how long an employee stays with an organization, and supervisory skills play a critical role in high turnover (Jo, 2008). Other factors include frustrations with the nature of the role, lack of recognition, and limited advancement opportunities (Jo, 2008). Jo (2008) also found that when employees feel underappreciated, there is usually a lack of recognition, or they are not treated as community members. Organizations must understand that an employee's work

environment reciprocates employee retention, and leadership must be aware of potential risks to prevent further turnover (Chen et al., 2010; Davis, 2013).

The Great Resignation. The Great Resignation was largely caused by toxic work environments, salaries not staying consistent with inflation, and burnout from being overworked (Sull et al., 2022a). Corrigan (2022) mentioned that the blame for the Great Resignation is due to government handouts, COVID-19, the pandemic, and generational differences in work-life balance. In 2021, voluntary turnover rose to record levels (Work Institute, 2022) in the wake of the pandemic because employees took notice of the potential work possibilities they could have and looked for employment elsewhere. This is in large part due to the Y generation or millennials, as some refer, and their focus on self-fulfillment, satisfaction, respect, recognition, continuous development, fairness, tolerance, and equity (Kuzior et al., 2022).

This generation is not mainly money-driven because their values play a more significant role in their retention than salary (Kuzior et al., 2022). Interestingly, previous studies have failed to understand the *why* behind employee turnover and what employees perceive as the main factors for quitting (Kuzior et al., 2022). Ultimately, there needs to be "a shift towards a sustainable organization that takes a personal approach to the employees and puts emphasis on relational, cultural, and self-fulfillment factors" (Kuzior et al., 2022, p. 7).

Employee Engagement & Retention

In a recent study by Snyman (2022), compensation, training, professional development, a supportive supervisor, and career opportunities impact employee engagement and retention. Holiday (2021) suggested that employee turnover and retention are strong indicators of how well the organization is taking care of its people and are closely linked to higher levels of employee engagement and lower turnover rates. Figuerora's (2015) study found that the main factors that influence turnover include employees' dissatisfaction with their relationship with their supervisor, lack of recognition, limited advancement, and job dissatisfaction.

Takawira et al. (2014) suggested that leadership and management consider programs for improving staff engagement to help reduce turnover. Engaged and committed staff are less likely to leave; therefore, the institution needs to encourage and sustain employees' vigor and dedication by providing meaningful work, flexible working arrangements, opportunities for growth, and incentives. Opportunities for growth give employees a chance to develop and demonstrate their potential. When there are opportunities for personal and professional development, employees are less likely to leave. Takawira et al. (2014) recommended future research using a longitudinal design to examine employees' turnover intentions and to use non-financial incentives to enhance job embeddedness.

Work Engagement. Takawira et al. (2014) found job embeddedness and work engagement as predictors of turnover and factors of organizational commitment. Job embeddedness is a combination of factors that influence employee retention. Job embeddedness is associated with job satisfaction and affective commitment through social connections, meaning, a social connection to the job or organization and the community (Paul, 2020). Further, job embeddedness is the link between behaviors, norms, and values (Bosland, 2019; Kotter, 2012); however, previous research has looked at job embeddedness as how committed people are to their jobs based on their behaviors, excluding how norms and values also impact job embeddedness. An employee becomes embedded in their job when they receive recognition or rewards for their hard work or when they feel supported by the organization through celebrations, acknowledgments, or compensation.

Work engagement is described as a positive and motivational state of energy where employees are dedicated and absorbed in their work (Khusanova et al., 2021; Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). High levels of work engagement result in high levels of job satisfaction, motivation, well-being, and retention. Employees with high levels of engagement are more committed to their organization and are less likely to leave. For example, job redesign can positively impact work engagement by providing employees with new job duties and resources.

Resources are aspects that intrinsically motivate and fulfill basic human needs of

relatedness, competence, and development (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Demerouti

et al., 2001). While job embeddedness and work engagement are very similar, job

embeddedness relates to organizational commitment, and work engagement is an

attachment to one's job (Takawira et al., 2014).

     Retention. Employee retention is the effort of an organization that retains talented

and high-performing employees (Erasmus et al., 2015). When employees leave their

positions, turnover costs increase, productivity decreases, training time increases, and

efficiency decreases (Work Institute's 2020 Retention Report, 2020). Employees are

essential to an organization because they are the backbone that holds everything together

(Slatten et al., 2020). Engaged and slightly disengaged employees outnumber actively

disengaged employees three-to-one, which makes them critical employees to retain

because they are easier to persuade and, in return, increase retention. Additionally, both

types of engaged employees play a large role within the organization, and if they do not

feel respected for the large part they play, they are more likely to quit; therefore, retaining

employees should be a main concern of every organization and company, along with

creating retention strategies (Bhebhe & Maphosa, 2016).

     Employee retention is critical to the financial health and success of an

organization because employees fuel the organization through time and hard labor to

make sure the organization can run successfully. Leaders need to address challenges as

they arise, but to make retention strategies effective, retention "must become part of an ongoing, proactive, and multifaceted strategy that needs to be integrated into budgets and future planning" (Smith & Testani, 2022, para. 6). If leadership and management are not focusing on employee retention and factors of turnover, leadership will fail to understand what will positively impact the organization's long-term health. This research is important to higher education and human resources because it delivers data on staff retention through organizational commitment and provides areas of improvement (Quirindongo-Cruz, 2016).

Understanding employee retention can help organizations implement new processes and establish better leadership practices to increase commitment and retention. Human resources and leadership need to view employee retention as more than just a process to resolve turnover but to encourage employees to stay because retention is more than hiring; it is a continuation. It is an opportunity for human resources to connect with employees and understand what they need to be successful and satisfied with their jobs, management, teams, and organization (Quirindongo-Cruz, 2016).

Retention is a strategic issue that is continuously handled among human resources, leadership, and employees. With retention strategies in place and effective retention plans, it is easier for organizations to learn what employees need and want in order to stay. Strategic retention plans allow for increased

31

employee engagement and control over their work, which ultimately leads to higher job satisfaction and enhanced organizational commitment (Selesho & Naile, 2014). Organizations need to meet the expectations of their employees in order to retain them by increasing morale and job satisfaction. Retaining skilled employees is beneficial for every organization because it makes the organization stay competitive against other organizations.

Organizations need to recruit and retain the best employees, or they will continue to face high turnover due to the shortage of skilled workers and competitive wages outside of higher education (Samuel & Chipunza, 2013; Selesho & Naile, 2014). HEIs are more likely to retain staff when the organization shows interest and concern, and employees are aware of what is expected of them while working in a role that fits their competencies and is receiving regular positive feedback and recognition (Samuel & Chipunza, 2013; Selesho & Naile, 2014). Skilled employees who feel underpaid and overburdened by increased workload and bureaucratic conditions (Coaldrake & Stedman, 1999) are more likely to leave the organization (Selesho & Naile, 2014). Ways to prevent high turnover involve a dedicated unit, such as human resources, with a structure that ensures academic and professional growth. For example, a mentoring program has the ability to attract and retain employees, provide guidance to underrepresented groups, and create a self-sustaining pool of mentors (Selesho & Naile, 2014) who are organizationally committed.

Human resources (HR) and leadership have the ability to retain competent staff if they are paying attention to job satisfaction and its effect on employees' performance levels. Selesho and Naile's (2014) study found that compensation, training, professional development, and career growth are some of the top factors of employee retention. To retain qualified and competent staff, leadership and HR must show how each employee contributes to the vision and mission of the organization while simultaneously developing a climate of trust. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) expresses that "a comprehensive employee retention program can play a vital role in both attracting and retaining key employees, as well as in reducing turnover and its related costs" (SHRM, 2021, para. 1). A successful retention program contributes to higher productivity and organizational performance (SHRM, 2021). Additionally, improving the skill levels of managers and supervisors through management training can increase retention.

Netswera et al. (2005) consider retention starting from the job description, through the hiring process, new employee orientation, and continuing through onboarding. If job descriptions are not transparent about what an organization is looking for, and the demands are different when the employee begins, there is a higher chance of turnover. If the hiring process is not transparent or is difficult to follow, there is a chance of a new employee resigning before they even begin.

There are steps organizations and leaders can take to increase retention, which include communicating employee contributions, developing trust, improving supervisory skills, providing management training, clarifying roles, understanding needs and wants, reducing burnout, and investing in ongoing commitment (Netswera, 2005).

Retention is more than hiring, but is "a process involving time, planning, and money; thus, organizations have to develop effective plans to mitigate the employee turnover and all the costs associated with it" (Quirindongo-Cruz, 2016, p. 39; Tucker, 2012). Retention should start at the application stage when organizational commitment is developing, and new employees have all these expectations for starting a new role. It is rare when employees leave abruptly because most employees take into consideration internal [organizational commitment] and external [pay, supervisor] factors before voluntarily leaving (Davis, 2013; Lee et al., 2008; Nyberg, 2010). As leaders and human resources are forced to handle retention challenges, understanding why turnover rates are high for staff and creating retention strategies can improve organizational commitment (Davis, 2013; Hausknecht et al., 2009). If higher education institutions want to reduce turnover and grow retention, creating retention strategies around orientation and onboarding might decrease turnover and improve retention for NHS (Davis, 2013, p. 35; Babajide, 2010).

Importance of Orientation & Onboarding

Figuerora (2015) found that NHS have preconceived notions of what is expected of them and are anxious about making a good impression. Often, these notions are based on prior experience, word of mouth, or information obtained from the media or other sources. Unfortunately, those resources are unreliable, which makes orientation a critical entry point for leadership to reduce any preconceived notions. If NHS' preconceived notions turn out to be accurate or inaccurate, there is a higher chance for employee turnover or retention; therefore, providing every NHS with the same onboarding experience can help eliminate preconceived notions and impact future employment and retention.

Orientation and onboarding are constantly grouped together, yet onboarding is a process that helps prepare new employees for success, whereas orientation is a time-limited event that acclimates new employees to the organization. Onboarding starts with hiring an employee and continuing until they are a productive member of the team (Little, 2019). The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) organization recommends one month of onboarding, while the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) recommends one year of onboarding (Little, 2019). SHRM offers guidance to work industries on providing a longer onboarding experience compared to higher education institutions that provide one month of onboarding to new employees.

Andringa et al. (2021) recommend onboarding before an employee begins and throughout the first year of employment. This length is necessary because onboarding is a process "of acclimating and welcoming new employees into the work environment and providing them with the tools, resources, and knowledge to become successful and productive" (Andringa et al., 2021, para. 3). orientation is one of the first encounters a new employee has with their new place of employment, and if they fail to learn their duties or the reality of the organization appears worse than they expected, it could probe a new hire to leave within the first six months (Lee et al., 2018). For an organization to create and foster stability and retention among new employees, onboarding needs to last through the first year of employment to allow enough time for a new employee to acclimate and be a productive colleague (Andringa et al., 2021).

Renn and Hodges (2007) found three phases of onboarding: the Pre-employment and Orientation phase, the Transition phase, and the Settling In phase. The Pre-employment and Orientation phase consists of interviewing, accepting a job offer, and one month after they start their position. The Transition phase lasts two to four months after employment when an employee is finding a mentor, seeking approval and support, and beginning to question their fit and competence. Roughly around the six-month mark, employees enter the Settling In phase where they feel a sense of self-confidence in getting the job done and adjusting to their new department. With the onboarding process being so impactful to a new hire's success, there is a concern about the effectiveness of

the onboarding process, especially where unemployment rates are so high and retaining skilled employees is a consistent challenge (Quirindongo-Cruz, 2016).

Orientation programs act as training to help new employees acclimate to their jobs, peers, and the larger community. Orientation is viewed as a structured event that occurs before or during the early weeks of starting a position; however, sometimes, orientation can be a singular event or a series of events over a period of time, depending on the employer. Orientation programs have the potential to increase new employees' morale and productivity (Dean et al., 2011; Addams, 1985; Mechling, 1996), reduce stress, and increase job satisfaction. Higher education orientation programs provide information about the institution, the policies, and procedures, the campus, leadership, paperwork, benefits, and training. For this particular study, the orientation program covered the university's history, and mission, vision and values. Also, introduced new employees to the university's leadership, programs, colleges on campus, as well as policies and procedures, trainings, benefits, and inclusive excellence.

An effective orientation program provides employees with interesting and accurate information about the organization's culture, work expectations, values, and how to get connected with the organization. Overall, orientation programs differ from organization to organization and either take on a formal approach or an informal approach, but tend to cover the same topics. Additional research is

needed to examine the linkage between orientation and organizational commitment to determine if they increase retention (Klein & Weaver, 2000). The lack of previous research examining orientation programs is due to onboarding processes that are not fully established (Klein & Weaver, 2000) and do not address how a staff member develops organizational commitment.

Leadership needs to look at staff entering a new position as facing a transition that is similar to new students who experience anxiety, mixed emotions, and have a myriad of questions. Orientation for students introduces them to the organization, how they can be successful, and the resources offered to help their success. Similarly, employee orientation introduces staff to the organization, provides benefits to help meet their needs, and recommends resources to be successful. An informative and supportive orientation can set the stage for a long-term and mutually beneficial relationship for new employees (CUPA-HR, 2023) because it helps communicate work culture, employee expectations, and sets the baseline for a successful future for new employees.

Having an effective orientation and onboarding experience for NHS can help reduce the anxiety and nervousness of starting a new position while fostering confidence, and building organizational commitment (Dean et al., 2011, p. 137). Additionally, simply attending an orientation program is not the sole reason an employee can experience organizational commitment. Dean et al.'s (2011) study is one of the few empirical studies that examine what new professionals need from their orientation and onboarding

program, indicating there is further research needed to be done to perceive the efficacy of orientation and onboarding.

Overall, orientation programs miss their mark when it comes to retention (Frank et al., 2004), and in its most ideal form, onboarding should start from recruitment to hiring to orientation and continue throughout the employee's first year on the job (Hacker, 2004). Onboarding that lasts throughout the first year can reduce turnover and help new employees make a mental decision to leave or stay in the organization (Hacker, 2004). When planning orientation programs, it is important to consider activities that introduce NHS to the organization and institutional culture, and provide opportunities to acquaint with other staff and their direct supervisor (Dean et al., 2011). Human resources should continually update their orientation programs to accommodate new generations coming into the workforce. Lee et al. (2018) mentioned:

Employees themselves are changing and what traditionally kept them loyal, may prove less effective now. Millennials, who are the largest group in the U.S. workforce, don't just work for a paycheck – they want purpose; they are not pursuing job satisfaction – they are pursuing development; they don't want bosses – they want coaches; they don't want annual reviews – they want ongoing conversations; they don't want to fix their weaknesses – they want to develop strengths; it's not just a job – it's their life (p. 90). With the workforce shifting,

employees do not stay long-term in a particular position; however, for HR to increase retention, they need to focus on development opportunities to enhance employees' career progress (Lee et al., 2018), their organizational commitment, and stop viewing compensation as the main reason for employee turnover.

Employee Turnover in Higher Education

The phenomenon of turnover among employees has become a cultural norm within higher education institutions, which explains the copious amounts of literature on predictors of employee turnover. In the field of higher education, there has been an ongoing concern for student affairs professionals and the high turnover surrounding them leaving their careers (Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006; Mullen et al., 2018). There is high turnover among these professionals because they are performing multifaceted duties on a daily basis and are partially responsible for students' academic and personal success (McClellan & Stringer, 2016; Schuh, et al., 2011). Until recently, staff turnover has become a growing concern within the past couple of years.

Prior, higher education institutions blamed the economy (i.e., inflation, recession) on high turnover, but in reality, there are many factors that cause staffing shortages. Mullen et al.'s (2018) study found that job stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction are predictors of turnover among staff. Since staff performs multifaced jobs, they may encounter role ambiguity and conflicts that result in higher dissatisfaction and experience burnout by attending to the emotional needs of others (Mullen et al., 2018). Employees

performing work duties that are not their typical responsibilities have greater levels of job dissatisfaction and burnout, and are more likely to leave (Mullen et al., 2018). Other factors of low retention include limited advancement opportunities, demanding workloads, non-competitive pay, and poor fit with supervisor and institution. While turnover intention continues to gain attention, and we are well advised in turnover predictors, our attention needs to shift to being proactive to increase retention and correct issues before an employee voluntarily quits.

On top of high turnover, employee resignation in higher education was at an all-time high, with over half a million employee exits since the beginning of 2022 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). According to Mullen et al. (2018), research on turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and related variables like burnout and job stress is vital in understanding the turnover of staff. Much of the existing literature on employee turnover focused on faculty and staff as one unit, which is outdated. Faculty and staff have the ability to impact student retention but require different resources to help make students successful. If research continues to group both together, leadership will not be able to understand the different needs and wants staff have from faculty; therefore, it is necessary for leadership to start investing in their staff and understand what they need to thrive and be successful. Previous studies have viewed retention as employee engagement, and predictors

41

of turnover within higher education have focused on professors, specifically tenured, full-time, benefited professors, while including student and academic affairs professionals under the same "employee" category.

The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) *Higher Education Employee Retention Survey* discovered predictors of turnover among higher education employees who are not faculty (i.e., administrators, professionals, and non-exempt staff) and suggested implementations to increase retention and improve the workplace (Bichsel et al., 2022). The report received 3,815 responses, with a large representation coming from human resources (31%) and 21% for student affairs professionals (Bichsel et al., 2022). CUPA-HR's survey asked employees where they were looking for other employment opportunities, and Figure 1 shows the breakdown of responses. From these results, 68% of employees intend to transition to another higher education institution, while 64% of employees are planning on moving to a private for-profit company. With such a small window between leaving higher education entirely or switching to a different university, the current university is at risk of losing top talent to its competition.

Figure 1

Where Employees Plan on Looking for Other Employment Opportunities

2022 EMPLOYEE RETENTION SURVEY

Where Employees Plan on Looking for Other Employment Opportunities

Another Higher Ed Institution — 68.1%

A Private For-Profit Company — 64.2%

A Non-Profit Organization Outside Higher Ed — 51%

Within My Current Institution — 42.7%

Percentage of Respondents
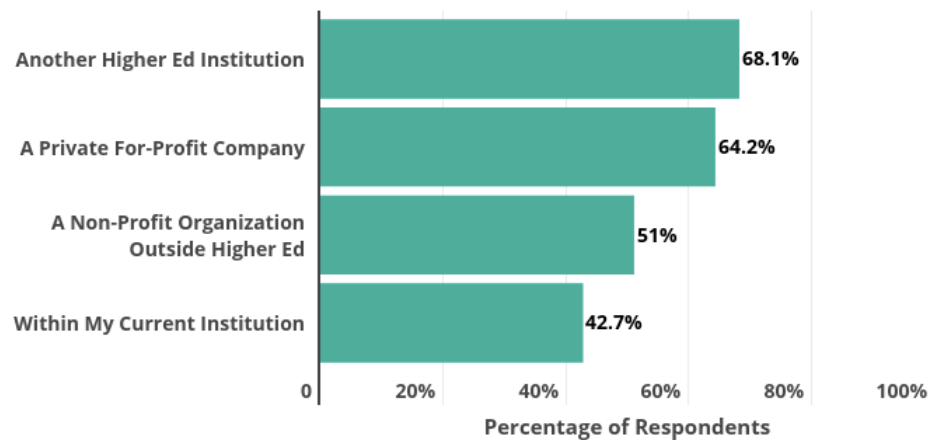
© College and University Professional Association for Human Resources

Note: College and University Professional Association for Human Resources, 2022

Figure 2 explains predictors and reasons why staff look for other employment, which are similar predictors from previous studies from several years ago, meaning these predictors have been reoccurring and turnover keeps getting worse. From the survey results, 76% of employees wanted a pay increase, 43% had the desire to work remotely, and 32% needed more flexible schedules. (Bichsel et al., 2022).

Figure 2

Reasons Employees Are Seeking New Opportunities

Reasons Employees Are Seeking New Opportunities

Reason	Percentage
Pay/Salary Increase	75.9%
Opportunity to Work Remotely	42.9%
Flexible Schedule	31.7%
Promotion or More Responsibility	29.6%
A New Challenge	19%
Working With Different People	13.7%
Relocation	11.3%
Better Benefits	8.7%

Percentage of Respondents

© College and University Professional Association for Human Resources

cupa-hr

Note: College and University Professional Association for Human Resources, 2022

The downside to these results is that it does not provide the opportunity for staff to explain the reasoning behind their choice. Figure 3 provides data on the factors of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and overall, 81% of employees were satisfied with their supervisory relationship, while 77% felt their work had a purpose (Bichsel et al., 2022). On the other end, 46% of employees disagree they have opportunities for growth, and 45% of employees disagree they are paid fairly (Bichsel et al., 2022).

Figure 3

Satisfaction With the Higher Education Work Environment

Satisfaction With the Higher Ed Work Environment
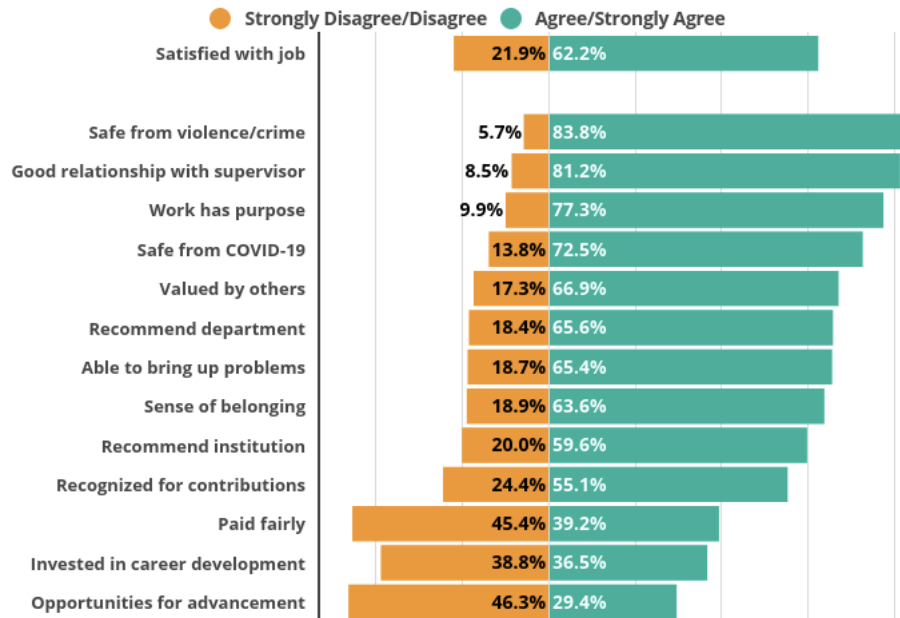
● Strongly Disagree/Disagree ● Agree/Strongly Agree

	Strongly Disagree/Disagree	Agree/Strongly Agree
Satisfied with job	21.9%	62.2%
Safe from violence/crime	5.7%	83.8%
Good relationship with supervisor	8.5%	81.2%
Work has purpose	9.9%	77.3%
Safe from COVID-19	13.8%	72.5%
Valued by others	17.3%	66.9%
Recommend department	18.4%	65.6%
Able to bring up problems	18.7%	65.4%
Sense of belonging	18.9%	63.6%
Recommend institution	20.0%	59.6%
Recognized for contributions	24.4%	55.1%
Paid fairly	45.4%	39.2%
Invested in career development	38.8%	36.5%
Opportunities for advancement	46.3%	29.4%

Note: College and University Professional Association for Human Resources, 2022

This literature review focuses on turnover and how organizational commitment can

impact retention. Ultimately, this study will extend recent research and examine retention

through qualitative data, and provide an understanding regarding newly hired staff's

organizational commitment.

Student & Academic Affairs Professionals Turnover

Staff in higher education are partially responsible for the student

experience, but staffing shortages can negatively impact the student experience

(Fried, 2023). Staffing shortages can impact course offerings, limited support

services, and longer times to degree for students (Fried, 2023). Additionally, minorized

students are affected by staffing shortages, exacerbating existing inequities. There are

high levels of stress, burnout, and work fatigue among staff, and it is essential to identify

and address these factors to maximize onboarding and retention of staff. If we are to

retain and engage staff, we need to find ways to keep staff from burnout and role stress.

Staff who work in student support service positions have higher turnover rates because

they experience the most burnout and job dissatisfaction. It is critical for HEIs to refocus

on retention strategies, especially for NHS, who are at the highest risk of turnover.

Professional staff provide services that directly or indirectly affect the student

experience (Curran et al., 2017), and are usually the front-line staff members handling

day-to-day operations (Davis & Cooper, 2017; Curran et al., 2017), which makes

retaining professional staff a high priority. Professional staff have a salient impact on

students (Jacques, 2020) and work themselves to exhaustion and fatigue to feel a sense of

accomplishment. Staff turnover occurs when an employee's emotional response to their

work shifts and they detach from their place of employment (Mullen et al., 2018).

Detachment is problematic for higher education institutions when it puts a strain on

finances, morale, and goal completion. Staff is at higher risk of low job satisfaction when

they have multifaceted job responsibilities, from counseling to advising students with

career planning, student housing, crisis management, and financial aid. (Mullen et al.,

2018; McClellan & Stringer, 2016; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011; Tull, 2014).

46

Little research has been conducted on professional staff (Jacques, 2020; Boehman, 2006), with most research taking place outside of the United States. Even more frequently, professional staff is grouped with faculty under the term "employee," which is not necessarily beneficial since both populations have different needs. The literature focuses on predictors of employee turnover and rarely on retention and organizational commitment (Jacques, 2020). Professional staff are critical in making institutions and students successful; therefore, it is necessary to understand the factors related to turnover to help with recruitment and retention strategies. With high-stress levels among professional staff and high turnover ceasing to slow down, it is critical to engage with new employees during their first six months since that is when morale drops severely (Jennings & Tvaruzka, n.d.). As NHS learn their position and role in the organization, it is vital to clarify any role ambiguity to avoid job dissatisfaction and turnover (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998).

Midlevel student affairs professionals were the main population of Rosser and Javinar's (2003) study because they are one of the largest employee groups in higher education institutions and are essential in achieving goals for the students and the organization. Rosser and Javinar (2003) found that student affairs leaders' years of service and salary were indicators of lower morale and higher intent to leave, but not necessarily of their job satisfaction. Work-life balance presented a

challenge for student affairs leaders and impacted their job satisfaction and morale; however, recognition and praise can help restore an employee's commitment and satisfaction, and increase morale. Rosser and Javinar (2003) found that the morale of student affairs professionals is enhanced when they feel autonomy and can make their own decisions.

In 2014, Tull examined turnover among community college senior student affairs officers (SSAO) and found that role conflict, role ambiguity, and job satisfaction were the main predictors of turnover among SSAOs. Tull (2014) defined role conflict as an individual who is faced with managing additional duties that are not part of their perceived role and, if unattended to, can cause job dissatisfaction. Similarly, role ambiguity occurs when an individual is unsure of their work and organization expectations (Tull, 2014). Job satisfaction is when an individual feels a sense of fulfillment achieved through their work that aligns with their values (Tull, 2014). Tull (2014) found that SSAOs' negative perceptions of their role affected their job satisfaction. SSAOs who struggled to meet their duties, specific duties they were not originally intended to do, caused job dissatisfaction. High job dissatisfaction leads to a lack of organizational commitment and support, which increases voluntary turnover.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in this qualitative study provides a foundation for understanding how orientation and onboarding for NHS can impact organizational

commitment (Davis, 2013). Additionally, it will provide a better understanding of how NHS make meaning of their organizational commitment throughout orientation and onboarding (Jacques, 2020). Organizational identification (OID) can initiate organizational commitment; therefore, it was necessary to discuss how an employee's OID becomes organizational commitment. OID is an understanding of how people draw on their organizational membership to construct their identity within the organization (Brown, 2017); however, there is no universally accepted definition. Brown (2017) mentioned, "Organizational identification is an alignment between individual and collective identities, resulting in a sense of unity between the person and their organization" (p. 299). Additionally, OID is an alignment between the individual and the organization's identities, resulting in a sense of belonging and unity between the employee and the organization (Brown, 2017).

OID develops when an employee perceives that they belong to their organization (He & Brown, 2013), which is how an employee defines themselves in reference to their organizational membership (He & Brown, 2013). Organizational membership is when employees identify and accept collective goals, beliefs and values, traits, behaviors, knowledge, and skills and embody them to integrate more into the organization. Similarly, Albert and Whetten (1985) describe organizational identification as a developmental process where

employees characterize aspects of the organization that align with their identity. With organizations constantly changing, organizations have new opportunities to study organizational identifications (He & Brown, 2013) and further develop an understanding of employee retention and turnover.

Organizational identification understands how an individual constructs their identity to their organization through the perception of belonging to an organization (Fang et al., 2021). Employee retention may influence organizational identification through interactions between the organization and the organization's members (Fang et al., 2021). When an individual identifies with their organization, the organization becomes part of their identity, and they become intertwined with the organization (Van Dick et al., 2004). OID is more than an attitude toward one's job and organization; an employee's organizational identity can motivate and enhance parts of their self-concept, increase job satisfaction, and reduce turnover (Van Dick et al., 2004). Turnover and organizational identification are closely related and are caused by strong job satisfaction (Van Dick et al., 2004); therefore, it is imperative to investigate employees' attitudinal experiences to understand if their organizational identity helps improve job satisfaction and retention. It is especially important to continually research organizational identification since identification is an activity, and employees' relationships with their organization can be confusing, inconsistent, and unstable (Brown, 2017).

Dutton et al. (1994) believe an employee's organizational identity and

identification process are based on a person's sense of self-concept to their organization

as well as how others infer about their organizational membership. An employee's self-

concept may be comprised of multiple identities that evolve from memberships in

different organizations, social groups, and based on race, gender, and other

demographics. Also, the stronger an employee commits to the organization, the

deeper they see themselves as part of the organization. Strong organizational

identification and commitment to the organization increase job satisfaction, which

improves retention and decreases turnover; therefore, organization identification

is the most fitting framework to address employees' experiences as predictors of

employee turnover.

The conceptualization of organizational commitment has shifted

throughout the last twenty-five years (Boehman, 2007; Meyer & Allen,

1997). Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) were one of the first to

conceptualize organizational commitment and viewed it as an individual's

attachment to the organization. Porter et al. (1974) viewed attachment in two

factors: attitudinal and behavioral commitment. Attitudinal commitment is the

process in which an individual comes to think about their relationship to their

organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991), by considering how their values and goals

are congruent with the organization. Behavioral commitment is the process in

which an individual becomes locked to their organization (Porter et al., 1974). Later on, Meyer and Allen's (1991) reconceptualization of commitment became the model still used to this day.

Meyer and Allen (1991) defined commitment as "reflecting the affective orientation to the organization, a recognition of the costs associated with leaving the organization, and a moral obligation to remain with the organization" (p. 11). Organizational commitment can be to the entire organization, not specifically the job duties, the department, or the peers. Overall, an employee's ability to internalize goals and values, their willingness to attain those goals, and the desire to remain are the components of organizational commitment (Boehman, 2006; Hunt & Morgan, 1994; Jans, 1989; Mowday et al., 1982). Commitment is different for each individual depending on their job duties, department, and the larger community of the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Organizational commitment can be broken down into a three component model encompassing affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Commitment is a psychological state that "(a) characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization, and (b) has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 67). Employees who stay in their position because they *want* to have developed affective commitment, while employees who *need* to stay due to costs develop continuance commitment, and

employees who feel *obligated* to stay, developed normative commitment (Meyer

& Allen, 1991).

Others, such as Buchanan (1974), believe organizational commitment

helps employees adopt their own goals and values of the organization, get

involved in their job activities, and gain loyalty and attachment to the

organization. DeCotiis and Summers (1987) claim that committed individuals

internalize the goals and values of the organization, get involved to serve these

goals and have the willingness to put in the effort to achieve these goals. Figure 4

includes a visual graphic of organizational commitment and shows how

employees can fall into one or all three categories of organizational commitment

throughout their time of employment.

Figure 4

Organizational Commitment: Ways HR Can Contribute

Note. Components of organizational commitment. From Academy to Innovate HR, n.d.

Affective commitment includes personal, structural, job-related characteristics, and work experiences (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Personal characteristics such as the need for achievement, affiliation, autonomy, and a general interest in the work correlate with higher commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Structural (organizational) characteristics are influenced by work experiences, such as role clarity, feelings of importance, and employee/supervisor relationships (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Work experiences can be divided into two categories: "those that satisfied employees' need to feel comfortable in the organization, both physically and psychologically, and those that contributed to employees' feelings of competence in the work role" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 70). Job-

related characteristics include accomplishments, performance-based awards, challenges of the job, job scope, opportunities for advancement, importance to the organization, and participation in decision-making (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Continuance commitment reflects the costs associated with an employee leaving the organization, and costs vary depending on the individual. Employees remain in their jobs when the magnitude of their investments outweighs the attractiveness of outside alternatives (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Normative commitment is the feeling of remaining with the organization out of obligation. For example, if an employee utilizes tuition assistance through their organization, they may feel obligated to reciprocate by committing to the organization until the debt has been repaid (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Normative commitment is the process of internalizing normative pressures that begin with observing role models and are contingent upon reward and punishment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Organizations and employers need to adopt a retention model and methodology that captures the root causes of employee perceptions and behaviors to understand turnover. Collecting and analyzing employee voices can help diagnose, remedy, and increase retention (Work Institute's 2020 Retention Report, 2020). From a conceptual perspective, it is important to show how organizational commitment is related to turnover through employee voices of their experiences. Therefore, organizational commitment is being utilized to

analyze employee retention through new employee orientation. This research is helpful

for human resources because it will deliver data regarding employee commitment and

methods to improve orientation and onboarding, but may not be generalizable to all

industries (Quirindongo-Cruz, 2016).

Organizational Commitment Among Staff

It is important to focus on newly hired staff's (NHS) organizational commitment

since it is an indicator of turnover and retention. Despite the critical nature of their role,

NHS typically have a high turnover rate throughout their first year, specifically around

six months, because morale drops significantly (Naifeh & Kearney, 2021; Lim et al.,

2010; Tull, 2006). Work culture has a big impact on commitment and high turnover, and

leadership needs to become aware of these influences on NHS. Employee turnover

impacts the work culture by bringing additional stressors, such as increased work hours

and taking on additional work duties, which promotes a workaholic lifestyle (Boehman,

2006). A workaholic style with low, competitive salaries reduces affective commitment

(Boehman, 2006; Casey, 1995; Philipson, 2002; Woodard & Komives, 2003).

There is little research that examines newly hired staffs' organizational

commitment and the impacts it has on retention. The studies that were found looked at

whether job satisfaction impacted organizational commitment (Jacques, 2020). Walker

(2000) mentioned commitment among staff includes trust, fairness, care, and concern, as

well as aspects of their director leader or supervisor. Most HR programs view

compensation as the main reason for turnover. Within higher education, commitment and an influential supervisor can help staff connect on a deeper and personal level, ultimately retaining them (Frank et al., 2004). Boehman's (2006) study revealed that professionals in student affairs remain committed to the field if there is a supportive work environment (Jacques, 2020).

Jacques (2020) recommends more qualitative studies to understand the development of organizational commitment in new student and academic affairs professionals. There is limited research related to student affairs and organizational commitment, most of which is quantitative in nature. Qualitative research could ascertain more of the factors that are antecedents to affective, continuance, and normative commitment as outlined in Meyer and Allen's (1991) model (p. 143). Therefore, I sought to shed light on the orientation and onboarding experience of staff and their commitment to the organization to understand if either can increase retention and reduce turnover (Mullen et al., 2018, p. 95).

Summary

An employee's commitment to their job and organization is only possible when an employee feels the organization has provided developmental, financial, and professional rewards (Bhebhe & Maphosa, 2016). To hold on to these top talents, organizations need to understand the experiences of employees to develop

policies to retain these employees. Employee experiences can show organizations how

employees are impacted throughout their time of employment, which can provide

organizations with the knowledge to adjust their policies and procedures to improve

retention (Miller & Murry, 2011). Thirty-eight percent of employees leave their jobs

within a year or less if they are not committed to their jobs or organization.

Additionally, a new employee's commitment is at its highest at the start of a new

position, when commitment is still shifting, and two out of three employees leave within

the first six months of employment. Organizations continue to struggle with retaining

employees and are not taking the necessary steps to support employee retention and

decrease turnover. Organizations that embrace developing an employee's commitment to

the organization have the chance to improve retention.

Chapter Three:

Methods and Methodology

Orientation and onboarding programs are best understood using case studies because case study research is "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple systems (cases) over time" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 96), through observations, interviews, documents, and reports. This approach aligns with organizational commitment by examining the experiences of newly hired staff (NHS) and how they develop their organizational commitment.

Organizational commitment was measured after one month to help predict organizational dependability (Meyer & Allen, 1991). A new measurement occurred after six months to understand the personal importance of organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This program evaluation utilized the three components of commitment model developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) to summarize organizational commitment and fill in gaps in our understanding of commitment and staff turnover.

This qualitative case study aimed to conduct a Utilization-Focused Evaluation (U-FE) of the existing new employee orientation and onboarding program at DU. Case study analysis was used to understand NHS' experiences and use that feedback to improve the orientation and onboarding program to

increase retention. The evaluation sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are newly hired staff's perceptions of orientation and onboarding?

2. What influences organizational commitment?

3. How can orientation and onboarding be improved to enhance organizational commitment?

4. What are the factors that contribute to greater organizational commitment?

Location and Program

The University of Denver is a private research university in Denver, Colorado. DU was founded in 1864 and is the oldest independent private university in the Rocky Mountain Region of the United States. It is classified among R1: Doctoral Universities. DU is "a mid-sized University of about 12,000 graduates and undergraduates with average class sizes under 21 students and an 11:1 student-to-faculty ratio" (DU, 2022a). Human Resources & Inclusive Community (HRIC) was chosen as the intended user, and People Development as the primary user because they handle recruitment, orientation, employee engagement, and take part in exit interviews, which collect data on voluntary turnover responses. Unfortunately, this type of interview does not allow HR to dig deeper and correct the situation before the employee voluntarily quits, which is why outreach throughout the first six months is crucial in retaining employees. HRIC can understand the predictors of turnover and retention through these interviews and have the chance to fix these problems.

The Thriving at DU: New Hire Orientation program was chosen because it is the first introduction an employee has to their new place of employment and has the power to shape NHS' attitudes toward their duties and position within the institution (Kaiser, 2006). Evaluating one of the first encounters NHS experiences can help institutions reconstruct their orientation program to incorporate culture and standards that help employees understand their roles, job duties, and organizational commitment (Kaiser, 2006). With the ability for orientation and onboarding to improve commitment and retention, leadership needs to incorporate organizational commitment throughout onboarding. HRIC has never evaluated the orientation and onboarding program nor implemented actions involving organizational commitment or continuing onboarding throughout a new employee's first six months of employment (K. Pinnock, personal communication, August 27, 2021).

Thriving at DU: New Hire Orientation program was evaluated in this study and is specific to the University of Denver. All new DU employees are required to attend orientation on their first day of employment. At the time of the data collection, the pandemic was still ongoing, and orientations were held virtually with the intent to go hybrid later in the academic year, pending COVID-19 protocols. Virtual orientations would last a half day and occur on the first and third Monday of the month to allow NHS to attend orientation on their first day.

Hiring managers are representatives throughout DU's campus who partner with HRIC to complete new employee hiring tasks. Hiring managers register the new employee for orientation and preferably line up the NHS's first day of employment with orientation. Hiring managers have access to an onboarding guide from HRIC that includes to-do items two weeks before a new employee starts, one week before, on the first day, after week one, and after the first month. Currently, HRIC does not provide onboarding beyond the employee's first month, and it is expected for the departments and supervisors to onboard new employees with guidance from HRIC.

Thriving at DU: New Hire Orientation provides new employees with the information they need to thrive in the DU community and covers these topics: DU's mission, vision, and values; DU's history; leadership; schools, colleges, and buildings; DU culture; HRIC and Shared Services; HR partners; an employee wellness program; DU policies; COVID-19 protocols; ID cards, parking, and transportation; My DU website, training, paperwork, and benefits (DU, 2022b). The overarching goals of Thriving at DU prepare NHS to start their position and adjust to DU's community and culture. Due to orientation being virtual, there were no tangible items that NHS could take with them, such as swag, compared to in-person orientations. Being unable to tour the campus, the departments and colleges, and the employee's specific office area impacted NHS's ability to connect with DU and the community. After attending orientation, NHS should understand what is expected of them as employees and as

62

members of DU's community, be aware of policies, have knowledge of the culture, and complete any remaining tasks, such as new hire paperwork and benefits enrollment, which are all topics covered during orientation (DU, 2022d). The next section will explain the methodology of the program evaluation, including data collection and data analysis.

Methodology

Utilizing a pragmatic paradigm and focusing on the use branch, this study was based on "prioritizing the use of evaluation findings" (Mertens & Wilson, 2018, p. 85). Pragmatists test the effectiveness of an action by collecting results that provide conclusions about the action. Common sense and practical thinking distinguish pragmatists from other researchers, and their axiology sees the value in how an evaluation is used and how the results are used (Mertens & Wilson, 2018). Unlike the other paradigms, the ontology of pragmatic evaluations does not seek the truth but, rather, if the results work to solve the problem at hand. A pragmatist epistemology allows for research of personal interests in ways they deem appropriate and can be utilized to produce results. The value of studying orientation and onboarding programs through NHS' experiences to understand organizational commitment can bring positive changes to the program and increase retention.

Rationale for Evaluation Methodology

A utilization-focused evaluation was used because the evaluation is carried out for DU and HRIC being the primary users. This evaluation approach was best suited for HRIC because HR has yet to evaluate the orientation and onboarding program; therefore, a neutral framework, such as U-FE, can encompass a variety of research methods (Patton, 2008). This approach allowed for flexibility when choosing the method approach in consultation with the users. Data was collected through interviews that related specifically to NHS because of the lack of research on staff retention in higher education.

This non-experimental design explored the similarities between NHS experiences and organizational commitment. A longitudinal design was used to collect data twice, during their first month and after their sixth month, because organizational commitment changes over time, and comparing their commitment levels can help HRIC adjust their onboarding practices. A qualitative U-FE dives into participants' perspectives and lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). HRIC aims to attract, inspire, and sustain excellence by empowering employees to maximize their potential (HRIC, 2023). For staff to reach their full potential, leadership, and HR must ask engaged and disengaged employees what they need and want to thrive within DU and act on those needs and wants. Therefore, this qualitative case study sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of NHS who attended orientation and how their organizational commitment was impacted throughout six months of onboarding.

Program Evaluation

A utilization-focused evaluation was chosen to help facilitate a learning process and apply the findings and experiences in practice for the intended users. U-FE acts as a guiding framework rather than a methodology and allows for flexibility. Decision-making with intended users is an important part of the process, and when intended users feel more ownership in the evaluation, they are more likely to utilize the findings. U-FE collects information about a program's activities, characteristics, and outcomes (Patton & Horton, 2009). Evaluations help make judgments about the program, offer improvements, and inform decisions about future programming. Due to this study focusing on one specific program, a particularistic evaluation was ensued with a formative approach. Formative was chosen to focus on improving and enhancing the new employee orientation and onboarding program. A formative approach allowed for open-ended responses with a variety of data on improvements for the program.

Use of U-FE

This study used Patton's (1997) five major steps of U-FE by (1) identifying intended users, (2) focusing on the utilization of the evaluation, (3) involving users in the creation of methodology, (4) interpreting findings with intended users, and (5) making recommendations (Christie & Alkin, 2013). First, the primary intended users of the evaluation were identified at the beginning of the process to ensure engagement throughout the entire process and to understand

the intended uses (Patton, 1997). The primary stakeholder of this evaluation was the

Human Resources and Inclusive Community Department at the University of Denver, as

the Thriving at DU program falls under the supervision of HRIC. HRIC was critical

because they provided data on NHS positions and start dates. The additional stakeholders

that made up the U-FE Committee were the Director and the Learning Consultant of

People Development. These two stakeholders were necessary because they are the

intended users of the evaluation and are responsible for improving the program.

Working with the intended users, the focus of the evaluation was determined,

which is the second phase of U-FE (Patton, 1997). This evaluation focused on

employees' perceptions and organizational commitment and provided recommendations

to improve orientation and onboarding. The methods of how data would be gathered to

execute the evaluation were also discussed, and qualitative data was agreed upon to

include in-depth interviews. Patton (1997) advises that intended users should be involved

in the evaluation design as the third phase of U-FE. The director agreed on two

interviews after their first and sixth months of employment. After data collection, step

four involved interpreting findings and making judgments and recommendations (Patton

& Horton, 2009). The intended users of the evaluation guided decisions, and the

evaluator facilitated decision-making on the evaluation findings (Patton, 1997).

Participants

Student and academic affairs professionals (SAAPs) were the main focus to help increase awareness around this large population in higher education and to empower NHS voices to speak on their experiences and provide feedback. For an optimal number of interviewees, Creswell (2007) recommends a sample of five to 25 interviewees, while Morse (1994) suggests at least six. The participants were preselected through purposeful sampling who met the criteria of being new to DU, a benefited, full-time student or academic affairs professional, who started working for DU between January and February 2022, attended orientation, and completed six months of onboarding. This demographic was chosen because "student affairs and academic support services can make the difference in whether students drop out, fail academically or succeed" (Hoyt, 2021, p. 1).

Participants who began in either month were contacted through a participation email and letter (Appendix A). The letter emphasized participation was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential before informed consent was obtained (Takawira et al., 2014). DU's Institutional Review Board approved this study before data collection. Each participant's data was safeguarded with password-protected data folders and Excel spreadsheets. Participants were informed and reassured they could refuse or withdraw from the study at any time.

A total of 80 new employees were hired between January and February 2022, including staff, faculty, transfer employees, and union employees. There

were a total of four new union employees, 11 transfer employees from a different DU

department, 10 new faculty employees, and 56 new staff employees. Of 56 new staff

employees, 13 NHS agreed to participate in this study. Interested employees responded to

the participation email and completed the Informed Consent form (Appendix B). Zoom

and phone meetings were scheduled and sent through email invitations.

Participants were provided $10 gift cards as compensation for their time after the second

interview was concluded.

Demographics were not included in this qualitative study; however, there were a

total of three new entry-level professionals, meaning this position is their first full-time

role in higher education, but three had previously worked for the university as student

employees. The remaining NHS ranged from mid to senior-level professionals. There

were six NHS in mid-level positions and three NHS in senior-level positions. Entry-level

professionals had less than five years of experience, mid-level professionals had five to

ten years of experience, and senior-level professionals had more than ten years of

experience (Dewar, 2023). The participants in this study represented diverse experiences

and identities that added to the value and depth of the findings.

Exclusions

While Thriving at DU is mandatory, there may have been a few NHS who were

missed and began working without attending orientation. This study did not include any

NHS who did not attend an orientation session, regardless of age and position title.

Additionally, this study excluded transfer employees, as the evaluation was based on new, full-time, benefited staff employees, and faculty were excluded to gain more attention on staff needs. At the start, there were a total of 13 participants; however, one participant withdrew from the study and was excluded from the findings. Additionally, this study excluded union staff employees who were hired into custodial, facilities, or groundskeeper positions.

Data Collection

Research initially began when determining the program stakeholders and the primary intended users. After reviewing DU's websites, I concluded that Human Resources & Inclusive Community and the University of Denver are the program stakeholders. They are the stakeholders because the findings can help DU implement new orientation and onboarding tactics to increase retention. HRIC was the intended user since they are responsible for employee engagement, orientation and onboarding, and have a personal investment in the program (Patton, 2012).

This evaluation is a case study that emphasizes qualitative data collection and interpretation. A case study allows for a qualitative description of the data collected and examines the relationships between the variables. Case studies provided an opportunity to understand the meaning of experiences by engaging in reflection through conversation (Mertens & Wilson, 2018). The purpose of this

evaluation was to explore newly hired staff's perceptions of orientation and onboarding and their organizational commitment to DU. Understanding organizational commitment for retention may affect how the program stakeholders weave organizational commitment throughout orientation and onboarding at DU. Data was collected through two interviews, each ranging from 20 to 90 minutes. Interviews were selected as the most appropriate instrument to capture the genuine perceptions of NHS who attended orientation and went through onboarding.

Website Review

Data collection began with a review of DU's Human Resources and Inclusive Community's websites to look for staff-specific resources that could impact organizational commitment and retention. During the initial review, HRIC's website had informational sections on *Jobs at DU, New Employees, Benefits, Employee Wellbeing, People Development,* and an *About Us* section (HRIC, 2023). The website also includes resources on the Americans with Disabilities Act, labor laws, campus safety, employee assistance programs, counseling services, employee associations, the Faculty and Staff Support Network (FSSN), financial hardship, and wellness (DU, 2023a). When reviewing HRIC's website for resources specific to NHS, there was one section, *New Employees*, which included an overview, provided action items, referred to orientation, and mentioned adjunct faculty; however, nothing specific for entry- to mid-to senior-level student and academic affairs professionals. The only mention of staff involves the FSSN,

which is housed under the Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs. Staff does fall under Student Affairs & Inclusive Excellence at DU; however, it can still give staff a sense of invisibility or exclusion throughout the community.

DU has a Staff Advisory Council (SAC) that unites and supports staff through advocacy and collaboration (DU, 2021b). The SAC "lobbies to get policies and procedures implemented that directly affect all staff members' morale, interests, working conditions, and professional development" (DU, 2021b, para. 2). SAC accomplishes this by hosting annual social and philanthropic events, organizing annual awards, and managing the Staff Benevolent Fund (DU, 2021b). SAC unites and supports staff through these events, but it is unclear if they address the core values of staff interests, working conditions, and professional development.

Miller and Murry (2002) believe the role of staff cannot be understated since they help a university function; "therefore, it is important to appreciate and understand how staff can affect an organization" (p. 57). Miller and Murry (2002) also said staff is "often overlooked in policy discussions about governance and leadership in higher education" (p. vii); therefore, there is a need for research specifically on staff. Otherwise, institutions "would be rendered operationally impotent without the critical role and participation of staff" (Arnwine, 2002, p. vii).

Interviews

        This qualitative study utilized interviews to solicit narratives while keeping consistency and structure throughout the interview process. Questions were framed broad enough to allow respondents to provide detailed stories and elicit narratives with probing questions. The two interviews (Appendix C & D) acted as guides when interviewing participants individually during two separate sessions. The objective of the first interview was to understand the experiences, perceptions, and commitment of NHS after they completed their first month of employment and attended orientation. The second interview examined organizational commitment after the employee's sixth month of employment. Interviewing participants twice is optimal for understanding organizational commitment since it begins to form after one month, and after six months, commitment tends to be fully formed.

        Twenty-four interviews took place virtually and were recorded with the participant's permission. One interview was conducted in person, on DU's campus and recorded on a password-protected electronic device. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used to understand employees' feelings, opinions, and perceptions of orientation and onboarding. Open-ended questions allowed each participant the flexibility to relay their experiences and clarify their thoughts and comments. The first interview for all 12 participants was conducted one month after the employee began working and addressed their pre-onboarding and orientation experiences.

Interview two for all 12 participants occurred after their sixth month and addressed organizational commitment. Although the data was collected in two waves, identical procedures were followed. The order of questions was unimportant, allowing participants to freely discuss their thoughts and experiences. Interviews were transcribed using Otter.ai (2022), an audio transcription software. Following transcription completion, member checking was instilled to allow participants to review and clarify their interview transcripts, which is an important step in ensuring the trustworthiness of the data.

The interviews aimed to understand a NHS's perceptions of orientation and onboarding and their level of organizational commitment through conversations that embodied stories, narratives, and detailed experiences. Addressing these questions at an employee's six-month mark can help HR understand why their employees are committed to the organization, which could potentially prevent voluntary turnover. With 12 participants, two interviews each, there were 24 interviews to transcribe. The interviews allowed for further dialogue through storytelling of onboarding experiences.

Data Analysis

This study is best suited as an intrinsic case study because it explored a real-life, contemporary bounded system over time through detailed and in-depth data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Orientation and onboarding are a

bounded system that starts from day one to six months of employment for new employees. Two interviews were conducted to examine NHS's development of organizational commitment and their perceptions of orientation and onboarding. An intrinsic case study focuses on the case itself, in this case, evaluating a program (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative data from the two interviews were analyzed through open and axial coding (Creswell, 2018) and coded to find emergent themes (Creswell, 2009). This study followed Creswell's (2018) five steps of qualitative content analysis derived from Tesch's (1990) eight steps to ensure accuracy and find categories and patterns. Those five steps used are: (1) prepare the data; (2) define theme of analysis; (3) develop categories and codes; (4) draw conclusions from the data; and (5) report methods and findings.

The evaluation results highlighted the components of orientation and onboarding that helped shape NHS' organizational commitment. The findings from the evaluation supported necessary program improvements that focused on retention and commitment (Creswell, 2018). Patton (2008) also recommends a comparative analysis of the qualitative data to make meaning of all the information collected. Words and phrases were assigned to codes and stayed consistent throughout each interview. Coding is a form of evaluator interpretation and subjective judgment (Morofsky, 2022; Babbie, 2014; Saldana, 2009). Interviews were transcribed using an online software program called Otter.ai. As a novice coder, initial coding was done firsthand, followed by another round

of initial coding using a computer data analysis program, Delve, to explore codes further and quantify those codes into larger themes.

Coding was done in several iterations to ensure data was rich enough and nothing new emerged. The first phase of coding began with open coding categories of information around comments, improvements, and suggestions toward orientation and onboarding. The second phase of coding was axial coding and included phrases, quotes, and words that fell under any of the three components of commitment – affective, normative, and continuance. The affective code included statements around emotions and feelings; continuance included statements regarding the cost of leaving, and normative included guilt and obligation to remain (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

To ensure the research questions were addressed, data analysis was split into two categories: (1) staff perceptions of orientation and onboarding and (2) organizational commitment. The open-ended questions focused on the NHS' perceptions, feelings, and attitudes toward their organizational commitment, and orientation and onboarding at DU. To keep confidentiality, participants were given pseudonyms (Shupp & Arminio, 2012). An additional code was preselected to address NHS' perceptions of orientation and onboarding.

Findings were provided to the primary intended users for both interviews, followed by a discussion between the evaluator and intended users. The

discussions allowed the evaluator and the intended users to agree on major themes and recommendations to enhance organizational commitment. Organizational commitment was organized by quotes and phrases that fell under the specific types of commitment. Affective commitment included phrases/terms/quotes around emotions, such as a sense of loyalty and desire to remain (Allen & Meyer, 1991). Continuance commitment included any phrases/terms/quotes where investments outweighed the risks of leaving, such as limit and potential loss of vacation/personal days. Normative commitment included phrases/terms/quotes around an obligation to stay, even if they are dissatisfied (Allen & Meyer, 1991), such as the guilt of putting pressure on coworkers to pick up their work once they leave.

Reporting Results

The data in this evaluation is presented as a case study using narrative description. Rich and detailed descriptions were used to examine the findings via commonality between answers, staff experiences, and the findings that emerged in the data. The coding process required the evaluator and stakeholders to "divide it into text segments, label the segments with codes, examine codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapse [the] codes into broad themes" (Creswell, 2005, p. 237). Narrative description was chosen for HRIC to learn from NHS on what they need to be successful in their new position and opportunities to help develop organizational commitment. Voices from NHS about developing organizational commitment are largely absent from the body of literature

76

around employee retention in higher education. Eliciting narratives from NHS was employed to uncover meaningful insights (Davis & Cooper, 2017) toward organizational commitment. The open-ended questions focused on NHS's perceptions, feelings, and attitudes of orientation and onboarding.

The program director and HRIC have expressed the desire to enhance their programs to focus on employee engagement and commitment. It was vital to keep the primary intended users updated on the evaluation's progress and actively engage them throughout the findings and the themes that emerged. This did require explaining to HRIC the codes and the themes that were developed from data analysis. Primary intended users were provided recommendations with supporting data from the evaluator and allowed for discussion on recommendations that were feasible. Strengths and weaknesses were discussed, and recommendations to improve organizational commitment and retention. Data provided to the intended users did not include identifiable characters to protect the employees' privacy and avoid repercussions involving their position at DU.

Results from both interviews were exported into an Excel spreadsheet, with each theme on its own tab, with codes and quotes to produce data on those themes. Stakeholders were actively engaged in understanding the evaluation's findings, which is the fourth phase of U-FE (Patton, 1997). The evaluator and intended users discussed the findings and developed recommendations for

improvements. This completed the fifth phase of U-FE, where stakeholders decide how best to move forward (Patton, 1997). After the evaluation, a complete write-up of the process, findings, recommendations, and action items was created and provided to all stakeholders to ensure HRIC understood the evaluation process, next steps, and how to use the evaluation moving forward.

Trustworthiness of Data

Trustworthiness was established through time spent in the research process, and the researcher shared their experiences as a new hire to relate and emphasize the participants' experiences. As a form of member checking, transcriptions were shared with each participant to allow for corrections and feedback (Denise-Halter, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mertens & Wilson, 2018). Preliminary interpretations were also provided while being vigilant about confidentiality (Mertens & Wilson, 2019). Member checking ensured the participants' perspectives were interpreted accurately and reassured what was said was not misinterpreted (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checks are also an important way to identify researcher biases and any misunderstandings of what was observed (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The evaluation report provided was an in-depth description of the evaluation process and the findings, to pull stakeholders into the staff experience and understand the impact orientation and onboarding have on organizational commitment, which adds to the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2018). The interview questions provided the

information they were expected to provide; thus, the interview questions were reliable (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative questions were examined for in-depth responses to ensure the research questions could be answered from the collected data (Connerton, 2019). According to Patton (1997), constant comparative analysis of the qualitative data is necessary for making meaning from all the information collected in the study. The comparison in this study was viewing how NHS' organizational commitment was impacted from when they began to their sixth month of employment.

Positionality Statement

With the assumption that my perceptions will affect the final program evaluation, it is important to know and understand my positionality. As a novice researcher, it has been difficult to describe my positionality toward this study and research. The practice of describing my own position in relation to the evaluation has been difficult knowing it may influence aspects of the study, such as the data collection and the way findings are interpreted (Holmes, 2020; Weiss, 1998). Staff retention in higher education has interested me professionally and personally. As an individual who began their education in psychology, I value human interactions and am interested in knowing staff's lived experiences and how staff perceives the world (Mertens & Wilsons, 2019), which explains the gravitation toward a social psychology conceptual framework for this study.

Throughout my ten years of experience navigating the political world within higher education, I have witnessed the lack of guidance, support, encouragement, and opportunities for staff to be their best selves. I have worked in numerous staff positions, all types of higher education institutions, and with varying styles and forms of leadership. My higher education experience began at my alma mater, where I held two student positions in the student activities office, followed by a graduate assistantship during the first year of my master's program. My first professional position was as a part-time program assistant for a private university, followed by my first full-time position as a student services coordinator at a technical college. I moved to online education and worked as an academic advisor for a for-profit university. I went back to the private university as administrative support, which led to my research interests in staff retention and a sense of belonging. Leaving the private university again, I went back into advising for a public, Hispanic-Serving Institution. This was the last student-facing position I held before I moved into my current entry-level human resource role within the University of Colorado system.

The constant factors I continually noticed throughout my career progression were the understaffed departments and the overworked and burnt-out employees. At each new university I worked at, it became more evident that staff kept the organization functioning but lacked the necessary support and resources to become their best selves. Meaning faculty have a detailed career progression to achieve these career milestones. At the same

time, student and academic affairs professionals create their own career progression through education, professional development, and seeking out job advancement opportunities. This is considered job-hopping to some, but to me, it has helped me keep up with high inflation rates and gain new skills and responsibilities.

A job-hopper spends less than two years in a position. It is a way to leave if you are dissatisfied with your duties, leadership, environment, compensation, and additional reasons listed in Chapter Two and presented throughout Chapter Four. I job-hopped mainly for higher compensation (Fowler, 2002) until I realized lack of professional growth impacted my organizational commitment, and left positions because of unsupportive management and ineffective leadership. After being denied four promotions from the same university, staff retention and commitment piqued my interest. In my reality, I was the only staff member having a negative experience in higher education; however, the more conversations I had with colleagues and my peers, especially student and academic affairs professionals, the more I understood the majority of staff had experienced the same challenges and barriers.

The evaluation of the Thriving at DU program at the University of Denver is not only valuable to the institution but also personally valuable to the researcher. I have attended nine different new employee orientations within the

past ten years. Only one orientation was effective in developing my organizational

commitment, which also provided an extensive onboarding. New employee

orientation is usually the first interaction an employee has with their organization.

It is the first chance to engage employees and start developing their organizational

commitment. I am heavily invested in the success of orientations and onboarding to

increase retention and commitment.

The problem with high turnover is the inability to ask the employees what the

organization or leadership could have done differently before they got to the point of

quitting and giving the organization enough time to make changes. If we are not looking

at the "why" behind turnover, we will have ineffective retention strategies; therefore,

extending onboarding to six months makes sense to allow for organizational commitment

to develop and encapsulate the "why" behind an employee's commitment. Organizational

commitment is a predictor of turnover and retention, and leadership needs to shift their

focus on staff to reduce turnover. These beliefs are as much of who I am as my personal

background. I currently work in human resources for an academic medical campus.

COVID-19 and the pandemic turned the workforce upside down, and I was one of

those employees who voluntarily left their job because of the lack of accommodations for

staff in higher education. I was a percentage of the great resignation because I realized

my mental health, education, and salary were more important than staying in a field that

does not value, appreciate, or try to actively retain me. *Everyone is replaceable*, which is

what I have heard from numerous supervisors. We should not view staff as expendable; we should empower and uplift them to become their best selves and retain that institutional knowledge.

Ethical Considerations

Patton (2008) mentioned ethical challenges will occur throughout the stages of the program evaluation, such as anonymity, confidentiality, data collection (i.e., interviews), and the researcher's potential impact on the participants (Stufflebeam, 2001). Since U-FE and pragmatists allow a researcher to research what interests them, I was intentional when choosing the stakeholders and primary-intended users. Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw from the study at any time. U-FE requires flexibility throughout the evaluation (Patton, 2008) because it is an active-reactive-adaptative process that is not clear and direct (Patton, 2012). As the researcher, I did not involve myself with the NHS's orientation and onboarding processes. One of the main reasons why I chose a formative evaluation is to provide feedback to the intended users to help improve the Thriving at DU program.

Limitations of the Study

While the researcher's relationship with the university and the orientation and onboarding program is a limitation, it is also an asset because of the researcher's outsider perspective to improve the program. The choice to focus on

staff perceptions can be considered a limitation to the program's overall improvement because the findings reflect a small window of staff's overall feelings about the orientation and onboarding experience. It was expected for human emotion to change between the two interviews, whether positive or negative, but only reflected a small window of staff's feelings of orientation and onboarding.

Utilizing a conceptual framework that has previously been used quantitatively rather than qualitatively is a limitation since the researcher makes inferences on participants' perceptions to understand their organizational commitment. Incorporating qualitative research gives staff a chance to explain their experiences and perceptions about orientation and onboarding and can lead to new innovations and a possibility to discuss changes and improvements within other higher education institutions.

Summary

This chapter outlined the research paradigm and methodologies, including procedures, participants, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations. The pragmatic paradigm was explained, along with a layout of data collection that incorporated the conceptual framework for this study. In addition, the chapter discussed the utilization of using case study analysis and member checking for validity and approval of the findings. A utilization-focused evaluation was the best way to evaluate the orientation and onboarding program because of the novice evaluator and the needs of the intended users. HRIC wanted an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses

84

of the program with improvements to increase organizational commitment and retention. The findings in the next chapter will explain what shaped NHS' organizational commitment and the factors that contributed to their organizational commitment after they attended orientation and went through onboarding.

Chapter Four:

Findings

Thriving at DU is the orientation and onboarding program provided through the University of Denver's Human Resources and Inclusive Community department and hosted by the People Development team. Orientation for new employees is offered on the 1st or 3rd Monday of the month to guarantee new employees attend orientation on their first day. During data collection, orientations were offered virtually due to COVID-19 and the pandemic. Meyer and Allen's (1991) three component model of commitment was used as a general guideline to characterize newly hired staffs' (NHS) relationship with the organization after orientation and onboarding, while also providing recommendations and improvements to enhance commitment and increase retention. The orientation and onboarding program provides new employees information to help them thrive in the DU community.

There is a gap in the literature that accounts for employees who experience more than one component of organizational commitment. Additionally, there is a gap in the literature that overlooks organizational commitment throughout new employee orientation and onboarding. This study hopes to fill the gaps around staff in higher education while focusing on all three components of commitment for a more holistic view of the employee. This study provides recommendations specifically for DU; however, this study is beneficial for other higher education institutions to evaluate their

orientation and onboarding programs and prevent barriers to organizational commitment while increasing staff retention. The findings discussed in this chapter will address the first two research questions for this study:

1. What are newly hired staff's perceptions of orientation and onboarding?

2. What influences organizational commitment?

The findings are presented this way because research questions 3 and 4 cover program recommendations, which will be addressed in the following chapter. As a reminder, research questions 3 and 4 are:

3. How can orientation and onboarding be improved to enhance organizational commitment?

4. What are the factors that contribute to greater organizational commitment?

Throughout the findings, all participants will be referred by pseudonyms, which were chosen by the researcher and a nod to the TV show, *The Office*. Names and position titles are listed below, as well as employment status, position field, and other to indicate if they are an alum of DU.

Table 1

Newly Hired Staff Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Position title	Other	Employment Status 12 months after hire date
Pam	Executive Assistant		Retained
Stanley	Executive Assistant	Alum	*On Leave*

Dwight	Program & Recruitment Coordinator	Alum	Retained
Angela	Enrollment Manager		*Resigned*
Jim	Director of Enrollment		Retained
Ryan	Career consultant	Alum	*Resigned*
Phyllis	Administrative Assistant II		Retained
Oscar	Director of Development	Alum	Retained
Michael	Instructional Designer	Alum	Retained
Meredith	Admission Specialist		Retained
Kelly	Director of Volunteer Networks		Retained
Kevin	Program Manager		Retained

Data coding consisted of deductive coding using predetermined codes, the three types of commitments (affective, continuance, and normative) as larger coding categories, followed by subcodes. Some subcodes include goals and values; job satisfaction; pros and cons of leaving; staying because it is the right thing to do; provided an award; and loyalty. To understand NHS' perceptions of orientation and onboarding, inductive (open) coding was used. Several iterations of coding occurred, and codes were selected that best answered the research questions and represented a majority of the responses. Each component includes codes of common words and phrases grouped into themes.

Table 2 below explains how statements from this study were organized to understand which component(s) of commitment developed by the sixth month for NHS. Additionally, Figure 5 includes a visual graphic of Meyer & Allen's (1991) three

components of organizational commitment and the antecedents of each

component. Figure 6 shows influencers of organizational commitment.

Table 2

The Three Types of Commitment

Affective	*"I am really lonely and feel siloed in this role."* Feeling siloed, overworked, and mention of goals and values.
Continuance	*"If I leave now, I will lose out on my vacation hours that I've accumulated."* Creating a list of reasons to stay or leave; weighing out the costs of leaving; the costs of leaving are not worth the risks.
Normative	*"I would feel guilty leaving and burdening my colleagues if I left."* Sense of obligation to stay.

Figure 5

A Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment

```
Correlates of Organizational

Commitment

Job Satisfaction

Job Involvement

Occupational commitment
```

```
Antecedents of

Affective Commitment

Personal Characteristics

Work Experiences
```

```
Affective  commitment
```

```
Turnover Intention

and Turnover
```

```
Antecedents of

Continuance

Commitment

Personal Characteristics

Alternatives
```

```
Continuance Commitment
```

```
On-The-Job

Behaviour

Attendance

OCB
```

```
Antecedents of
Normative
Commitment
Personal Characteristics
Socialization
Experiences
Organizational
Investments
```

```
Normative Commitment
```

```
Employee Health

and well-being
```

Note. Types or components of organizational commitment. From Meyer & Allen, 1991

Figure 6

Influencers of Organizational Commitment

90

What Influences
Organizational Commitment?

Job Satisfaction Managerial support Role stress & role ambiguity Empowerment Job insecurity & employability

AIHR | ACADEMY TO INNOVATE HR
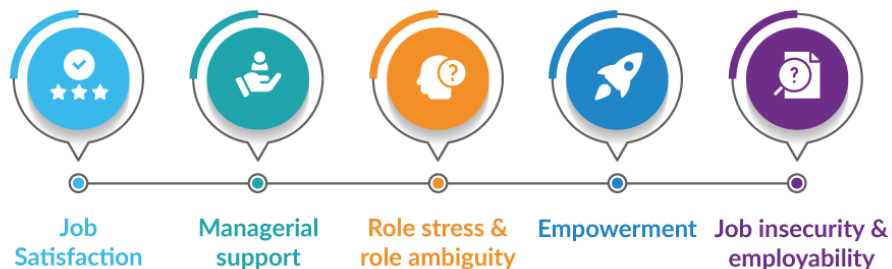
Note. Influencers of organizational commitment. From Academy to Innovate HR, n.d.

Affective commitment includes phrases and words that express an employee's emotional attachment, such as feeling happy, content, accepted, etc. Continuance commitment includes phrases and words that deal with the costs of leaving, such as losing accumulated paid time off hours and no longer receiving a 401k match from the university. Normative commitment includes phrases and words that present as an obligation to stay, such as the need to stay for financial stability.

Overall, the evaluation findings revealed that NHS felt overwhelmed during orientation with information overload, and most NHS attended orientation to learn about the benefits offered. Additionally, onboarding for NHS ranged

drastically, leaving each NHS with a different onboarding experience that impacted their organizational commitment.

The three themes that emerged under affective commitment are feeling siloed, feeling overworked, and having an emotional connection to goals and values. Predictors of turnover was the predominant theme for continuance commitment. The three themes for normative commitment are loyalty, provided a reward, and supervisor and leadership. In this next section, the overall impressions of NHS on their orientation and onboarding experience will be discussed, which will answer research question 1 and help support the program recommendations in the following chapter.

Overall Perceptions of Orientation

As stated in Chapter Two, orientation is one of the first moments a new employee begins developing their organizational commitment, with onboarding solidifying organizational commitment. The overall perceptions of orientation included **information overload**, **the need for a liaison**, and **"came for the benefits."** Multiple participants noted information overload, and when speaking with Pam, they suggested having pre-recorded informational videos with links and resources, which would allow more time to answer questions and make it more personable, rather than just a knowledge dump. Fortunately, NHS were provided with a checklist to guide them on tasks to complete within the first month. Kevin stated, "the checklist was very helpful" because "it had

more of an emphasis on due dates." Oscar enjoyed the checklist because it gave him tasks to complete while waiting for other job-related functions to get set up.

On the other hand, two NHS did not receive the checklist or did not have enough time to review it from when they were hired to when orientation occurred. Phyllis had a quick hiring turnaround and said:

From the time my first interview was, to my start date, it was less than a week or exactly a week, I think. So, it was really quick, and while I got that stuff, I was also, like, rushing through it. The checklists, I think, would have been great if I had more to review it before my orientation, which was the next day.

Additionally, Meredith stated the "first week was a little hectic" because they were hired immediately after interviewing and attended orientation a few days later. Meredith did not receive a checklist and felt they were playing catch-up that first week. The checklists did serve their purpose for most of the NHS, but for the NHS who were hired on quickly, they did not have enough time to review the welcome email and checklist or prepare for orientation. Another reason to have a slower turnaround is to provide NHS with a welcome email, a checklist, and important information upfront. Stanley was able to research on their own beforehand and had ample time to review benefits and prepare questions to ask during orientation.

When Stanley was asked about any improvements HRIC can make to their orientation and onboarding program, they said touch points on higher education

for someone new to higher education. Stanley also mentioned wanting a liaison that followed up to help navigate through benefits and make sure they are capitalizing on all the resources the university has to offer, "otherwise, it's like you are going out of your way to look for it." On the other hand, quite a few NHS mentioned how helpful and robust the orientation was, and Angela said they appreciated how orientation was not emotionally driven by getting to know one another, and instead went through the benefits package, employee expectations, policies, and available resources. Jim enjoyed orientation and having "a community of people that were starting together from across the institution."

Another hot topic centered around benefits and was touched on previously. Phyllis, Ryan, and Angela mentioned how quickly benefits were discussed during orientation and how rushed the benefits section felt. Ryan mentioned how there needs to be more time with benefits, especially if someone has follow-up questions, because benefits were the only part of orientation they were looking forward to. Even Stanley mentioned how benefits were what they selfishly cared most about. Additional challenges and barriers to onboarding will be addressed later under the continuance commitment component. The next section will cover the findings on organizational commitment, separated by the three components of commitment from Meyer and Allen's (1991) conceptual model.

Organizational Commitment

Meyer and Allen's (1991) conceptual model was used to understand organizational commitment. Codes were assigned to themes that fell under the components of commitment that Meyer and Allen (1991) referenced throughout their studies, and explained in previous chapters throughout this study. Each participant was asked to define and describe organizational commitment during both interviews to allow for comparisons, inconsistencies, and if commitment shifted for any NHS.

Participants with over ten years of higher education experience had more in-depth definitions of organizational commitment than entry-level professionals. Jim explained organizational commitment as:

> *When I think of commitment, I think of pride and having pride in the work you do. The role that you play. The value that you bring, as an employee, to the students that you work with, but also to the unit, the department, or the college, but then to the broader university. I would see commitment as being something that's strengthened or maybe neutral or could decline.*

Jim elaborated on why commitment can decline and said, "the interactions you've had, the experiences you've had, any sort of like, work-related issues or successes, you know, there's all that." Ryan defined organizational commitment as "when you care to grow, to nest, to be accepted, brave, to be recognized, to innovate." However, Ryan mentioned

95

that when it is a consistent battle between leadership and employees, the sense of caring disappears, and the job is no longer worth the fight.

Organizational commitment showed up in job duties, rewards, and community. For example, Michael mentioned:

> *I would say I feel more of a level of commitment to like my job in the college, and that's mostly because I know the people in my department. I know the people I'm making classes for and that I'm working with on a daily basis. And so right, like, I, I like those people. I can see them. I talk to them all the time. And so, I feel like a certain level of commitment that is fairly high for that, right. Like I have deadlines.*

Each definition and understanding of organizational commitment from every NHS was different, but the overall consensus was investing in a company through the alignment of goals and values to bolster and make the organization better. Ultimately, organizational commitment is centered around job duties, people, and policies.

Affective Commitment

Meyer and Allen (1991) explained affective commitment as an individual's emotional attachment to their organization. Buchanan (1974) described affective commitment as an attachment to the goals and values of the organization. These two definitions provided the themes to use toward the affective commitment component, and the two themes are feelings and emotions, and goals and values.

Feelings and Emotions

When looking for words, phrases, and statements involving feelings and emotions, I looked for "personal characteristics, structural characteristics, job-related characteristics, and work experiences" (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday et al., 1982). Personal characteristics include the need for achievement, affiliation, and autonomy (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Morris & Snyder, 1979; Steers, 1977; Steers & Braunstein, 1976; Steers & Spencer, 1977), as well as personal work ethic, locus of control, and expression of values (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Hulin & Blood, 1968). Structural characteristics related to decision-making, employee/supervisor relationships, role clarity, and feelings of importance (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Job duties or work experiences surrounding feelings and emotions were variables that satisfied or dissatisfied the employees' needs.

Feeling Siloed. "I feel siloed" was the predominant phrase mentioned throughout the interviews. One participant said they felt siloed because of COVID and the pandemic shifting organizations to telecommuting; however, their supervisor and colleagues were not checking on them, which made them feel siloed. Almost all NHS said they wanted to connect with another employee in a similar role across campus. Michael mentioned wanting to connect further with people on campus doing similar work to feel less alone and siloed. Michael said,

"it's really easy to quickly feel siloed on a campus because you're in your building, or you're in your college or just like even in your department, and then sometimes, like that's it, you never sort of like engage outside of that." The narrative of feeling siloed can impact an employee's organizational commitment and intent to stay with the organization. This was true for Angela who reached out to other departments with no response. Angela said, "there are people on campus that do not want to build those partnerships, which I was really taken aback by. I'd never really encountered that before."

Pam, a mid-level executive assistant (EA), mentioned feeling alone, siloed, and wanting more connection across campus with other EAs. The connection between EAs would help reduce Pam's isolation because they would be introduced to other deans, EAs, colleges, and departments. Dwight mentioned joining a staff group to create a sense of connection, and after attending two meetings, they realized they were not the only one who felt lonely and how difficult it has been feeling siloed. Silos showed up physically and mentally; some NHS were the only ones in their office, while others were the only person doing their specific job duties. Other NHS felt siloed because they did not know the campus or know of ways to connect across colleges and departments.

On Angela's last day at DU, they were asked if there was anything HRIC could implement to make them feel more like a part of the university. They said human resources would not be able to resolve the silos because it is more of a university-wide

culture shift that needs to take place. Angela's experiences showed a lack of collaboration among the departments and other colleges across campus. With such a large disconnect among DU's campus, Angela said the university felt like separate entities rather than a cohesive unit. Having each college and department operate differently explains why Angela had to find their own solution to problems; otherwise, their commitment "would have diminished" because they kept hitting roadblocks trying to improve upon their role and job duties. With this disconnect among DU's campus, it makes sense why almost all NHS felt siloed at some point.

Like Angela, Ryan reflected on their last six months and said there had been a disconnect between what staff needs to do their jobs and what the university thinks staff needs to complete their job duties. For example, Ryan said during the summer months, only a small demographic of students are in classes, and it would be beneficial to expand the remote policy to show that the university is acknowledging and accommodating their staff's needs. Ryan further stated with the high turnover throughout departments, it was reasonable to expect certain incentives, such as expanding the remote policy, to help further develop organizational commitment. Feeling siloed greatly impacted almost all NHS' organizational commitment, and another finding that emerged was feeling overworked.

Overworked. This study defines overworked as an employee taking on additional job duties on top of their main duties. Almost all NHS mentioned taking on additional job duties that were not outlined in their job description and took them on due to a staffing shortage. Some NHS mentioned their supervisor advocating for them to receive a raise or title change. In contrast, others said they did not receive recognition or were promised raises and incentives without results. Demanding workloads led to burnout, which tends to bring lower salaries or salaries that are not including the additional job duties (Mullen et al., 2018). Burnout and a salary plateau led employees to new career paths, which is a huge indicator of high employee turnover, and the following are examples of when NHS at DU mentioned feeling overworked by taking on additional job duties.

Ryan previously stated that staff do not have everything they need to do their job successfully, and referenced their department's receptionist taking on additional job duties apart from their main job duties. And because this employee was taking on additional job duties, it affected Ryan because they either needed to burden someone else with their work or undertake the additional duties and overwork themselves to burnout. Additionally, Ryan said, "I just am seeing a whole lot of responsibility and expectation and absolutely no incentives." Employees who are emotionally and physically overworked cannot be their best selves in their positions. Ryan also said when employees take on additional job duties, it limits their ability to put their whole self into their work the way they envision their position evolving. Kelly mentioned something similar,

stating, "it's not a very sustainable staffing or appropriate staffing model to like,

ask people to be doing all the things, and then they're not focusing on the higher-

level stuff that we should be prioritizing."

Oscar also struggled with taking on additional responsibilities without

recognition or a change in title and pay and instead was given an empty promise

for the future. Oscar was hopeful their "investment of taking on additional

responsibilities pays out at the end of the day, right? So, if that didn't pay out, then

I think my mindset might change." Meredith mentioned one of the reasons their

commitment fluctuated is because:

> *Not only am I not getting paid the amount I should to do my minimum job*
>
> *requirements, but I'm going above and beyond trying to help this institution out*
>
> *because things are just falling through the cracks, and I'm not being compensated*
>
> *for that. So, I'm doing extra hours and I'm doing all this stuff, and I'm not being*
>
> *recognized for it. And I'm just getting drained.*

Dwight, another DU alum, listed five major job responsibilities they

perform, including program management, recruitment, website updates, email

management, and other administrative duties. These responsibilities are a lot to

put on one individual and a lot of pressure to get done successfully. With Dwight

completing these tasks, it is clear they can handle it all, but Dwight said:

Then they wonder why there's like high staff turnover when these positions, like

monetarily, aren't growing. And I'm doing a bit more work than what my job

description and my salary have allotted me. Oh yeah, I guess I'm like running all

of the recruitment, all the registrar, doing all in-person/online recruitment,

everything from slate to admissions, and then like event programming. So

basically, I'm the catch-all for everything.

High turnover at DU creates barriers and challenges for departments because they wait for human resources to advertise the available position(s). Meanwhile, it creates double duties for the rest of the department and team, slowly causing more burnout and overworked employees. COVID-19 and the pandemic exacerbated employee turnover, leaving 52% of remaining workers with more work and responsibilities (SHRM, 2021b). More than half (30%) of those workers report struggling to get necessary work done (SHRM, 2021b), which implies employees are overworked. Referring to Work Institute's *2022 Retention Report*, organizations need to be aware of that added stress and provide resources to improve employee well-being and combat high turnover.

Kevin mentioned feeling overwhelmed, stressed, and "bamboozled about how this job is expected to be done by one person" because they "always had the mentality of I'd much rather enjoy my job than care about how much I'm getting paid. But at some point, you have to realize, like, the amount of stress has got to equal the amount of pay." And while Kevin did receive a merit increase, the extra income barely covered their parking

pass. With little salary increases, Kevin said, "I think if DU legitimately wants to keep long-term employees, then they're not going to." Even though Kevin enjoys their job and colleagues, it is not enough to keep them at DU longer than five years because the "job works particularly well for the stage of life that I'm in right now, but would not at all if I was in any other stage of life."

Feeling siloed and overworked can impact an employee's mental health, and mental health was a huge factor in Ryan's development of organizational commitment. Ryan noted having a negative onboarding experience that impacted their mental health and damaged their commitment to DU. When seeking accessibility accommodations, Ryan had a retriggering experience that "did not help facilitate a positive environment for like having a disability but not feeling disabled." Encountering negative onboarding experiences affects employees' mental health, hinders the development of organizational commitment, and can be a predictor of turnover.

Goals and Values

Phrases and statements that involved professional and career goals were included under this finding. Goals included statements around professional development opportunities, such as obtaining a certification or attending a conference. Goals were also disclosed regarding job duties, the department, the college, or DU. On the other hand, goals and values showed up when they aligned

with DU's mission and/or their specific college's mission. The University of Denver's (2021-a) mission statement is:

> *To promote learning by engaging with students in advancing scholarly inquiry, cultivating critical and creative thought, and generating knowledge. Our active partnerships with local and global communities contribute to a sustainable common good.*

The importance of mission and vision statements allows employees to understand what drives the organization and make them aware of the strategic plan to meet these goals. From the literature, there are three possible reasons for an employee to develop organizational commitment: the employee identifies with the values; there are financial or other personal benefits associated with the job; or there is a sense of duty or calling.

When Jim, a senior-level student affairs professional, was asked which reason(s) they aligned with, they mentioned how their commitment is strongest when their values align with the university, "because it's hard to commit to an organization whose values don't align with your values." Jim stated benefits and salaries can only go so far with developing organizational commitment, but "you can't, you can't live that long in an environment where the values don't match up."

When asked what values have developed Jim's organizational commitment, they said, "for me, I love the intrigue of figuring out a new system, a new culture. I like being part of that. I see myself as somebody that can be here long term and be a resource and a

contributor long term." When Jim can establish a vision for their job, develop strategy and core values, align them, and create a roadmap for how the vision will come to fruition, that strengthens their commitment. They said, "your job has to align with your assets, your strengths, and be enjoyable. If there's too much of one and not the other, I think it becomes less enjoyable, and then you're less committed."

Kelly's values showed up in team collaboration through creating policies and structures for the team, the department, and the entire campus while including alumni to create a "meaningful sense of connection and affinity to the university and to the student body." This collaboration and connection helped Kelly develop a sense of commitment because "the position itself is just like a really good fit." When Kelly can do things that activate them and have successful team collaboration, it is easier for Kelly to commit to the organization because they have developed that sense of belonging.

Inclusive Excellence & Diversity. Goals and values showed up around diversity and DU's Inclusive Excellence commitment. DU defines *inclusive excellence* as "the recognition that a community or institution's success is dependent on how well it values, engages, and includes the rich diversity of students, staff, faculty, administrators, and alumni constituents" (DU, 2023-b). Angela was asked if they could explain inclusive excellence in their own words,

and they said, "I don't know, it's, I mean, maybe the concept of equity and access for students to an excellent education," but DU is not able to do that because "they're not retaining their staff and faculty of color." When asked if they aligned with DU's mission statement they stated, "university mission statements in general, overwhelmingly say a lot without saying anything, and I really just don't think those words mean much. I don't think DU lives up to what it claims are its values." It was difficult for Angela to feel organizationally committed to DU because of the lack of equity and accessibility access for diverse students, staff, and faculty, which ultimately led to their departure from DU.

Diversity was expressed throughout all the interviews, meaning diversity impacted all staff at varying professional levels. Pam mentioned when they see "things that are going on and knowing that they're going on, and not seeing any kind of communication from DU as a whole," negatively impacts their commitment. When asked for an example, Pam mentioned how DU did not send out any communication regarding Pride Month:

> I saw nothing from DEI [Diversity, Equity & Inclusion] or DU as a whole
> acknowledging it. This is kind of a major thing, especially for the city of Denver,
> and we're supposed to be the University of the City of Denver, and I saw nothing.
> When there's something major going on, and we pretend like we don't even know
> it's happening, I really, really, really don't like that.

Pam thinks DU must have open conversations and be willing to mention controversial topics and events that are going on. It is not about taking a stance on anything, more so, providing knowledge and resources to DU's community to show they are valued and included within DU.

Stanley mentioned how frustrated they are with the expectation for employees to show up to campus, when inflation is high, and salaries are not increasing, and expected to pay for parking. Stanley referenced how the university makes decisions and creates policies, through the lens of a white man, for minoritized individuals, where those decisions and policies may not feel safe for these individuals, and expecting them to come to campus regardless, is alarming. Stanley said their commitment would change if DU acknowledged the lack of safety for many people on campus. When asked if DU and HRIC can do anything to make campus feel safer, Stanley said, "the fact that DU says they're going to do something and then they don't do it, it's very clear that they're not committed to making change or making DU a safe place for minoritized individuals."

Additionally, Stanley said they see themselves as someone who fills in the diversity gap within their office, who has to hold their team, their supervisor, and DU accountable for promises and actions that were made that have not been delivered. Stanley is partly committed to DU because of their role and the chance

to fill "the gaps that are going to help the university move forward with things that they say that they want to do."

A few NHS who work in recruitment mentioned how cost and accessibility are deterring factors for minoritized groups and how difficult it is to promote a university that is not culturally diverse with staff, faculty, and leadership. Meredith mentioned how disingenuous it is to have the Pioneers moniker all over campus, given the history of the land that DU resides on, and "doing land acknowledgment seems so insincere when we have that on our welcome letters." Additionally, Angela mentioned how their commitment to their role was impacted because DU's campus is vastly homogenous, which made them wonder why they are trying to recruit students of color to an institution where those students are not going to be taught by "a faculty member who identifies as a person of color, or when everyone they interact with is going to be white." DU claims to be a "private university for the public good," but are not making campus inclusive or accessible, and recruiting students who may be better served at a public state school or a Hispanic Serving Institute.

Meredith mentioned how their commitment was low, or they did not feel connected to DU because they have seen a lot of things DU is doing internally that are upsetting from a diversity standpoint and are putting their focus and money in the wrong areas. Meredith did mention how DU is completing a brand refresh to look more inclusive. However, there are still a lot of other institutional parts that are not accessible

to students of color, mainly DU's tuition price. They worked with the Pioneer

Prep Program for Black and Latinx students but felt the program was not a

priority to DU because a lot slipped through the cracks, and on an institutional

level, DU does not scream diversity.

A few participants mentioned diversity in the form of affinity groups.

Affinity groups share an identity, values, or worldview based on social identities.

Ryan mentioned the naivety of having a white man tell new employees about

diversity and affinity groups, when they should have a representative from an

affiliate group to discuss diversity on campus. Additionally, when Michael was

asked about the affinity group they searched for, they said:

> *I was actually looking for one that it turns out doesn't exist. I was curious if there*
>
> *was anything related to staff and disability. And no, there's very few [affinity*
>
> *groups] on staff, in general, a lot are targeted at faculty, which, of course it is.*
>
> *And then I was like, Hey, we talk about, like, Student Disability all the time. What*
>
> *about your employees with disabilities? And they were like, cool. That doesn't*
>
> *exist.*

Identity. Identity was a trigger for one participant; however, identity or

organizational identity is a part of organizational commitment. Identity is

associated with emotional attachment to the organization, role, department, and

colleagues. As an emotional attachment, identity falls under the affective

109

commitment component. Dwight, who worked in student positions throughout their degree, had the strongest commitment to DU during their first interview. During their second interview, it was evident they were being misgendered by leadership, who have known them for multiple years. Dwight stated, "if you can think about the combination of this job being lonely, and then the only interactions I have, I'm being misgendered." Being misgendered made Dwight feel disrespected and unseen. Afshari et al.'s (2019) study found organizational identity is positively linked to the development of organizational commitment; therefore, Dwight's organizational commitment suffered when their organizational identity was excluded and misgendered.

When Dwight was a student at DU, they already were misgendered and hoped it would resolve once they became a staff employee; however, they continued to feel excluded, mentioned how it is exhausting when they do not see anything changing, and how people wrap up something so simple into identity politics. When asked to explain further Dwight said, their colleagues seemed inconvenienced to use the correct pronouns, or each peer had a reason why the use of pronouns made them feel uncomfortable. Additionally, they spoke to a graduate admissions counselor to continue their education at DU, and were misgendered throughout the entire conversation, and said it was very triggering. Dwight even feels the need to remove their pronouns from recruitment emails and resources to avoid confrontations.

Continuance Commitment

   Meyer and Allen (1991) explained continuance commitment as the perceived costs of leaving. In other terms, the pros and cons of leaving an organization "when something of importance to an individual (e.g., pension, seniority) becomes contingent upon continued employment in that organization" (pp. 64–65). Another way to view continuance commitment is by recognizing the perceived costs associated with discontinuing employment. Continuance commitment includes perceived costs of leaving and the pros and cons that NHS created based on their intent to stay, which produced the theme predictors of turnover.

Predictors of Turnover

   Predictors of turnover was the constant theme that emerged among NHS responses. Throughout Chapter Two, predictors of turnover were mentioned, and some of the NHS experienced similarities, which would have allowed HRIC to intervene before these concerns became actionable reasons for NHS turnover. The major findings under predictors of turnover were career growth and compensation. Understandably, these two predictors of turnover should not be the sole responsibility of HRIC; however, HRIC has the opportunity to address these predictors of turnover throughout the onboarding process.

Career Growth. Career growth showed up in opportunities for growth or lack thereof and job fit. When Angela was asked during their second interview, on their last day, if HRIC or their supervisor could say or do anything to keep them at the university, they responded with:

> *My supervisor asked, tried to negotiate something, but I don't think so. I wasn't overly unhappy here. I realized pretty early on it wasn't the perfect fit. But also at the same time, I felt well taken care of, I was onboarded well. I felt fairly compensated; professional development was provided. I enjoyed the people that I worked with. So even though it wasn't exactly the work I wanted to be doing long term, I didn't really have like something driving me out the door. I just found something that fits better, a lot sooner than I thought I would have.*

While job dissatisfaction was a reason why Angela left their position, they also did not see the potential career growth this role had to offer, which is an example of two components (affective and continuance) of commitment interconnecting. Job fit was important to Angela and impacted their organizational commitment because they realized the position did not fit their strengths and needed a position that used systems and routines. Kelly said their commitment is dependent upon opportunities for growth, but the only way to career ladder is through job hopping to achieve success at higher levels.

Compensation. Out of the twelve participants, more than nine mentioned how pay or salary impacted their organizational commitment. They knew they could look

112

outside of higher education, find a similar job, be fully remote, and have a higher salary. Ryan said, "the amount of money that I get paid does not pay for this dissonance in values." The values Ryan relies on for their organizational commitment are not being met through compensation or other rewards. Kevin mentioned something similar when asked if pay impacts their organizational commitment, and they said, "I've always had the mentality of I'd much rather enjoy my job than care about how much I'm getting paid. But at some point, you have to realize the amount of stress has got to equal the amount of pay."

When asked if there is anything DU or HRIC could do to enhance organizational commitment, Meredith said, "I think pay is the biggest issue. I think you're gonna find stuff like that at every institution where their values don't always match up with their actions, but it's the pay that really makes people leave because it's not sustainable." Michael said DU is not competitive with other industries because "everywhere else is completely flexible, and if universities want to compete and keep staff, that is going to be an issue with turnover. Pay compared to other industries is still much lower."

On top of feeling siloed, quite a few NHS mentioned with high inflation rates, their salary did not increase, which impacted their continuance commitment and potentially became a predictor of turnover. The inflation rate in Colorado during July 2022, when the second interviews took place, was at an all-time high

of 8.2% (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). CUPA-HR (2022) published a press release on workforce surveys from 2021-2022, and administrators' salaries increased by 3.4%, while staff and professionals increased by 2.9%, compared to the inflation rate of 6.8% during 2021. Unsurprisingly, this is not the first year that staff salaries have failed to keep up with inflation (CUPA-HR, 2022), which is shown to be a predictor of high turnover.

Kelly mentioned that staff positions and pay structures are being reevaluated based on living costs. However, current employees in those roles are not seeing pay increases to keep up with these changes. On top of staff salaries in higher education not keeping up with current costs of living, now a high inflation rate is making it more difficult for staff to live comfortably. Kevin mentioned, "I got like a 1.5% increase. I was like, great. That's like nothing. That is no catch-up with inflation, but it's fine. All good. Like you don't go to university if you want to make a ton of money." Ryan's experience was similar and a huge shock since this was their first full-time student affairs professional position.

Ryan said since they started halfway through the fiscal year, they did not qualify for the full merit increase of 3% and were prorated to 1.3% and thought that was outrageous because they came to DU to help "put back bones to a place that didn't have any bones, like, be grateful that I am a bone." Additionally, having a high inflation rate did not help enhance Ryan's organizational commitment:

Because the university's already going to integrate that increase in tuition and an increase of classes or class credits. So, we're not putting them out of pocket, but to let my base devalue, that's awful. Why would you want to hitch your wagon long-term to a space like that?

When considering Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, staff salaries are not increasing with inflation or with costs of living; therefore, their basic need of survival through financial stability is lacking, and a huge push for staff to look outside of higher education to survive. Meredith summed up what all participants thought and said:

I think in order for people to successfully be committed to their workplace, they need to be provided for; there shouldn't be a huge give and take. I also think circumstances such as inflation, the pandemic, and cost of living should be considered when going into pay.

Almost all NHS mentioned taking on additional duties, but Meredith's supervisor was the only one to advocate for a salary increase, to no avail. Meredith expected this to happen because their supervisor had to fight pretty hard to get Meredith a merit increase at all. This left Meredith frustrated and commented: "I love this job, and I love my team, and I'm happy to stay here, and I'm happy to take on more extra duties, but not for $20 an hour. It's just not gonna cut it." Stanley also mentioned taking on additional duties and agreeing to do them because they need financial stability to survive. On top of that, Kevin said "I

think if DU legitimately wants to keep long-term employees, then they're not going to because like, I do like my job, I like my team, I like the skills I'm learning, but I don't think I'll be here for like, more than five years." From these responses, it was clear compensation played a huge part in NHS's continuance commitment, and some were already planning their exits from the university. While continuance commitment provided examples of predictors of turnover, normative commitment showed factors of retention for NHS.

Normative Commitment

Normative commitment is an obligation to remain with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991) because it is the right thing to do. The "right thing to do" showed up through loyalty and recognition through reward(s). If an employee is provided a reward or professional development opportunities, they may feel obligated to stay with the organization because they received recognition. After speaking with twelve NHS, the following findings show loyalty as grit, or as an alum connected through family, relatives, or friends, and loyal to their supervisor, team, and/or the students.

Loyalty

Loyalty showed up frequently throughout the interviews and fell under normative commitment because with loyalty comes retention, and when an employee feels a sense of loyalty, it is easier for them to stay committed and remain at the organization longer. Within loyalty came grit, connections to DU, and team support.

116

Grit. For Pam, loyalty showed up as *grit*. Pam referenced grit: "when things get hard, you're just gonna buckle down and do it because you said you were gonna do it, and you're gonna make it work." In other words, grit means the determination one puts into achieving a goal and enjoying the work that goes into achieving this goal. Grit also falls under affective commitment because determination is an emotional act. For Pam, loyalty and commitment were to their supervisor, and said "I will be in this role unless he feels otherwise and fires me. I will be in this role for three years. I told him I would during my interview." Pam is a person of their word, and when they said they would be here for three years, they meant it, and even said "I don't open the emails I get from LinkedIn that tell me about other jobs. I could but I am not actively looking for my next job."

Connections to DU. Kevin mentioned their loyalty and commitment came from their relative who got them the position and the need to return the favor and stay in their position long term. Fortunately, Kevin mentioned "I can see the effectiveness, I can see like where this job fits me a lot better. So, I...that is more buy-in for me." Employees who have a sense of buy-in have normative commitment. Employees who feel obligated to stay (and would feel guilty leaving) because of their loyalty to the department, leadership, and team are experiencing normative commitment. Phyllis's partner works at DU which gives Phyllis an instant connection and sense of loyalty to DU. Dwight mentioned their

117

sense of loyalty and commitment was to the students they interact with and help.

Dwight's organizational commitment shifted drastically between interviews to the

point of contemplating quitting; however, their loyalty to the students pushed

them to get the programs up and running and implement better recruitment strategies for

prospective students. Out of twelve NHS, four were alums of DU and had a sense of

loyalty and commitment because of that connection. Having connections played a huge

part in multiple NHS getting hired, which enhanced their loyalty and commitment to DU.

Aside from grit and honoring connections, NHS also had a sense of loyalty as an

alum, and to their colleagues, department, and students. As an alum, Ryan had a stronger

sense of commitment coming in as a post-grad into a full-time staff position, and they

referenced the support they received throughout their graduate program and graduate

assistantship that strengthened their commitment. After working at DU in a staff role for

six months, Ryan said:

> *From a staff perspective to the point of, how faculty and staff are treated*
>
> *differently, right, no one cares. No one supports staff. We don't get staff*
>
> *support…. But having now been a staff member and railroaded, I don't really feel*
>
> *very committed to DU. Because again, what for... what's the benefit?*

Ryan explained how the campus parking garage was being remodeled and needed to park

in a different lot that was further away and was not covered, opposite of what Ryan

originally had. Ryan felt their needs were not addressed and stated, "if the university does

not care about me or what happens, then that is not really accommodating." Aside from Ryan's loyalty to DU as an alum, for them, loyalty showed up by engaging with a particular endeavor. Ryan's normative commitment developed and strengthened when their beliefs and priorities came together, creating a sense of loyalty to the position and students they serve. Ryan believes "if you don't care about something, and you show up, you might as well not have, because there's no part of you that's really engaging with a particular endeavor."

Coming straight from a student position into their first full-time position, Dwight believed they were hired because "I did four years here. In a way that other staff probably don't have. So that's why I'm here, probably why they gave me the gig." Dwight's retention and commitment stemmed from their past experiences as a student, but at their sixth-month interview, their commitment shifted to their loyalty to the students they serve. Dwight's commitment to the students is to provide the same support they felt as a student to the students they help. At one point, Dwight stated, "DU doesn't care about you. I don't feel anything toward DU. They don't care at the end of the day about the people here. They're a large institution that responds to money." This is an example of an employee accessing multiple components of commitment, affective and normative. Dwight expressed how they feel like DU does not care about their

feelings, which has pushed their loyalty toward the students since the students have

helped shape their affective commitment.

Dwight was one of the few whose organizational commitment relied on

the students and making sure their needs were met rather than their own. For example,

Dwight said, "my commitment is to the students to make sure that I'm continuing to

change the structures in a way that these programs are going to be more inclusive to all

types of people overall." Dwight's loyalty to the students is a component of normative

commitment because they kept questioning the consequences if they quit, instilling that

sense of obligation to stay. Dwight's commitment was tethered to the success of the

programs they ran, and if they left, they sensed the entire department would crumble.

Dwight posed an internal dilemma of quitting or waiting until the next quarter once

everything settled. They were asked why they would stay when they were so unhappy,

and said:

> *Whether or not I want to be committed, I'm the only thing keeping the ship afloat.*
>
> *And so, to me, I have a commitment to the students that I've worked so hard to*
>
> *recruit. I don't have any commitment to DU at all. But I do owe something to the*
>
> *students because they reflect the larger social structure of DU, and oftentimes our*
>
> *students of color or students from marginalized backgrounds do not find a*
>
> *program that is of interest. But really, it's a structural problem. So, my*
>
> *commitment is to the students to make sure that I'm continuing to change the*

structures in a way that these programs are going to be more inclusive to all types

of students.

Stanley and Michael, also alums, mentioned having a sense of loyalty and commitment to DU from when they were a student. Stanley and Michael mentioned how different DU is for staff compared to when they were students. Stanley said they were still learning what their relationship with DU looked like as a staff member versus a student, making them view DU differently. For Stanley, they need to reconstruct their relationship with DU through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) with the work they are completing for DU to feel that sense of loyalty.

Team Support. Team support was another aspect of loyalty that NHS acquired that shaped normative commitment. Meredith's normative commitment is their loyalty to their team because they value their coworkers and supervisor and what they have put in to rebuild the department after high staff turnover. With a strong team environment and support system, it has been easy for Meredith to develop normative commitment and "have a huge drive to get things done and improve systems, and help out students and improve DU as a school." Kelly mentioned feeling well supported by their team but has been missing strategic direction and oversight to complete their duties efficiently; however, with high

department turnover, Kelly still feels their department cares and is figuring out a path going forward for better team support.

Stanley's team and department strongly advocate for DEI initiatives and the communities they serve. Stanley's normative commitment developed through the team's support as an advocate for minoritized and underrepresented groups. Previously, Stanley mentioned the importance of DEI shaping their affective commitment; again, DEI is shaping their loyalty to their team, department, and work. For Stanley, their organizational commitment is based on their loyalty to keep their word and keep things moving forward in their department. Additionally, Stanley seeks the responsibility to ensure they effectively serve affinity groups and the communities around DU.

Ryan's support for their team showed up in understanding the team's potential through their vision, thoughts, actions, and ideas. Unfortunately, Ryan believes their team cannot reach their full potential "because they're doing everything with one hand tied behind their back." When asked if they could further explain the team's potential, they said, "I enjoy my team, but this team....this is where I want to make this very clear; I think my team is fantastic, but everyone can't be their best selves when they're constantly in the pressure cooker because of situations outside of their control." This statement was regarding all the vacant positions in Ryan's department that are waiting to be advertised because main human resources have not pushed the postings through; therefore,

prolonging the staffing shortages and having current employees take on more work without rewards or incentives, leading to overworked and burnt-out employees.

Phyllis's loyalty developed for their team during a busy event season when Phyllis needed extra support, and the entire team came to help to make sure the event went smoothly. For Phyllis, that proved the team's loyalty; therefore, they provided the same loyalty back. Additionally, Phyllis's supervisor was one of the few who devoted their time getting Phyllis a raise for completing duties outside of the job description, reaffirming their supervisor's loyalty and ultimately enhancing their normative commitment. Aside from their loyalty to their team, Phyllis searched for a staff club to join to develop their loyalty to the larger community of DU; however, they were unsuccessful in locating clubs. Phyllis stated,

> *"It's [clubs] super obvious for students, but not so much for staff members, and I think that is a big part of retention. If I join a club with DU, even if I'm having a hard time in my job, I would still be... there would be a level of commitment of, I don't want to leave because I love my club."*

This statement is similar to feeling siloed and wanting that connection across campus. However, it is difficult to accomplish when it is too difficult to locate staff clubs compared to finding student clubs.

For Jim, team support falls under their purview, and they believe effective team support comes from having pride in where you work and having the desire to do good work. According to Jim, when employees want to be in their roles, they feel privileged because it is desirable. When experience matches the skill level required for the position, it is easier for NHS to feel loyal to the university. Jim views team support through a lens of affective and normative commitment because they feel loyalty to the university because of the trust and support they have received from their peers and supervisor. Jim wants to uphold DU's reputable reputation by creating "a culture that is strengths-based, transparent and very open, where people ask questions, and we share data."

Provided a Reward

Almost all NHS mentioned benefits as a reward for their labor, and tuition assistance was the main benefit to enhance organizational commitment. A few NHS wanted to use the tuition assistance to advance their careers, but not necessarily specific to their job duties or advance within DU. The benefit of tuition assistance gives employees the chance to further their education, develop new skills, achieve new milestones, and receive professional development. Tuition assistance can be perceived as a reward for an employee's time and commitment to the university's success. Since tuition assistance plays a factor in organizational commitment and employee retention, benefits should be widely known throughout the onboarding process to allow for maximum absorbency to not overwhelm NHS and give them opportunities to utilize these rewards.

Tuition Assistance. Stanley was very transparent about utilizing the

tuition assistance to not have to pay themselves. Stanley did mention having a

very particular goal and timeline for obtaining a master's degree and charging

ahead with the things they want to do in life, which was the main reason pushing

them to stay at DU to complete a master's degree and move into a position that

more aligned with their career goals. Additionally, Stanley mentioned staying for

the stability, ease, and comfort they need while completing the degree. Pam

mentioned that they specifically looked for jobs at DU because of the

"phenomenal MBA program, and the fact that I could come here and do my MBA

was one of the deciding factors." Pam said their organizational commitment was

shaped before they started working because of the privilege that comes with

working at DU and the opportunity to attend their top-ranked graduate business

programs. Pam trusts once they receive their master's degree, more doors will

open for them to advance their career.

The downside to DU's tuition assistance is the limit of credit hours an

employee can take per academic year, meaning, it was a longer timeframe to

complete a master's degree, which was Dwight's dilemma. Dwight stated:

I'm finding it really hard to reconcile in my head, like, you're gonna have to stay

with this job you hate to do this degree. Is that worth it? Is that what you want to

be doing? And that's what everyone's telling me I should be doing. And I literally

125

> *came back from that vacation being like, I'm either getting a master's degree or*
>
> *I'm quitting.*

Other NHS mentioned how the limit of credits hinders their commitment because it constraints them to their job and DU for at least three years. NHS need to wait six months before this tuition assistance starts. Also, Jim and Oscar mentioned the desire to pass their full tuition assistance benefits to a family member rather than further limiting the number of credit hours a family member can use per academic year. Quite a few NHS mentioned how tuition assistance was of no use to them and would rather have funds for professional development opportunities. With these two differing outlooks on the tuition assistance benefit, there is a need for HRIC to connect with NHS and explain the available options for tuition assistance and professional development.

Supervisor and Leadership

Supervisor and/or leadership were brought up by almost all NHS and how both impacted their normative commitment. During the first round of interviews, NHS were asked about the onboarding they received from their supervisor and if the supervisors focused on their well-being and commitment. A couple NHS had positive onboarding experiences with their supervisor, while a handful of NHS had no supervisor or inconsistent supervisors. NHS that did not have a direct supervisor were managed by leadership, which is why leadership is included in this section.

126

Supervision. Jim's onboarding began before they started because their supervisor included them in conversations to keep them abreast of projects and other initiatives going on in the department. Jim's normative commitment developed through the loyalty they developed for their supervisor, who provided them with an extensive onboarding process that eased Jim into their position and did not need to play catch up because they were already prepared. Phyllis developed loyalty to their supervisor because the supervisor implemented wellness Wednesdays and advocated for them to receive a raise. Phyllis's supervisor has shown Phyllis they have their best interest in mind, which enhances Phyllis's loyalty and normative commitment.

Kevin and Dwight started with a supervisor, and by the second interview, Kevin was without a supervisor and Dwight had three different direct supervisors by that point. Having three different supervisors was extremely challenging for Dwight because they had no direction on what needed to be completed and felt "like a floating nebulous" until their recent supervisor showed Dwight they believed in their ideas and cared about them. Dwight said,

> *It goes to show if you just have one person who believes in you, in your corner, that can make all the difference. Like, I was really ready to quit, pull the trigger, and then meeting my new supervisor and being like, 'Oh, you actually seem to care about me, and you seem to care about the program, and you seem to like,*

want to hear what I have to say.' And not only that, but they're not going to brush

off my ideas.

Dwight mentioned that the little things their supervisor does make a difference and impact their loyalty and commitment. Dwight established a supervisory bond where Dwight changed their mind about quitting and became excited about future collaborations with their supervisor.

Leadership. Kelly's leadership team continued to have two senior-level positions remain vacant for the past six months. Kelly mentioned there is a lot of uncertainty and stress among staff and a lack of clarity around their priorities and what they need to complete. The lack of transparency about the vacant senior-level positions impacted Kelly's normative commitment. Oscar had some challenges with leadership around communication that caused some hurdles in developing their organizational commitment and caused enough of an impact for Oscar to compare their current organizational commitment to their previous institution. Oscar explained from their perspective that there are unrealistic employee expectations compared to what leadership suggests, and leadership is less than willing to listen to why something might not be realistic and obtainable. Oscar said their position is "driven by numbers, and there is pressure to reach certain metrics that are black and white, without understanding the nuances of how to get there realistically."

Stanley built enough loyalty and trust with their supervisor where they are comfortable challenging their supervisor, leadership, and the division, and "call them out when something problematic happens, is said, or even if something that's been overlooked and could become problematic." Stanley does not like to see things go undone or ignored, and their commitment is impacted by honesty and authenticity, which has enabled them to be direct and communicative. Therefore, Stanley's ability to stand up for what is right enhances their normative commitment and keeps them retained. On the other hand, when Stanley has decisions made for them by leadership, they said there is no space for them to show up as a human, especially a human with problems that leadership would not be able to fathom.

When asked what leadership can do to enhance organizational commitment, Stanley said to keep their word and deliver on promises. Stanley said when leaders who have power lack commitment to make beneficial change, it creates frustration and contributes to higher turnover of "incredible people who are passionate about the work that they do, and they no longer want to be in this space." When top talent employees witness a lack of commitment from leadership, who have the power to make significant changes and are not making those changes, it creates a sense of disloyalty to the university's mission and values. Ryan, who had negative experiences with central and in-house leadership,

said there is nothing HRIC can do to make them feel heard or strengthen their organizational commitment. Ryan explained their lack of commitment to leadership as:

> *Kind of like when you're in a relationship, and you've been dating for six months, and it's been red flags up to that point…There is no amount of love bombing at the six-month mark that is going to want you to stay with that person. You're looking for you're out at that point.*

Ryan mentioned never receiving a welcome from the dean of the school, even during slow months, and the first time they met the dean was when they asked for additional funding and resources. To Ryan, there was no way this interaction would be viewed as productive because they did not feel comfortable providing their honest opinion and did not think the dean was approachable since they never met them. Not having a relationship with the dean caused a lack of loyalty and commitment to Ryan's department and the university. The findings helped to provide HRIC with recommendations to resolve disruptions that NHS encountered throughout orientation and onboarding. While most of these findings do not relate specifically to orientation, they pertain to onboarding. HRIC has the resources to address the challenges and barriers NHS experienced that impacted their organizational commitment.

Summary

The program evaluation findings revealed that NHS appreciated orientation but found it overwhelming with too much information to absorb. Most of the NHS mentioned benefits as the main topic of interest during orientation and wanted more time to meet with HRIC to discuss benefits one-on-one. Each NHS had different onboarding experiences, with some supervisors being hands-on and other supervisors hands-off or nonexistent. Two participants had in-house human resources professionals who onboarded them into their position and department, while others had to struggle their way through onboarding with internal and external barriers. From the findings, it is clear that orientation does not play a huge role in staff retention, but it does show employees the privileges that come with working at DU. Orientation may still be one of the first encounters a NHS has with the organization, and allows for an opportunity to update orientation and onboarding to focus on developing organizational commitment to increase employee retention and decrease turnover. When organizations can understand more of what their employees need to be successful, it allows employees to feel seen and heard and get what they need to be more efficient.

The findings in this study suggest that there are many parts of the orientation and onboarding program that are perceived as impacting staff's organizational commitment. Conversely, there are parts of orientation that staff

see as ineffective or negatively impacting their organizational commitment. The next chapter will offer recommendations to HRIC to enhance orientation and, ultimately organizational commitment and retention. Overall, Meredith summed commitment up by saying:

I think in order for people to successfully be committed to their workplace, they need to be provided for. There shouldn't be a huge give-and-take. I think you should be paid for the work that you're doing, and circumstances such as inflation, the pandemic, and cost of living should be considered when going into pay. I think if you're committed to a job, it's because you really care about the people you work with, and you don't want their jobs to be harder if you suddenly left because you care about them; they provide for you, and you provide for them.

When viewing staff employees, leaders must realize that when staff provides for the university, leadership must provide for them. For some NHS, this was the case and they developed stronger organizational commitment, while others' commitment weakened, ultimately leading to their resignation. The next chapter will offer recommendations to HRIC based on the findings on improving the orientation and onboarding program for newly hired staff.

Chapter Five:

Discussion, Recommendations & Conclusion

This program evaluation used a Utilization-Focused Evaluation to identify improvements for the orientation and onboarding program at the University of Denver (DU) to enhance newly hired staffs' (NHS) organizational commitment in hopes of improving staff retention and decreasing employee turnover. This study monitored twelve NHS from their first month to their sixth month of employment. This study aimed to understand the experiences and perceptions of NHS who attended orientation and how NHS organizational commitment developed throughout the first six months of work. Understanding these experiences and perceptions offers recommendations for program improvements discussed throughout this chapter.

The findings of this evaluation will help DU and HRIC implement parameters around what human resources, supervisors and leadership, and employees can achieve to increase employee engagement and retention. Additionally, the findings may be helpful for other higher education institutions (HEI) facing high staff turnover, especially among newly hired staff. Since there is high staff turnover within higher education, it may be beneficial for other HEIs to initiate program improvements centered around developing a newly hired staff's organizational commitment. The ultimate goal is to increase retention and

improve the experience for staff, which would reduce turnover and decrease the high costs that come with employee turnover.

This chapter focuses on research questions 3 and 4 and offers recommendations constructed by the researcher and the NHS's views of process improvement. As a reminder, research questions 3 and 4 are:

3. How can orientation and onboarding be improved to enhance organizational commitment?

4. What are the factors that contribute to greater organizational commitment?

The findings are presented this way because research questions 3 and 4 cover program recommendations, while Chapter Four discussed the experiences and perceptions of NHS that addressed research questions 1 and 2. As a reminder, research questions 1 and 2 are:

1. What are newly hired staff's perceptions of orientation and onboarding?

2. What influences organizational commitment?

The next section discusses the findings with suggestions on how HRIC can improve newly hired staff's orientation and onboarding experience—followed by three overarching recommendations relating to commitment components: affective, continuance, and normative. The suggestions are simple improvements HRIC can implement to create a smoother onboarding and transition for staff at DU. The recommendations are improvements that will take time to implement and achieve;

therefore, they are more detailed to encourage leadership to implement staff retention strategies around organizational commitment.

Discussion of Findings

From the first interview to the second (six months from the start date), it was evident NHS's organizational commitment changed due to the barriers and challenges they encountered throughout their onboarding. At the same time, there were aspects of orientation and onboarding that worked well for NHS that made the transition into their new position stress-free, and enhanced their organizational commitment. Additionally, the unique experiences of NHS alums will be addressed, and a discussion on what DU and HRIC are doing effectively to retain NHS. Following will be recommendations based on the findings and suggestions from NHS, previous literature, and strategies that have worked for industries outside of higher education.

There were several staff updates provided after one year of employment at DU. Angela's last day was on their six-month mark and when their second interview was conducted. Angela left DU for a job with summers off, within walking distance, and prepares students to transition from high school to college. When Angela was asked if DU or their supervisor could do anything to prevent them from leaving, Angela indicated there was nothing to keep them at DU. Even though Angela enjoyed the online orientation format and had crossover with their

predecessor, making onboarding a smoother transition, it was clear Angela left because the job duties did not align with their values. Similarly, in the first interview, Angela mentioned wanting to work at other universities that aligned with their values. At that point, it was obvious they had no intention of staying at DU long-term.

Ryan left after one year for a different university with a more flexible remote work policy. Several NHS are without a supervisor due to transition and turnover, while others have a supervisor or are provided guidance through senior leadership. With leadership constantly shifting, DU would benefit from implementing programs and training around supervision because supervision and leadership impacted quite a few NHS' organizational commitment. Specifically, implementing training around synergistic supervision can increase employee retention. This type of supervision has been used predominately with entry-level professionals; however, there are advantages to this leadership style that mid- to senior-level professionals can benefit from that enhance their affective organizational commitment and improve overall retention.

The main reason NHS remain at DU is the tuition assistance benefit; however, the limit of 20 credits an academic year prevents some employees from utilizing this benefit. The challenges and barriers NHS faced caused tension and hindered their organizational commitment. The common experiences that caused tension and shifted NHS' organizational commitment include the remote work policy, diversity and inclusivity, career growth, and taking on additional duties from being understaffed. Almost all NHS

felt overworked and only a few NHS received recognition or a reward, while others received nothing for taking on additional duties outside of their job description.

Ultimately, these findings and recommendations hope to make work more human (Mosley & Irvine, 2021) by developing employees to become their best selves through training, feedback, and rewards; when employees feel secure to express their views and ideas with respect for themselves and others; or employees can use their talents and voice for good. Mosley and Irvine (2021) believe organizational trust, coworker relationships, meaningful work, recognition, feedback, growth, empowerment, and work-life balance characterize a human workplace. While all these characteristics cannot be the responsibility of just human resources, HRIC at DU can utilize the recommendations and incorporate supervisors, leadership, and employees to help implement improvements.

Orientation and Onboarding

The orientation and onboarding program for newly hired staff (NHS) must be viewed as a process rather than an event (Saunders & Cooper, 2003). Currently, most orientations for NHS are filled with an overload of information about policies, workplace culture, and professional expectations (Tull, 2006), making it difficult for NHS to retain information. For HRIC to improve the

137

orientation and onboarding program and address organizational commitment, People

Development must address the three themes mentioned in the previous chapter, listed

below in Table 3.

Table 3

Employee Needs and Improvements for Retaining Newly Hired Staff

Category	Need	Recommendations
Orientation	Reduce the information provided during orientation to prevent information overload, causing the new employee to retain bits and pieces of important information. One-on-one appointments with benefits specialists to assist the employees who just "came for the benefits."	2-Day, hybrid, once-a-month orientation. Synchronous online class/meeting. Tour of campus for employees. Meet with benefits specialists, supervisor, and team.
Onboarding	Allow time for the university system to register new hires and grant access to systems, portal, and email effective on the first day of employment; however, this will be more effective with a human resources liaison.	HRIC and Shared Services to become one entity. Liaisons need to be provided for each college and school throughout the university.

As mentioned throughout this study, orientation is one of the first moments a new

employee begins developing their organizational commitment, with onboarding

solidifying organizational commitment. From the findings in Chapter Four, it was clear

that some NHS missed the personal aspect of being on campus for new employee

orientation, while others enjoyed the flexibility and the introspective time alone to

understand the benefits, policies, expectations, and available resources. A change in orientation modality can meet the needs of NHS who seek relationship building, digestible information, and resources to succeed in their new position. Further, if DU and HRIC implement these improvements, it will address the information overload barrier and provide more time with benefits specialists.

Information Overload

At the time of this study, orientations were held virtually and later shifted to a hybrid (half online, half in-person) model after data collection occurred. The interviews showed that NHS were overwhelmed with the information they received and chose certain aspects to focus on, such as benefits. With the stress of starting a new position and learning about the organization, opting for an online site to store orientation and onboarding documents and resources would allow new employees to review everything at their own pace.

Since NHS have diverse work backgrounds, different orientations must be offered to be mindful of one's time and redundancy. For instance, an online orientation would be beneficial in several ways:

- It is supplied to all incoming hires with different versions for faculty, mid-to senior-level, and entry-level professionals.

- Employees with access can refer back to the information.

- Complete an electronic checklist to keep them on track, and a completed orientation notifies HRIC.

This way, NHS stays accountable to deadlines, HRIC can check on their progress, and (4) allows staff to meet basic needs, such as setting up and navigating web accounts that can be accomplished before orientation or their first day.

An orientation designed for entry-level higher education professionals, who may not be knowledgeable of the hierarchy, common terms and acronyms, or the different functions of higher education, could benefit from orientation and onboarding being spread out over a longer period, functioning as a process. This improvement can reduce stress and turnover while speeding up the development of organizational commitment. There can be another orientation for mid- to senior-level professionals who have worked in higher education for more than five years and do not need higher education background information. DU's culture, policies, benefits, leadership, colleges, schools, and departments are topics to include. During the in-person portion of orientation, new employees learn about staff support services, well-being, and professional development, with representatives from benefits and staff affinity groups. This format would include a brief information session on each topic, followed by new employees speaking with representatives and reviewing topics of interest.

Came for the Benefits

As stated previously, almost all NHS attended orientation specifically for the benefits section, and it was clear some benefits were reasons why the NHS stayed and outweighed the costs of leaving. From the literature, employee benefits can help engage employees and enhance their organizational commitment. From the findings, Pam mentioned their orientation ran behind, and the benefits section needed to be cut short, not allowing enough time for NHS to learn about all the employee benefits available. Therefore, orientation could benefit from changing to a hybrid model of half online and half in-person. This model would allow NHS to meet with benefits specialists one-on-one to discuss their ultimate care and needs.

Additionally, there is the possibility to treat orientation as a career fair and include booths and tables for representatives from affinity groups, professional development, benefits, mentorships, sporting events, academics, and other resources. End with a campus tour and close out with a handoff to their supervisor and team. Further, to keep orientation and onboarding more of a process, benefits specialists can connect with employees who meet the tuition assistance requirements and help create professional development plans.

Need for a Liaison

Most of the concerns, challenges, and barriers NHS experienced could have been resolved with a human resources liaison for each department or

141

college. Unfortunately, the HRIC department is severely short-staffed and would not be able to take on this task alone; therefore, combining HRIC and Shared Services (SS) would provide SS employees the opportunity to learn more about the employee development side, potentially enhancing their normative commitment and loyalty to DU, or require leadership to provide an HR liaison within the college or department. Additionally, a liaison could assist with employee retention through outreach after NHS's first month, reminding NHS they are their liaison and can help with system access, technology issues, timesheet inputs, and accrued leave hours. After NHS reach their sixth month of employment, their liaison can help with tuition assistance benefits and offer suggestions on joining groups or clubs to enhance NHS's engagement and retention.

Technology issues and system access were a constant challenge for NHS. Ryan mentioned, "My biggest bone has been with the administration and the relationship with tech, like, getting all the things I need to do my job." Technology and system issues are hard to predict until they happen; however, HRIC can implement a requirement where a new hire must wait at least a week before they start working or only hire on certain dates to allow the system to process. For NHS that are quickly recruited and onboarded, there is a need for a Frequently Asked Questions section on HRIC's website to help alleviate stress, and employees can get quick answers.

Meredith suggested, "A clearer place to go if you're having problems with this, contact this person, or a clear sort of way out of who does what, and who can I contact if

I'm having this problem and that kind of thing." Additionally, to prevent

confusion and silos, DU should require all the colleges and schools to function

similarly. This improvement can facilitate a connection between employees across

the campus and is a reason for an employee to stay, enhancing their affective and

normative commitment. An HR liaison is crucial for newly hired staff to succeed

and feel a sense of belonging and commitment to DU. In the findings, Oscar and

Michael had a more engaging and helpful onboarding process because they have

an HR liaison in the department.

Ultimately, NHS perceived orientation as informative yet overwhelming.

Mid-to senior-level NHS (five or more years of higher education work

experience), familiar with higher education but new to DU, were focused on

learning about the benefits offered. They wanted one-on-one time with benefits

specialists to understand the most they could get from their benefits. NHS who

received the checklist and other onboarding emails one week before orientation,

had a more impactful orientation. They had time before orientation to review new

employee information, which gave them the mental capacity to focus on topics of

utmost importance, such as benefits and DU's affinity groups.

Organizational Commitment Improvements

Throughout the interviews, it was apparent NHS developed multiple

components of organizational commitment. Many factors from NHS's

perspectives and experiences contributed to developing their organizational commitment. If HR liaisons are provided, negative experiences can be addressed early on before those experiences turn into employee turnover. Intervening and resolving the issue would make NHS feel attended to and cared for, turning that negative impact into a positive one and enhancing organizational commitment. On the other hand, plenty of positive experiences enhanced NHS' organizational commitment, and those moments of recognition should be used throughout the university to enhance commitment further.

Affective Commitment

Affective commitment for this study included feelings and emotions and goals and values, leading to the themes of feeling siloed and overworked, and values and goals toward inclusivity, diversity, and identity. Table 4 is a visual of the categories of affective commitment, the themes associated with the category, the need for improvement, and recommendations.

Table 4

Employee Needs and Improvements for Enhancing Affective Commitment

Category	Theme	Need	Solution
Feelings & Emotions	Siloed	Feeling siloed impacts newly hired staff's organizational commitment.	Staff channels on Teams.

Feelings & Emotions	Overworked	Departments are understaffed. Job postings are taking too long to post. Staff is taking on additional duties, causing burnout.	Opportunities for career growth. Learn new skills. Reward and recognition for overworked staff.
Goals & Values	Inclusive Excellence & Diversity	Lack of diversity throughout campus. Harder to recruit new employees. Requirements to get into DU may be too limiting.	Representatives from DEI to speak on inclusive excellence during orientation (lead by example). Representatives from staff affinity groups. Trainings for inclusive excellence and diversity.
Goals & Values	Identity	Being misgendered and incorrect use of pronouns.	Trainings for inclusive excellence and diversity.

Feeling Siloed

Feeling siloed and alone impacted almost all NHS, especially staff in entry-level positions that faced burnout from being overworked. These feelings and emotions impacted NHS's affective commitment, ultimately hindering retention. Overall, from the participants' interviews, NHS lacked a sense of community toward DU; therefore, creating staff groups of similar positions on an online platform (Microsoft Teams) that will connect NHS with other employees that have similar job duties, reducing the sense of loneliness and isolation, and make DU a more collaborative and cohesive university. Improving a sense of

145

community is important because "community flourishes when people recognize others with whom they work and spend their time" (Mosley & Irvine, 2021, p. 97). Peer-to-peer interactions and recognition can further develop cohesivity among the colleges across campus and build a stronger community.

Very rarely do employees broadcast their unhappiness, and if they confide in leadership, it is during their exit interview, which is usually too late to persuade them to stay (Mosley & Irvine, 2021). Feeling siloed and alone can push any employee to the brink of resigning, and it is HRIC and management's responsibility to notice a situation that needs more attention to prevent turnover. Looking back at the findings, feeling siloed was the number one challenge NHS faced during onboarding, and an easy fix if leadership is taking the time to connect with their employees to understand employees' unmet needs and wants. Involving staff in decisions that will impact their work can help them feel heard, feel less alone if others are experiencing the same challenges, and enhance their affective commitment and loyalty to stay if they see they are being cared for and supported.

Overworked

The higher education workforce is struggling with high turnover and understaffed departments. Understaffed departments cannot perform at their highest level, limiting the work they can complete, which causes a chain reaction for other services to be delayed. For DU, promptly approving and posting available jobs on career boards is a major

challenge, which elongates overworked employees in continually understaffed departments. When available positions sit empty, the department is responsible for picking up the extra job duties while they wait to fill the position. If HRIC cannot increase productivity with position postings, DU will continue to have high staff turnover. Leadership may recognize that departments can get work completed while being understaffed and not see an urgency for posting the positions; however, with this outlook, leadership may need to realize how overworked their current employees are and could be on the verge of quitting.

For understaffed departments, listing opportunities for internal employees to transition can give staff a chance to learn new skills and gain experience that will advance their career, ultimately enhancing affective commitment and intent to stay with DU. Regardless, HRIC and leadership need to recognize employees for their hard work and reward them to show DU cares and wants to keep employees happy, committed, and retained. Recognition applied to performance reviews can impact affective and continuance commitment and overall intent to stay. Additionally, social recognition between peers impacts retention. HRIC could benefit from implementing a social recognition structure throughout orientation to get new employees oriented and aware of the positives of recognition.

An implementation deemed successful in social recognition was the 3 Pillars of Working Human: Thank, Talk, and Celebrate, which rewards employees for their hard work through purpose, meaning, and gratitude. Consistent gratitude becomes essential to employees' career growth and success. Thanking an employee is "expressing authentic appreciation for someone's work effort or positive behavior" (Mosley & Irvine, 2021, p. xviii). Talking includes checking in with employees, coaching employees, and keeping an open dialogue between people and teams. Celebrating employees shows how we relate to one another through affirmation of values and goals and showing regard for one another (Mosley & Irvine, 2021).

Inclusive Excellence & Diversity

Along with feelings and emotions, goals and values impact affective commitment for some NHS. Several NHS commented about a white man discussing diversity and affinity groups during orientation and how that does not bode well for the Department of Human Resources & Inclusive Community. Ryan stated, "Having a representative from an affinity group would look even a little bit better" because it would show a representation of DU's culture and could provide an opportunity for an open conversation around DU's diversity and inclusion.

Stanley mentioned the hypocrisy of DU being inclusive and diverse while excluding representatives from underrepresented communities during orientation. The lack of representation of minoritized individuals impacts organizational commitment

148

because NHS needs to see representation from staff who share similarities;

therefore, it is important to address these inequities while new employee

recruitment has yet to finish. Providing reassurance to new employees during

orientation, the last recruitment phase, can show NHS this is not the overall

culture at DU.

Ryan and Stanley believe their preconceived notions and misconceptions

about DU were validated after they attended orientation and again throughout

onboarding. Stanley mentioned having the sense of no longer caring because they

do not see DU advocating for their Brown, Black, and Indigenous employees.

With a lack of diverse representation, other NHS' misconceptions or preconceived

notions about DU are validated, and their organizational commitment will be

negatively impacted, potentially causing them to leave before they even begin,

further increasing turnover and overworked departments. Further, the mission

statement stood out when reviewing HRIC's website for new employee resources

because it revolves around the student experience rather than the employee

experience. HRIC's mission statement reads:

> *It is increasingly clear that an engaged, talented faculty and staff will be critical*
>
> *to realizing DU's considerable aspirations and supporting a new generation of*
>
> *students.*

HRIC's mission statement needs to recognize employees and mention services that engage faculty and staff, making them feel like a critical asset in achieving DU's aspirations of supporting new generations of students. It will be difficult to increase employee retention unless HRIC views employees as valuable assets that keep the university functioning. Staff deserves the same time, attention, and resources it takes to recruit, onboard, and train NHS.

Additionally, if leadership is not enhancing performance results by aligning culture with strategy, and employees are aware of these inconsistencies, employees will not believe in the authenticity of DU's values. For example, some NHS commented that it feels inauthentic to believe in DU's mission when DU's actions do not match their values. The NHS, which did not share the same purpose as HRIC, viewed their relationship with DU as transactional, working for pay and rewards that come with doing a job (Mosley & Irvine, 2021), impacting their affective commitment.

Identity

Diversity and inclusion correlate with one's core self and how it impacts one's affective commitment. While this study had similar identity issues presented, identity in this study was NHS not having a voice or being able to make decisions for themselves. The major policy that most NHS did not agree with is the remote work policy and the need for more flexibility during winter and summer quarters. For example, Ryan mentioned having no student meetings during summer because it is an off-season and

how it would behoove DU to be more flexible with the remote work policy to

show they are acknowledging and implementing new practices to meet the needs

of their employees, ultimately enhancing organizational commitment and

retention.

Ryan also had issues with disability services and received pushback from

leadership regarding their accommodation request, needed to do their job

successfully. Ryan stated their frustrations with the lack of knowledge and

support around staff with disabilities who may need accommodations. HRIC does

offer employees a Request for Reasonable Accommodation Form on the

university's website, but it took several clicks to get to the correct form. Having

these forms readily available for NHS can enhance commitment and reassure

them they made the right decision choosing DU. Additionally, the development of

staff positions, hiring practices, and other personnel policies and procedures must

follow those already established within the institution, including "rights,

privileges, and responsibilities, and extend to considerations such as salary, rank,

tenure, and fringe benefits" (Mosley & Irvine, 2021, p. 64).

Along with inclusion, identity was a challenge for Dwight, who was

misgendered throughout their time as a student at DU and continued into their

full-time positions. Pronouns need to be respected and utilized, and Dwight felt

their supervisor tried for a month and gave up because it was too inconvenient for

them to remember the correct pronouns. Having this negative experience continue for years has impacted Dwight's affective commitment and their basic need of feeling seen and valued as a human. Ultimately, affective commitment led to the overarching outcome of *Ways to Connect Across Campus*. This outcome helps address NHS feeling siloed and overworked while addressing inclusive excellence, diversity, and identity.

Continuance Commitment

Continuance commitment for this study included costs of leaving presented as predictors of turnover among the twelve NHS. The two presenting themes were lack of career growth and compensation. Table 5 shows the categories of continuance commitment, the themes associated with the category, the need for improvement, and recommendations.

Table 5

Employee Needs and Improvements for Enhancing Continuance Commitment

Category	Theme	Need	Recommendations
Predictors of Turnover	Career Growth	Lack of opportunities for career growth.	Implement Realistic Job Preview to determine if the position is a good fit. Offer career and promotional tracks.
Predictors of Turnover	Compensation	Competitive pay and better incentives.	Mini bonuses. Redeem points for rewards. Competitive pay that keeps up with inflation rates. Reassessing pay structures annually.

Career Growth

Mosley and Irvine (2021) suggest continuous improvement in processes, procedures, and business outcomes. To help with career growth, NHS can track their performance on completed tasks, receive feedback from team members and leadership, and use it during performance evaluations. Tracking continuous improvement is a way for employees to remember all the projects they have completed and shows NHS's growth and improvement. Oscar mentioned the pay gap between DU and other institutions and the need for a promotional track for advancing within the university. Additionally, they mentioned how DU is "behind the times" with its flexibility toward remote workers. These two predictors of turnover were something Oscar considered when asked if they planned on leaving DU, along with lack of recognition through rewards.

For entry-level NHS, implementing realistic job previews to communicate important aspects of the job allows NHS to weigh the pros and cons of the position and if it aligns with their preferences. Realistic job previews could increase continuance commitment because it gives NHS a chance to "try" out the job, and if it is not a good job fit, they can express these concerns to HRIC and leadership to find something else that aligns with their skillset. Job satisfaction can be evaluated at 90 days, six months, again at one year for NHS, and then annually during performance reviews for returning employees. Assessing job

satisfaction can assist with NHS feeling overwhelmed by taking on additional job duties outside their job description and not receiving rewards or recognition.

When asked why they think the university is struggling to retain top-talented employees, Kevin said, "I think, probably a mix of like pay, and, like policies refusing to change. Like, I've heard a lot of things from people where if the university kind of operated more like a startup or something, it would definitely keep people," because "I could be working in another company that does things more intelligently, or more quickly, and has a little bit more of an aligned direction." When policies are reluctant to change, it can impact continuance commitment and become a turnover factor. HRIC and DU must embrace policy changes related to the current and incoming workforce. The future of higher education is millennials and Generation Z, so why not start implementing new policies that focus on career growth since this workforce wants the development aspect but with a competitive compensation to keep up with the workforce.

Oscar was told there would be opportunities for them to be recognized for their work in the future, with no definitive timeframe, which needed to be a stronger answer for Oscar to feel recognized and valued as a team member. Moments like this could benefit from having a career and promotional track. Having a plan in place can help NHS know what they need to work toward to meet a certain goal, and once they do, they are rewarded for their hard work and meeting their goal. Suppose Oscar had been given a guide on how bonuses, promotions, and taking on additional tasks are rewarded. In that

154

case, it might have prevented Oscar from looking at other jobs outside DU. Not being recognized or rewarded for taking on additional tasks can be a huge factor in employee turnover, especially if they are helping the department function successfully. These career and promotional tracks need to include innovative ways of providing formal opportunities for career advancement (Lorden, 1998), including internal promotions, to impact continuance commitment and the retention of NHS.

Compensation

Oscar's organizational commitment was dependent on future promises made by leadership. Their continuance commitment fluctuated depending on what was promised for taking on additional job duties outside of their scope. Oscar said they would voluntarily quit if assigned more duties without a pay increase or title change. If Oscar received the recognition and reward(s) they were promised, their continuance commitment would retain them, which is more cost-effective than high turnover costs. Efforts should be made to determine appropriate classifications of positions, particularly in areas where comparable positions elsewhere within the institution do not exist.

In addition to providing an equitable setting for staff members, these considerations contribute to the institution's credibility, acceptance, and stability. Offer mini bonuses if providing a promotion and a raise is unlikely to happen.

Referring back to the point system, NHS can redeem a certain number of points for rewards. A few NHS mentioned wanting to receive DU items when they started but had to seek merchandise on their own. While merch and swag are minimal gifts, having an item gives employees that sense of pride for being a DU employee. Additionally, providing gifts, bonuses, and rewards can keep continuance commitment intact if HRIC and DU cannot raise pay and salaries due to inflation and other factors.

Normative Commitment

The findings for normative commitment were loyalty, rewards, and supervisor, leading to the themes of connections to DU, professional development, and supervisory leadership. Table 6 shows the categories of normative commitment, the themes associated with the category, the need for improvement, and recommendations.

Table 6

Employee Needs and Improvements for Enhancing Normative Commitment

Category	Theme	Need	Recommendations
Loyalty	Connections to DU	To monopolize on external & internal referrals	Offer referral bonuses.
Provided a Reward	Professional development	Increase credit hours taken during an academic year.	Unlimited credits allowed in an academic year for employees. Showcase programs each quarter or bi-monthly.

Supervisory Leadership	Supervision	Effective supervision.	Synergistic supervision training and supervisor academy program.
		Promoting within the university.	Offer positions to staff/faculty. Promote within to fill positions quicker. Interested employees start in an interim phase.
		Leadership keeping their word.	Transparency and allowing staff voices to be heard.

Connections to DU

Out of the twelve NHS who participated in this study, at least two were referred to DU through personal connections to an employee of DU. Roughly five NHS were alums of DU and shared a connection to DU as students and student employees, who transitioned into a full-time staff position within DU. A referral bonus program incentivizes employees to bring in other employees who they believe will be a good fit within the university. DU can retain two employees at once through a referral program with a hiring bonus, a 90-day bonus, and another bonus after one year (Phillips & Connell, 2003).

Five of the NHS are alums of DU, and three out of five expressed how their organizational commitment shifted from their time as students to full-time employees. Dwight's normative commitment was negatively impacted when they were misgendered and the main reason they contemplated leaving DU.

157

Additionally, Dwight said they would feel guilty for leaving because they got hired from their previous work experience and commitment to the program as a student and contemplated if they want to be at DU indefinitely. However, Dwight's affective commitment impelled them to stay and to give back to the students while taking responsibility for student engagement and retention.

Ryan originally joined DU with a sense of duty and a calling to make DU as good as when they were a student. During Ryan's sixth-month interview, they declared they would leave the university within the next six months. After the experiences Ryan encountered throughout their onboarding, they already knew they would leave DU because of their lack of drive to give back because Ryan did not feel supported by their alma mater. To improve staff retention, DU needs to respect and support the needs of its employees and treat them as valuable assets for the university's success.

Professional Development

In Chapter Four, NHS said they attended orientation to learn about employee benefits, including tuition assistance. When asked what factors keep NHS at DU, more than half mentioned utilizing the tuition assistance benefit to obtain an advanced degree to further their career. Angela mentioned they would have started another degree since they reached their sixth-month mark if it were not their last day at DU. Pam chose to work at DU because "it opens doors that I don't have access to otherwise, but purely because I want an MBA [Master of Business Administration]." Pam also acknowledged

158

that it would take three years to finish, which meant they committed to stay at DU

for at least three years while they complete an MBA degree. With this sense of

loyalty and obligation, Pam is reassuring DU that they will remain for as long as it

will take to complete an MBA.

Stanley's career aspirations are outside of higher education and require a

master's degree so they can transition into a role that aligns with their job

interests. Stanley's sense of ease, stability, and comfort with their position makes

them confident to begin a master's program. Dwight created a pros and cons list

before committing to a master's degree because it is at least a three-year

commitment, and they were unsure if they wanted to work for DU for three more

years, especially with their experience as an alum and staff member. Oscar

expressed disinterest in getting another advanced degree. They planned on giving

their spouse the tuition benefit but were displeased with the limited number of

credits one can take within an academic year. Dwight also expressed disinterest in

the limited number of credits allowed within an academic year because it would

hinder their graduate experience by not allowing them to continue with a cohort,

creating a barrier connecting with DU's campus.

Kevin mentioned their need for more awareness of all the graduate

programs DU offers and was only made aware of degrees associated with their

department. If Kevin was made aware of all the programs offered, it could impact

159

their normative commitment and give them a sense of obligation to stay to utilize the tuition assistance and advance their career. Therefore, there is a need to market graduate programs throughout campus for employees and students to see what DU has to offer and something to strive for, which ultimately impacts affective commitment since they would be incentivized to receive a graduate degree because it will lead to other opportunities, but also requires them to be loyal and remain committed to DU in order to receive a reward, which would be the tuition assistance/degree.

On the other hand, a few NHS were unlikely to utilize the tuition assistance and would rather have a family member or dependent be able to utilize the benefit. Do not have a cap on credits taken per academic year for relatives or dependents of a DU employee, and instead, provide them with the allotted twenty credits a DU employee can take per academic year. If DU offered more flexibility around this policy, Jim could provide their dependents with tuition assistance, therefore impacting Jim's normative commitment because their dependents are provided a reward (tuition assistance), and Jim feels obligated to stay with DU.

Additionally, Jim suggested that DU promote certificates for people who want to spend less than two or more years getting a degree but still want to utilize the benefit to get a better job or a promotion. Jim suggested promoting courses, programs, and training based on employees' job descriptions that can count toward their performance evaluation and help with professional development, career growth, and potential higher

compensation. Pam suggested unlimited credits taken per academic year for employees and not increasing the limit for spouses, relatives, and dependents. Unlimited credits allow employees to complete their program with a cohort, ultimately connecting employees across DU's campus, improving work culture, and making DU feel more cohesive.

Supervisory Leadership

In Chapter Two, research showed how valuable the employee/supervisor relationship is for employee retention (Work Institute, 2021). Throughout the findings, it was evident there were many barriers NHS faced during orientation and onboarding, and adding on supervisory challenges is another factor that can push an NHS toward quitting. Each participant experienced internal and external barriers that impacted their commitment. Staff with a supportive and attentive supervisor made onboarding more memorable. An effective and memorable onboarding process impacted NHS' normative commitment because they were loyal to their supervisor for taking the time to train, acclimate, and care about their success.

Other NHS organizational commitment shifted between the first and second interviews. Ryan and Dwight's experiences of feeling undervalued, overworked, lack of recognition, and misgendered all contributed to shifting their normative commitment and loyalty to DU. Without initiating contact with these

NHS, DU and leadership would not have been made aware of the challenges and barriers NHS faces because no one is asking. DU will not be able to improve employee retention if they are not asking what their staff needs to be successful, engaged, and committed. As a reminder, Ryan expressively stated they are not working at DU for longer than a year, and if HRIC was conducting six-month stay interviews, they could have addressed Ryan's challenges and prevented them from quitting; however, Ryan has since parted ways with the University of Denver.

A common factor among several NHS was the lack of supervision or absentee supervisor, which impacted NHS' normative commitment and overall job satisfaction. Kelly started onboarding with their supervisor on leave and reported to senior leadership, but then transitioned into a new role, leaving Kelly without a supervisor again. Without oversight from leadership, Kelly said their commitment was impacted because they could not articulate their role's vision and goals without consistent leadership and guidance. Angela's onboarding during their first month also began without a consistent supervisor due to an illness, requiring Angela to train themselves or seek colleague guidance. Additionally, they hoped to complete an exit interview with their supervisor on their last day but were unsuccessful. Angela suggested requiring exit interviews within the department for the employee's feedback to be useful for improvements.

Stanley specifically made sure they held their supervisor and leadership accountable when agreements or tasks went undone or ignored because their normative

commitment is impacted by honesty and authenticity, which is where their loyalty to DU lies. For Stanley to be an asset to their team, they need direct communication from their supervisor on job expectations. When expectations are not met, job dissatisfaction results from role stress, job burnout, and work overload (Tull, 2006; Berwick, 1992; Conley, 2001), causing employees to not perform at their best and missing opportunities for career advancement. Effective supervision of NHS can reduce turnover among NHS and increase overall employee retention. Without effective supervision, the employee experience and normative commitment are impacted, and there is a higher chance of employee turnover. An effective supervisory model provides the necessary onboarding and socialization for NHS into the university, the department, and the team.

The following section will review recommendations for HRIC and DU that can improve orientation and onboarding, help develop organizational commitment, and increase staff retention. Recommendations were co-constructed by the researcher and the participants (NHS) to address research questions 3 and 4, improvements for orientation, and what contributes to greater organizational commitment. Suppose implementations are imposed based on the recommendations. In that case, the University of Denver and the Human Resources and Inclusive Community will meet the following outcomes to reduce NHS turnover and increase staff retention:

163

- Developing ways for newly hired staff to connect with other employees to enhance affective commitment and retain NHS.

- Offer ways for leadership to put effort into developing NHS' continuance commitment through resources and support.

- Provide ways for NHS to succeed and grow through training and professional development to enhance normative commitment and increase retention.

Ultimately, DU must manage staff retention through a magnetic culture of talented and empowered employees to help sustain employee retention (Sheridan, 2012). DU needs to create a work culture with "engaged employees who share a strong desire to be part of the value the organization creates" (Sheridan, 2012, p. 1). Additionally, engaged employees are more likely to recommend and promote their employer, which can help reduce high turnover among staff employees.

Recommendations

HRIC at DU can improve staff retention if they start including components of organizational commitment at the recruitment phase, specifically during orientation, which should be the final stage of recruitment, followed by six months of onboarding. Recruitment includes orientation because it is the first companywide encounter for a NHS to connect with the university and begin developing organizational commitment. Recruitment helps convey the culture, success, and personality of the University of Denver and is an opportunity to hook prospective employees. Additionally, Jim's

organizational commitment developed quicker and was expressed as a *privilege to work at DU* because of its strong public image (Phillips & Connell, 2003); therefore, recruitment can correct any misconceived notions about DU and uphold DU's image.

NHS recommended several program changes, including free parking the first week, attending orientation before they begin employment, switching to a hybrid format, and leaving more time for one-on-one appointments with benefits specialists. These improvements would contribute to greater organizational commitment because benefits act as incentives and necessities, and when NHS understand what is offered, their organizational commitment can develop. Additionally, DU should avoid hiring around holiday breaks to avoid confusion and lack of guidance for new employees. If unavoidable, a backup plan should be enacted to ensure new employees are prepared and set up in the university system before they begin; however, this would require a human resources liaison to deliver this smooth onboarding transition. The following recommendations will be organized by the responsible party for implementing each recommendation.

Recommendations for DU/HRIC

Two-day, hybrid (half online/in-person), once-a-month new employee orientation can help improve organizational commitment. The first day is a synchronous online course with informational videos, forms, and resources. HRIC

165

would present information on policies, DU's culture, colleges, schools, and departments on campus, and senior leadership. Having the first day online could prevent the stress and anxiety of trying to find parking. Additionally, this information is easily accessible on the website. It does not require a lengthy description, and uploading the information can allow new employees to review the material later. Day two of orientation is in-person and starts with a campus tour designed specifically for staff and faculty.

From the findings in Chapter Four, a few NHS mentioned wanting a tour and were advised to set it up independently. NHS that attended a campus tour realized it was too student-focused and not beneficial for employees. HRIC could create a guide for the Admissions Office and request certain days to be blocked off for employee tours that align with orientation. A tour can connect new employees and other staff, preventing siloes and feeling alone. During the tour, staff can complete their HR paperwork, obtain their employee ID, secure parking, receive DU merchandise (to feel a part of the university), and meet with benefits specialists to get questions answered and benefits set up correctly. Followed by the new employee meeting their supervisor and team, going to lunch with supervisor/team, being shown to their office, and receiving technology equipment to start their position.

HRIC and Shared Services need to become one entity, and human resources liaisons need to be formed to help newly hired staff adjust to DU and create a smoother onboarding process. The workload would even out once these two departments are

combined, freeing additional time for people development and staff retention. It seems unfitting to have faculty affairs oversee staff when staff has different needs and expectations than faculty. With this misalignment, staff may not feel valued when they are not considered their own entity. Staff should be offered a support network instead of being grouped with faculty, preventing DU from understanding what NHS need to succeed in their position. HRIC and DU must acknowledge and respect employees in all their humanity, which impacts inclusive excellence, diversity, and identity.

For employees to feel included, there is a need to change outdated practices when onboarding new employees in order to impact change and truly be inclusively excellent. As mentioned in the findings, Dwight was continuously misgendered and disrespected when their pronouns were not acknowledged. While HRIC cannot require specific training, they can offer incentives for attending; however, training should be required to reduce barriers around diversity, equity, and inclusion within DU.

Stanley, Ryan, and Dwight were vocal about the lack of diversity throughout campus and the difficulties of recruiting, onboarding, and retaining staff, faculty, and students. To address these difficulties, HRIC can require training around identity. For every training employees attend, they acquire points that can be traded for rewards, such as time off, gift cards, or DU merchandise.

167

Incentives can impact an employee's intent to stay so they can trade points for a high-value reward while increasing awareness around underrepresented groups. These trainings can offer videos from Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to explain DU's culture, inclusive excellence, and diversity among employees and students.

Campus Partnerships

NHS felt siloed while striving for connection with their team and the larger DU community. The lack of cohesiveness among the colleges throughout DU's campus presented obstacles for NHS to develop commitment and connection to DU. Along with feeling siloed, NHS were overworked and disconnected from DU's goal of inclusive excellence. Shupp and Arminio (2012) suggest that human resources establish campus partnerships to assist new employees with onboarding and acclimating them to campus. Such partnerships would be successful on several levels by allowing NHS to meet other staff members, build a support network across campus, and increase employee collaboration and engagement. Currently, HRIC is overlooking the impact campus partnerships have on employee engagement and retention. Campus partnerships could be systematized through a mentoring program (Shupp & Arminio, 2012) and can help reduce siloes throughout DU's campus.

Campus partnerships can be formed through an online platform. HRIC can assign employees based on their job titles and duties in the same online group channel to help employees communicate and connect with their counterparts throughout the university.

Considering the hours spent with coworkers, implementing group channels can reduce siloes and improve DU's work culture because coworkers can make work exciting and reduce engagement detractors. Sheridan (2012) recommends allowing staff to socialize throughout the day. Socialization can foster employee camaraderie and coworker satisfaction to reinforce engagement.

Ryan mentioned socializing through mixers or having departmental staff visit other departments to understand what each one does and foster community. Kelly suggested providing more opportunities to find community within the larger DU community because it is important for employee engagement, satisfaction, and happiness. Learning about all the opportunities and ways to engage with DU's community can help NHS feel empowered and encouraged to reach out and become more included within the university. Pam stated they want HRIC to connect NHS with other DU employees who have similar job duties to help foster commitment and connection, reduce siloes, and clear up confusion on what departments handle and learn about the people who operate those departments. To achieve the outcome of connecting NHS across campus to enhance their affective commitment and improve staff retention, HRIC can implement staff channels or groups within an online platform, such as Microsoft Teams, to connect NHS with employees who have similar job duties and position titles.

Diversity & Inclusive Excellence

169

Throughout orientation, a handful of NHS mentioned the lack of diverse

representatives throughout the presentation and the visibility of diversity on

campus. For example, when HRIC went over affinity groups on campus and DU's

diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, HRIC did not utilize representations

from these affinity groups to speak on DU's culture and how these groups can help

employees feel a part of DU's community. Diversity and inclusion are at the forefront of

higher education institutes' agenda and have become a hot topic of importance among

millennials and Gen Z employees, who will soon dominate the workforce industry.

Therefore, to recruit these generations of employees, DEI needs to begin at the

recruitment stage, where many higher education institutions (HEIs) put effort into

retaining a more diverse workforce.

When HEIs put more of their time and focus on recruitment initiatives than

retention strategies, they are setting themselves up to fail because they only have

structures to attract employees but not keep them committed and retained. HEIs may be

attracting the right people originally but cannot retain these top talented employees

because they do not have retention strategies around DEI. Employees who feel like they

do not belong and leave for DEI reasons prove that inclusion efforts are failing (Mosley

& Irvine, 2021). Additionally, HEIs need to put more effort into being inclusive by

hearing and listening to their staff's needs and wants. Then act on staff's contributions and

perspectives, and use their experiences to change the organization according to its values (Mosley & Irvine, 2021).

Mosley and Irvine (2021) offer ten ways to help with diversity and inclusion initiatives, and they are: amplify positive human interaction; promote equality; connect people and networks; democratize feedback; proactive employee development; awareness of unconscious bias; address potential problems quickly and privately; peers and managers support each other; be empathetic and humanize people; and align everyone through shared purpose, goals, and values (p. 194). To embody inclusive excellence, DU needs to uncover and understand the biases that everyone has and make progress toward a broader mindset (Mosley & Irvine, 2021). This change can only occur through awareness, acceptance, and action. HRIC must know when and where "unconscious bias happens, accepting in a healthy and positive way that something can be done about it, and then taking action" (Mosley & Irvine, 2021, p. 175). One must also realize "that no matter who you are or how pure your intentions, you are going to have some unconscious bias" (Mosley & Irvine, 2021, p. 175).

Additionally, DU must rethink its inclusive excellence slogan or provide an actionable, comprehensible definition. Inclusive excellence empowers employees to show up holistically through respect, engagement, and having a voice regarding policies and procedures that impact staff employees (Mosley &

Irvine, 2021) — in other words, removing any invisible roadblocks to prevent NHS from feeling excluded and losing their sense of originality while appreciating all employees and the different capabilities they bring to the university.

Including staff members in decision-making can help staff feel they matter rather than be excluded from the conversation where faculty are the decision-makers, which seems counterintuitive when staff work in the programs and utilize the systems daily. Staff have strong institutional experiences and can offer valuable insights, troubleshoot problems, and develop realistic timelines and systems to support new ventures. For this to occur, leadership must lead by example and "encourage employees to cultivate and sustain a sense of inclusion through their everyday interactions" (Mosley & Irvine, 2021, p. 177). Leadership must show their employees they care about their engagement by understanding and acting on staff's needs and preferences while fostering an environment of joint ownership in employee engagement (Sheridan, 2012).

Recommendations for Supervisor/Leadership

If each college or department had an HR liaison, onboarding could last at least six months to address any staff morale decline. It should be up to the department/college to provide a financial line for an HR liaison to prevent the continuity of high employee turnover and to address information overload during the beginning of a new hire's employment. The HR liaison conducts stay interviews and assesses a NHS's organizational commitment with the ability to inform departments and leadership of

potential turnover. For example, when the HR liaison sends out the sixth-month email to new employees about tuition benefits, the email can include an option to schedule a meeting with the liaison to discuss concerns or ask questions.

During the six-month interviews, NHS mentioned being more aware of topics and questions to ask, such as joining groups or receiving professional development opportunities. Reaching out at the six-month mark gives time for the employee to settle into their new position and environment and ponder on what they need to feel a greater sense of organizational commitment. The six-month interviews can make HR liaisons aware of any misconduct and the engagement levels of the NHS. If a NHS's morale and engagement seem low, allow employees to discuss their career goals and see if a job switch is possible. A job switch can promote within DU's community, build a stronger sense of loyalty, and create an overall more inclusive environment. Promoting within needs to include students and alums transitioning into full-time employment because it will help strengthen their loyalty and bond and demonstrate DU giving back to the community who put time and effort into the university.

Recognition & Rewards

According to Sheridan (2012), recognition is the key driver of employee engagement. HRIC may not be able to offer everyone raises to keep up with inflation and be competitive with other universities; however, there is a bias

around pay inequity for staff employees, and DU could benefit from a social recognition program that uses variable rewards. Rewards can address equity by compensating the employees who deserve it. HRIC and leadership can look at who receives rewards, acknowledge hard workers, and provide development opportunities or promotions. Additionally, HRIC "can use this data to compare against salaries and performance ratings, audit for equity in pay, and spot possible areas of manager bias" (Mosley & Irvine, 2021, p. 209).

Employees' feelings about the recognition they receive account for more than half of their engagement levels, meaning they still want to be recognized for a job well done (Sheridan, 2012). Recognition feeds into an individual's self-esteem to help them reach their full potential of self-actualization, and "the need for esteem must be satisfied in the workplace to have engagement" (Sheridan, 2012, p. 58). When esteem is not satisfied, an employee can become frustrated and feel inferior and worthless, leading to turnover. Unfortunately, one out of two employees receives recognition from their supervisor(s), while others feel their accomplishments go unacknowledged. Additionally, supervisors need to consider how their employees like to receive recognition for it to be effective and keep up with the changing workforce. When recognizing employees, they need to be told they have done a good job while explaining what they are being recognized for, their preferred way of receiving recognition, and how often they want to be recognized for a job well done.

174

An effective recognition program enables, energizes, empowers, and encourages employees to thrive. Enablement provides the means for employees to accomplish their work and eliminate impediments (Mosley & Irvine, 2021). Energy "interacts with several factors (physical, emotional, mental, & spiritual energy) that is cultivated through positivity, good working conditions, common values, and a common purpose" (Mosley & Irvine, 2021, p.107). Empowerment sustains and nurtures engagement and is the foundation of accountability (Mosley & Irvine, 2021). Encouragement is the support and gratitude that help build confidence and resilience within employees (Mosley & Irvine, 2021). Recognition should not be vague or an entitlement, not focused on the company or manager, not a popularity contest, not a one-size-fits-all, and not an annual event (Mosley & Irvine, 2021).

Recognition is social, celebrative, authentic, sincere, appropriate, can come from anywhere or person, and resonates with values, goals, and purpose (Mosley & Irvine, 2021). Human organizations are complicated to manage, and recognition systems cannot catch every contribution and success; however, if NHS are introduced to the recognition system used during orientation, social recognition will be easier to adopt as an everyday action. Recognition can help new employees quickly adapt to the culture and a way for them to internalize DU's values and their alignment to these values. With this structure, NHS are

175

aware of the social recognition program and can implement it in everyday activities. A system-wide recognition program for DU employees can help with organizational culture, employee engagement, employee experience, employee relationships, and organizational values (Mosley & Irvine, 2021). Leadership needs to implement the 3 R's: reward, recognition, and respect when creating a recognition and rewards program, which are ultimately responsible for improved efficiency, reduced absenteeism, a pleasurable work environment, and higher earnings (Kundu & Lata, 2017, p. 703; Nazia & Begum, 2013).

Additionally, Mosley and Irvine (2021) suggest using crowdsourced compensation, meaning "dedicating a small portion of the overall payroll budget to social recognition" (p. 205), because social recognition empowers employees to reward others multiple times a year, which creates a larger impact than annual bonuses (Mosley & Irvine, 2021). Overall, recognition is investing in your employees. Having the right talent or organizationally committed employees will drive revenue growth, which is an investment with a future payoff (Mosley & Irvine, 2021, p. 138). Recognition should be viewed as seeing employees as individuals in all their humanity (Mosley & Irvine, 2021).

DU must use internal referrals throughout recruiting because five NHS were recruited from previous alums, professors, or family and friends of DU. Referrals can be a great opportunity to help foster employees' organizational commitment through recognition and rewards, by providing bonuses for successful referrals. DU can retain

employees through a referral program with a hiring bonus, a 90-day bonus, and another bonus after one year (Phillips & Connell, 2003). This structure incentivizes current employees to recruit and retain NHS so they can receive the assured reward. Additionally, when employees are referred, it helps build connections between DU and the community.

Recruitment always evolves to attract new talent, but compensation and rewards remain stagnant. To combat this, supervisors and leadership could implement variable rewards that even out over time, can mitigate bias (Mosley & Irvine, 2021), and impact continuance commitment. Variable rewards and bonuses are less predictable than annual bonuses and less transactional, whereas variable rewards are incentives that drive satisfaction and behavior (Mosley & Irvine, 2021). Research shows that success depends on an engaged workforce that pushes through changing times (Mosley & Irvine, 2021). HRIC can utilize realistic job previews and promotional career tracks to address career growth. To address compensation variations, DU can offer mini bonuses utilizing a point system for rewards, reevaluate wages to be competitive with public universities and other workforce industries, and reassess pay based on outside factors such as inflation.

Promotional Career Tracks

Pam recommended that DU develop its employees through promotional and career tracks and recognition programs. Pam stated that DU must develop its staff through career tracks; that way, when a higher-level position opens up, DU will have created a culture of well-qualified candidates the university can promote, making it clear that DU supports the professional growth of its staff. Promotional and career tracks can also be expanded to students, which could show alumni and the community DU gives back to their students through employment opportunities, making it a full-circle moment where students become full-time, benefited employees.

Faculty career tracks offer tenure, sabbaticals, countless professional development opportunities, and higher compensation. There are clear guidelines for faculty to move from assistant to associate professor to full-time professor. Even administration has clear career paths from chair to associate dean to moving up the hierarchy. Most staff work in service departments such as student life, information technology, human resources, advising, admissions, etc., with no well-defined career trajectory (Skallerup Bessette, 2020).

For staff to move up and boost their salary, they either leave for another HEI or leave higher education altogether. This is known as job hopping because of the few opportunities for career progression. There are evident structures for promotion for faculty and administrators, but none for staff; therefore, HRIC needs to implement career tracks for staff professional growth and reward that growth consistently and similarly to

faculty and administrators. Lack of rewards, respect, autonomy, and career progression are all factors of staff feeling burned out and leaving the field of higher education (Skallerup Bessette, 2020). On top of that, "new employees are often hired at similar or higher salaries than staff members who have been working on the campus for years" (Skallerup Bessette, 2020, para. 8), keeping staff wages stagnant. It would be beneficial for cross-institutional comparisons of staff salaries to see where DU falls on the level of pay competitiveness.

Compensation

Quite a few NHS mentioned that their pay does not compete with other higher education institutions or workforce industries. Pam specifically mentioned how DU underpays their staff, "I mean, fine, we underpay, and we know that, and there's nothing we can do about it. But there's other things that we could do that would incentivize people, you know, besides just a monetary thing." With inflation and DU's pay not comparing to other institutions, compensation was a driving force for most of the NHS who were starting in entry-level positions, and the NHS who mentioned being overworked and not compensated for their hard work. Hard work can drive higher compensation or a factor in seeking new employment opportunities (Skallerup Bessette, 2020).

Compensation for staff should revolve around the perception of fairness because "the vast majority of dissatisfaction stems from communication of

179

organizational compensation strategies and perceptions of fairness" (Sheridan, 2012, p. 84). Paying staff fairly and generously helps to build a magnetic culture (draws, empowers, sustains, and retains top-talented employees). To accomplish this task, leadership must create a transparent pay philosophy on the university's methods for determining monetary compensation (Sheridan, 2012). This will allow staff to understand what they need to do to achieve higher compensation and ensure staff are paid fairly while fostering an environment of trust. Additionally, if student tuition increases due to inflation, staff pay should also increase to combat inflation, showing DU's fairness and trust pay philosophy.

DU cannot compete with other HEIs regarding higher wages for staff; therefore, leadership needs to understand the importance of incentives to combat staff turnover and offer opportunities for career development (Liu & Liu, 2021). Career development is an essential part of employee engagement, and if staff have the desire to make career advancements that are not fulfilled, they will look for employment elsewhere (Sheridan, 2012).

Leadership needs to look at different ways to incentivize and reward employees when compensation remains stagnant for staff. For example, almost all NHS mentioned how recognition and rewards positively impact organizational commitment and intent to stay. When NHS were recognized for their hard work, it made them feel valued and appreciated. Leadership needs NHS to view recognition as micro-bonuses that employees

180

give to each other, and these micro-bonuses can be turned into points and redeemed for a reward. Mosley and Irvine (2021) recommended a point system where points can be redeemed for goods or experiences. This approach can assist with the dissatisfaction with compensation if DU is limited in providing raises.

With a recognition point system, the redeemable points enable the employee to be in charge of their reward. This gives employees a sense of control over their work environment through rewards. Mosley and Irvine (2021) said this "kind of choice renews the good feelings of community and gratitude" (p. 206), which also validates their affective commitment. For example, HRIC could provide university merchandise or tickets to a sporting event. Simple incentives like this can keep retaining NHS and positively impact their organizational commitment.

To help reduce the chance of employee burnout, HRIC can provide additional paid time off to help rejuvenate staff's job satisfaction. Mosley and Irvine (2021) suggest recognition and retention programs for NHS who feel overworked to keep employees engaged and committed to their work. Social recognition is the foundation for creating a more human workplace by reinforcing shared purpose through peer-to-peer gratitude and acknowledging important contributions and results achieved for the university's overall success.

Supervision

181

Effective supervision and leadership are the easiest ways for staff to succeed and grow because "employees receive more direction, guidance, support, and recognition from their direct supervisor" (Sheridan, 2012, p. 62). Additionally, NHS mentioned needing and wanting effective supervision, transparent leadership, and mentoring to be successful and grow within their position and at DU. Leading by example allows senior leadership to model a culture of supervision and establishes expectations for staff. When a supervisor lacks proper guidance or received inadequate supervision, it negatively impacts their normative commitment and impacts NHS's normative commitment. This leaves staff lacking a sense of obligation to their supervisor because their supervisor is not putting effort and time into their professional growth.

Work Institute's *2021 Retention Report* mentioned how much supervision affects employee retention, organizational commitment, and engagement. Supervisors guide employees in fulfilling their job duties and "their career aspirations and help them develop both personally and professionally to achieve their individual goals" (Work Institute, 2021, p. 33). Suppose the development of supervisors is not integrated within HRIC's strategy to retain staff. In that case, they will not achieve their objectives, their organizational commitment will be stunted, and they will experience staff disengagement (Work Institute, 2021).

HRIC needs to offer training around synergistic supervision "based on integrating the professional development needs of staff with meeting the needs of the organization"

(Renn & Hodges, 2007, p. 376). HRIC can assist supervisors in adjusting to their new responsibilities by having clear goals for supervision, clarifying roles in supervision, and acclimating NHS to the university. This will facilitate transparency throughout recruitment, orientation, onboarding, and professional development (Renn & Hodges, 2007).

Synergistic supervision is focused on a holistic approach that includes open lines of communication, trust, feedback, recognition, identifying employees' career goals, and recognizing the skills necessary for career advancement (Winston & Creamer, 1998). The successes of synergistic supervision led to greater commitment, engagement, and employee retention. The quality of supervision is linked to job satisfaction, and turnover intentions result from job dissatisfaction. In other words, synergistic supervision is the collaboration between supervisors and their employees in successfully meeting the goals of both employees and the overall organization (Shupp & Arminio, 2012; Saunders et al., 2000; Winston & Creamer, 1997, 1998). Saunders et al. (2000) stated, "The job of [a] supervisor is to figure out how to tap into [all] employees' potential and to enhance motivation and thus, their performance" (Shupp & Arminio, 2012, p. 161).

Synergistic supervision allows NHS to seek feedback on their job performance, discuss progress on professional development, and allows

supervisors to develop new skills and learn different models of supervision (Shupp & Arminio, 2012). HRIC can increase retention with supervision development programs to improve employee engagement and retention. With the collaboration that comes with synergistic supervision, feedback on performance should be given to the supervisor from the employee to seek additional training and leadership skills from HRIC.

HRIC might consider administering short surveys to capture staff's happiness and changes in engagement through data that assess staff's organizational commitment. HRIC can conduct timed check-ins with NHS to understand their well-being and collect feedback on how HRIC could support staff productivity and growth (Lee et al., 2018). Some NHS may avoid opening up to their supervisor if there are concerns about providing honest feedback and may seek HRIC to help initiate change. There is also the opportunity to have mentors conduct check-ins with NHS or allow NHS to choose whom they want to have these conversations with to make them as open and honest as possible (Lee et al., 2018). Overall, synergistic supervision, effective orientation and onboarding programs, social recognition, mentoring, and professional development are solutions to bolster organizational commitment, increase staff retention, and reduce turnover (Davis & Cooper, 2017).

Recommendations for Newly Hired Staff

Employees succeed and grow through purpose, meaning, and gratitude because everyone has a purpose, and the meaning is unique to the employee, and gratitude builds

connection (Mosley & Irvine, 2021). A social recognition program gives power to

employees to control their compensation. Peer-to-peer recognition builds trust among

each other and the system and gives lower-earning employees the same chance at a

reward that a higher-paid employee may receive (Mosley & Irvine, 2021).

Similarly, employees are not required to do extra work outside their job

description. However, most employees agree with an act of generosity, hoping to

receive a reward for taking on more and overworking themselves. Socially

recognizing these overworked employees fosters stronger relationships among

coworkers, the department, and others in the organization (Mosley & Irvine,

2021).

Mentorships

Mentorships can help staff acclimate to the culture and work environment

and provide opportunities for current staff to advise new staff on professional

development (Dalton, 1988). While HRIC does offer mentorships, hardly any of

the NHS knew where to find a mentor or how to form a mentorship; however,

since the interviews ended, HRIC has since updated the mentorship website that

includes an application for interested mentors/mentees as well as a list of

available mentors, which addresses most of the NHS' concerns about their

normative commitment. Mentorships are also a valuable asset for retaining staff

because staff may feel obligated to stay to keep growing professionally through a

mentor. It would be beneficial for HRIC to focus more on mentorships to help DU's employees become their best selves because effective mentoring "can be a very powerful approach to staff development" (Kolvitz et al., 2000, p. 9).

HRIC can improve its mentorship program by including senior-level professionals to coach and train entry- and mid-level professionals. Mentors can increase employees' positive perceptions of their job duties rather than view them as mundane. Mentors can shift that mindset, look at the advantages of working in higher education, and show NHS that they care about staff development. Previous research has mentioned the new workforce will be millennials and Generation Z, and this workforce cares a lot more about their professional development than previous generations. Therefore, mentors who incorporate the ten competency areas for student affairs professionals can help develop NHS and employees new to higher education.

HRIC can provide guidelines around the ten competencies from the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), which are used concurrently. The ten competencies are Personal and Ethical Foundations; Values, Philosophy, and History; Assessment, Evaluation, and Research; Law, Policy, and Governance; Organizational and Human Resource; Leadership; Social Justice and Inclusion; Student Learning and Development; Technology; Advising and Supporting (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). The intent of the competency areas lays "out essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of all

student affairs educators, regardless of functional area or specialization within the field" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 7). Utilizing these competencies can help HRIC lay out an effective mentorship with "directions for the future development of student affairs educators both individually and as a profession" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 7).

Professional Development

Professional development (PD) opportunities are a main factor in staff retention because the benefits full-time staff receive at DU have kept them engaged and have impacted their normative commitment. Educational advancement is laid out for faculty, but HEIs forget that helping staff grow also helps the organization grow, which is why professional development is critical in retaining employees. PD showed up in different ways for each NHS. PD was utilizing the tuition assistance benefits, attending a professional conference, or offering individualized training per their position. For quite a few NHS, professional development showed up in the ability to have shared ownership of their engagement. Sheridan (2012) refers to shared engagement as creating "a means for staff members to understand their engagement level and how they can make improvements" (p. 30).

For staff to understand their engagement level, they need to have discussions with leadership to discuss their challenges and receive feedback for

improvements to engagement. The performance management network allows feedback from anyone, anywhere, at any time because employees are surrounded by potential feedback. Trust is the key to openly seeking and receiving feedback. Performance management starts with self-managing performance, then a manager provides coaching, followed by receiving feedback from the team and crowdsourced feedback. Crowdsourced feedback can come from the human resources liaisons or even HRIC. Employees can receive recognition from their manager, their team, the department, the college, and the overall university.

For HRIC to be successful in staff retention and engagement, it needs to create a shared engagement environment where leadership and employees address imbalances in the workplace and take action for improvements (Sheridan, 2012). To create a shared engagement environment, Sheridan (2012) recommends the following steps: (1) teach the concept of engagement; (2) help employees understand their engagement level; (3) brainstorm on what could increase and decrease engagement levels; (4) employees and managers meet one-on-one to increase engagement; (5) develop specific action plans and goals; (6) follow through and assess programs; (7) make employees aware of efforts to build engagement and a magnetic culture; and (8) lead by example (pp. 37-54). A shared engagement environment also needs effective leadership, which is why HRIC needs to implement synergistic supervision.

A person's background and upbringing influence their engagement; therefore, every employee's sense of engagement looks different. HRIC and leadership need to take the lead in teaching the concept of engagement, so all employees know how to develop engagement while working at DU. Since organizational commitment fluctuates between the different components, employees must understand their engagement level. Once an employee is aware of their engagement level, developing action plans and goals become easier, and employees can start making efforts toward building their engagement. Also, leadership must lead by example for a magnetic culture to ensue within the employees, which is why if there is one recommendation that DU and HRIC should utilize from this study, it is to create a DU wide social recognition program. The next section will go over the implications of the program evaluation and its contributions to higher education to assist in closing the gaps in staff retention.

Implications

Utilization-Focused Evaluation (U-FE) requires participation between the evaluator and primary intended users throughout the evaluation process. While completing the study, there was a lack of sustained engagement between the researcher and the primary intended users due to shifting dynamics within HRIC being understaffed. Which is an ironic correlation that there was a lack of

engagement from the primary users because they are understaffed and taking on additional duties, causing them to feel overworked and burnt out, which is what this study entails. Additionally, out of the twelve participants who originally agreed to participate, Angela left within the first six months, Ryan left after one year, and Dwight is on a short-term work break.

The implications of this program evaluation may be significant to other HEIs experiencing high employee turnover, who lack recruiting structures that engage organizational commitment and understand the importance of staff retention (Quirindongo-Cruz, 2016). Tracking staff's organizational commitment allows HRIC and leadership to know where potential problems are, thus implementing action plans and solutions (Quirindongo-Cruz, 2016). This study has implications for understanding engagement and retention among NHS. The results from this study suggest that benefits, rewards and recognition, professional development, and supervisory leadership influence NHS organizational commitment and retention.

There are many aspects of orientation and onboarding that NHS perceived as being effective in developing their organizational commitment. Conversely, several changes can be made to improve new employees' orientation and onboarding experience. The nature of the U-FE uncovered how NHS's organizational commitment was impacted throughout orientation and onboarding and filled in the gaps around how organizational

commitment impacts staff retention. HRIC can use these findings to create strategic plans and strategies for increasing staff retention that can be used within any organization.

New employee orientation cannot be a one-time event. Orientation must be grouped with recruitment because NHS are still getting to know the university on the first day. If human resources (HR) provide an impactful and enjoyable orientation, orientation can further solidify preconceived notions and start the development of organizational commitment. NHS who have an HR liaison that provides onboarding assistance, helped develop staff's organizational commitment within the first month and continued throughout their sixth-month mark. Alums who came to work at DU after student positions had stronger commitment because they felt the need to give back since they had such a wonderful educational experience. However, alums' commitment shifted in their sixth month after experiencing the treatment of being a staff employee. This means employee orientation must operate similarly to student orientation to improve staff retention.

There should be employee orientation program outcomes equivalent to DU's student orientation outcomes (2023a):

- Employees learn about roles and responsibilities of becoming a University of Denver community member.

- Explore the resources and opportunities that support employees' professional, social, and health and wellness goals.

- Develop skills centered on self-awareness/professional development, social interactions, and engaging with the diverse identities, ideas, and experiences of others in the community.

- Develop a sense of belonging/commitment and connection to the University of Denver and the greater Denver community.

However, for HEIs to be successful with retention, there needs to be a follow-up with NHS by their sixth month of employment because morale drops, and organizational commitment is impacted enough to shift staff's needs elsewhere.

Conclusion

This study aimed to conduct a Utilization-Focused Evaluation of the Thriving at DU orientation and onboarding program at the University of Denver. This study focused on newly hired staffs' (NHS) experiences throughout orientation and onboarding that impacted their organizational commitment. Recommendations were provided to enhance the program and increase employee retention. This study, while expanding upon previous literature around employee turnover and organizational commitment, has only begun to explore the needs of newly hired staff.

The primary data collection method of interviews helped to gather the necessary qualitative data to provide recommendations to Human Resources and Inclusive

192

Community (HRIC) at DU to improve retention and enhance organizational commitment. Conducting two interviews provided a lot of rich information from NHS and the ability to see how NHS' organizational commitment shifted and impacted their retention. This study will capitalize on the desire to learn from NHS and foster their retention through effective onboarding that develops their organizational commitment.

The findings related to the first research question regarding NHS' perceptions of orientation and onboarding fell into three themes: information overload, the need for a liaison, and came for the benefits. The second research question produced findings on how orientation and onboarding shape organizational commitment and were broken into themes matching the three components of organizational commitment from Meyer and Allen (1991). Research questions three and four offered recommendations to improve orientation and onboarding that would help improve and enhance organizational commitment.

This study was designed to understand NHS' perceptions of orientation and onboarding that impacted their organizational commitment and included improvements for the program. Additional studies could provide a further understanding of and improvements to new employee orientation and onboarding.

1. HRIC can expand this study to other employee classifications, such as faculty, part-time staff, and union employees. Additionally, DU can expand to include new employees who did not attend orientation as a control group and reach out to them after one month and six months to compare similarities and differences. Finally, DU can expand and improve this study to include current employees in all classifications, including remote employees. These expansions could effectively look at how employees developed organizational commitment and what has kept employees retained, allowing DU to determine additional improvements for staff retention.

2. This study is recommended to be replicated at other higher education institutions that offer new employee orientation and onboarding. The study would require little tailoring for each HEI; however, the interview questions should be tailored to address the organization's specific needs. This would provide larger scales of results that can generalize staff retention and organizational commitment. HEIs could benefit from a program evaluation on orientation and onboarding to determine improvements to increase employee retention and enhance organizational commitment.

3. Human resources need to evolve with the current workforce because organizational commitment looks different for Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z employees because "employees themselves are changing and

that what traditionally kept them loyal may prove less effective now" (Lee et al., 2018, p. 90).

4. Additional studies are needed to further understand staff retention beginning at the recruitment phase, which includes orientation, followed by at least six months of onboarding. HEIs can incorporate Realistic Job Preview as part of the recruitment process or during new employee orientation. Realistic Job Preview is a method that offers a preview of the job before the individual experiences the job (Quirindongo-Cruz, 2016).

5. HEIs need to shift toward a business model and view staff more humanized, giving them a choice to decide what is best for them. Research is needed to determine the cause and effects of switching toward a business model to determine if changing the HEI culture makes people feel more engaged and committed. Switching to this model would improve employees' organizational commitment because they could make decisions for their happiness.

The satisfaction and retention of NHS remains critical. The findings showed that supervisory training played a large part in NHS's intent to remain and organizational commitment. Ongoing supervisory training and development are necessary for higher employee retention and commitment. Additionally, DU and HRIC should revise their recruiting and hiring process by "communicating the culture, mission, and values…but

also sharing the expectations of the position" (Davis & Cooper, 2017, p. 3) and

dedicating time with applicants to assess job fit.

Higher education institutions need to create more humanized organizations

that focus on student and academic affairs professionals, especially since there is an

abundance of research on student and faculty retention. Focusing on staff eliminates the

neglect that plenty of NHS felt in this study. If supervisors lead by example and keep

their promises, DU will no longer appear as "all talk and no action" when changing and

updating procedures and policies. If higher education institutions are to curb this wave of

high employee turnover, leadership must listen to the needs of the staff to understand

what factors might cause staff to quit. For NHS to have a greater sense of organizational

commitment, DU needs to spark real change. With the recommendations provided, DU

can improve retention and become a university of change and inclusion. Human

resources already have the fuel for staff retention through continuous improvement,

creating a positive employee experience, and focusing on connection, community, and

organizational commitment.

References

Aboramadan, M., Albashiti, B., Alharazin, H., & Khalid, A. D. (2020). Human resources management practices and organizational commitment in higher education: The mediating role of work engagement. *The International Journal of Educational Management, 34*(1), 154–174. https://doi-org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1108/IJEM-04-2019-0160

Albert, S., Ashforth, B. E., & Dutton, J. E. (2000). Organizational identity and identification: Charting new waters and building new bridges. *The Academy of Management Review, 25*(1), 13–17.

Albert, S. & Whetten, D. (1985). Organizational identity. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 7*, 263-295.

Alkin, M. C. (2004). *Evaluation roots: Tracing theorists' views and influences.* SAGE Publications.

Alkin, M. C. (2012). *Evaluation roots: A wider perspective of theorists' views and influences.* SAGE Publications.

Allbee, N. M. (2019). *Factors contributing to the attrition of new student affairs professionals.* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2243825863). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/factors-contributing-attrition-new-student/docview/2243825863/se-2?accountid=14608

Alsaad, A. M. (2016). *Investigating the effects of employee engagement on the*

employee's career commitment and retention in the manufacturing

industry. ProQuest Central.

(1884772731). https://search.proquest.com/docview/1884772731?accountid=193

269

American College Personnel Association [ACPA] & National Association of Student

Personnel Administrators [NASPA]. (2015). *Professional Competency Areas for*

Student Affairs Educators. chrome-

extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.naspa.org/images/upl

oads/main/ACPA_NASPA_Professional_Competencies_FINAL.pdf

Andringa, S., Jones, V., Pieper-Olson, H., & Reitmeier, J. (2021, September 30).

Retention through onboarding: How hiring managers can foster a sense of

belonging. *Academic Impressions*.

https://www.academicimpressions.com/blog/retention-through-onboarding/

Armstrong, S. & Mitchell, B. (2019). *The essential HR handbook, 10th anniversary*

edition: A quick and handy resource for any manager or HR professional. Career

Press.

Arslan, M. (2018). Organizational cynicism and employee performance: Moderating role

of employee engagement. *Journal of Global Responsibility, 9*(4), 415–431.

https://doi-org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1108/JGR-05-2018-0014

Baker-Tate, I. (2010). *Organizational commitment patterns in higher education: A study of selected midlevel student services professionals.* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (899758936). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertations-theses/organizational-commitment-patterns-higher/docview/899758936/se-2?accountid=14608

Bakker, A. B. & Albrecht, S. (2018). Work engagement: Current trends. *Career Development International, 23*(1), 4-11. https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-11-2017-0207

Bairi, J., Manohar, B. M., & Kundu, G. K. (2011). Knowledge retention in the IT service industry. *Journal of Systems and Information Technology, 13*(1), 43-65. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13287261111118340

Barham, J. D. & Winston, R. B. Jr. (2006). Supervision of new professionals in student affairs: Assessing and addressing needs. *College Student Affairs Journal, 26*(1), 64-89. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ902803

Barrington, L. J. (2021). *Employee engagement from the viewpoint of highly engaged university employees.* ProQuest Central. (2572603826). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/employee-engagement-viewpoint-highly-engaged/docview/2572603826/se-2

Bender, B. (1980). Job satisfaction in student affairs. *NASPA Journal, 18*(2), 2–9.

    http://journals.naspa.org/jsarp/

Bhebhe, S., & Maphosa, C. (2016). Examining staff members' views on staff retention

    practices in a public higher education institution. *Journal of Sociology and Social*

    Anthropology, 7(2), 84-91. Doi: 10.1080/09766634.2016.11885704

Bichsel, J., Fuesting, M., Schneider, J., & Tubbs, D. (2022, July). *The CUPA-HR 2022*

    Higher Education Employee Retention Survey: Initial Results. CUPA-

    HR. https://www.cupahr.org/surveys/research-briefs/higher-ed-employee-

    retention-survey-findings-july-2022

Boehman, J. (2006). *Affective, continuance, and normative commitment among student*

    affairs professionals. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (305294196).

    https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-

    com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertations-theses/affective-continuance-normative-

    commitment-among/docview/305294196/se-2?accountid=14608

Boehman, J. (2007). Affective commitment among student affairs professionals, *NASPA*

    Journal, 44(2), 307–326, Doi: 10.2202/1949-6605.1797

Bosland, D. (2019, January 6). *Organisational culture: What it is and how it is embedded*

    in the organization [Thumbnail with link attached] [Post]. LinkedIn.

    https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/organisational-culture-what-how-embedded-

    organisation-dirk-bosland

Bossu, & Brown, N. (2018). *Professional and Support Staff in Higher Education* (Bossu & N. Brown, Eds.; 1st ed. 2018.). Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-6858-4

Brown, A. D. (2017). Identity work and organizational identification. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 19*, 296–317. Doi: 10.1111/ijmr.12152

Buchanan, J. (2012). *Factors that influence attrition of new professionals in student affairs.* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1170630286). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertations-theses/factors-that-influence-attrition-new/docview/1170630286/se-2?accountid=14608

Butina, M. (2015). A narrative approach to qualitative inquiry. *American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science, 28*(3), 190–196. https://doi.org/10.29074/ascls.28.3.190

Butt, A., Lodhi, R. N., & Shahzad, M. K. (2020). Staff retention: A factor of sustainable competitive advantage in the higher education sector of Pakistan. *Studies in Higher Education, 4*(8), 1584-1604. Doi: 10.1080/03075079.2019.1711038

Calland, D. R. (2012). *Organizational commitment among employees at a private nonprofit university in Virginia.* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (921817603). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-

com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertations-theses/organizational-commitment-among-employees-at/docview/921817603/se-2?accountid=14608

Chen, S., Yang, C., Shiau, J., & Wang, H. (2006). The development of an employee satisfaction model for higher education. *TQM Magazine, 18*(5), 484-500. https://doi.org/10.1108/09544780610685467

Chong, C. Y., & Teng, L. S. (2017). Employee retention and job performance attributes in private institutions of higher education. *International Journal of Business and Administrative Studies, 3*(5), 158-165. https://doi.org/10.20469/ijbas.3.10001-5

Christensen-Mandel, E. M. (2019). Rankism in higher education: A critical inquiry of staff experiences. *Higher Education: Doctoral Research Projects*. https://digitalcommons.du.edu/he_doctoral/5

Christie, C.A. & Alkin, M.C. (2013). An evaluation theory tree. In MC Alkin (Ed.) *Evaluation Roots: A Wider Perspective of Theorists' Views and Influences* (11–57). Los Angeles: Sage.

College and University Professional Association for Human Resources [CUPA-HR]. (2021a). Median faculty and staff turnover. https://www.cupahr.org/surveys/dataondemand/hr-benchmarking/

College and University Professional Association for Human Resources [CUPA-HR]. (2021b). Findings from CUPA-HR's 2021 staff in higher education annual

report. https://www.cupahr.org/blog/2021-06-findings-from-cupa-hrs-2021-staff-

in-higher-education-annual-report/

College and University Professional Association for Human Resources [CUPA-HR].

(2022, April 27). Higher ed pay increases have not kept pace with inflation.

https://www.cupahr.org/press-releases/higher-ed-pay-increases-have-not-kept-

pace-with-inflation/

College and University Professional Association for Human Resources [CUPA-HR].

(2023). Orientation/Onboarding. https://www.cupahr.org/knowledge-

center/toolkits/orientationonboarding/

Cook, J. L. (2006). *The interrelationship among job satisfaction/dissatisfaction of student

affairs professionals and selected demographic variables*. ProQuest Dissertations

& Theses Global. (304965466). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-

proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertations-theses/interrelationship-among-job-

satisfaction/docview/304965466/se-2?accountid=14608

Corrigan, J. (2022). CEO: Universities to blame for 'massive skills shortage.'

https://www.hcamag.com/us/specialization/benefits/ceo-universities-to-blame-for

massive-skills-shortage/402699

Cortez, D. S. (2008). *A case study of organizational commitment*. ProQuest Dissertations

& Theses Global. (304474213). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-

proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertationstheses/case-study-organizational

commitment/docview/304474213/se-2?accountid=14608

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J.W. & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches.* 4th Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Curran, T. M., & Prottas, D. J. (2017). Role stressors, engagement and work behaviours: A study of higher education professional staff. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 39*(6), 642-657.

https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2017.1377964

Dasan, S. (2021). Easy come, easy go? Time to change our approach to staff retention in emergency medicine. *Emergency Medicine Journal, 38*(9),

662. https://doi.org/10.1136/emermed-2021-211546

Davis, T. L. (2013). *A qualitative study of the effects of employee retention on the organization.* ProQuest Central. (1313773596).

https://search.proquest.com/docview/1313773596?accountid=193269

Davis, T. J., & Cooper, D. L. (2017). "People are messy": Complex narratives of supervising new professionals in student affairs. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 54*(1), 55–68.

https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2016.1219267

Dean, L. A., Saunders, S. A., Thompson, G. F., & Cooper, D. L. (2011). Efficacy of
orientation for new student affairs professionals. *College Student Affairs Journal,*
29(2), 137-149,177,179-180. https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-
proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/scholarly-journals/efficacy-orientation-new-
student-affairs/docview/903807607/se-2?accountid=14608

DeCrescenzo, D. L. (2021). *Understanding mid-level student affairs professionals'*
experiences through belonging. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
(2622625321). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-
com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertations-theses/understanding-mid-level-student-
affairs/docview/2622625321/se-2?accountid=14608

De Sousa Sabbagha, M., Ledimo, O., & Martins, N. (2018). Predicting staff retention
from employee motivation and job satisfaction, *Journal of Psychology in Africa,*
28(2), 136–140. Doi: 10.1080/14330237.2018.1454578

Dewar, J. (2023, May 10). Job levels 101. https://www.compa.as/blog/job-levels-
founders

Dillingham, R. D. (2004). *Staff retention strategies of private universities in*
California. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (305033927).
https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-
theses/staff-retention-strategies-private-universities/docview/305033927/se-
2?accountid=14608

Dinise-Halter, A. (2017). Challenge and support: The needs of first time professionals in

student affairs. *College Student Affairs Journal, 35*(2), 1.

https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-

journals/challenge-support-needs-first-time-

professionals/docview/2160294729/se-2

Dutton, J. E., Dukerich, J. M., & Harquail, C. V. (1994). Organizational images and

member identification. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 39*(2), 239–263.

https://doi.org/10.2307/2393235

Erasmus, B. J., Grobler, A., & Van Niekerk, M. (2015). Employee retention in a higher

education institution: An organisational development perspective. *South African

Progressio, 37*(2), 32-62.

Eck, D. G. (2020). *Why they stay: Variables associated with commitment among student

affairs professionals.* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2457944174).

https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-

com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertations-theses/why-they-stay-variables-associated-

with/docview/2457944174/se-2?accountid=14608

Els, V., Brouwers, M., & Lodewyk, R. B. (2021). Quality of work life: Effects on

turnover intention and organisational commitment amongst selected South

African manufacturing organisations. *SA Journal of Human Resource

Management*, *19*. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v19i0.1407

Fang., D., Fombelle, P. W., & Bolton, R. N. (2021). Member retention and donations in

    nonprofit service organizations: The balance between peer and organizational

    identification. *Journal of Service Research, 24*(2) 187–205. Doi:

    10.1177/1094670520933676

Felder, E. L., Jr. (2018). *Higher education nonacademic staff job performance and job*

    satisfaction: Pillars of feedback interdependency. ProQuest Dissertations &

    Theses Global. (2047544330). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-

    proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertations-theses/higher-education-

    nonacademic-staff-job/docview/2047544330/se-2

Figueroa, O. (2015). The influences impacting staff turnover in higher education. *Journal*

    of Management and Sustainability, 5(4), 86-93. Doi:10.5539/jms.v5n4p86

Fowler, B. (2022, June 23). Is job-hopping bad? [LinkedIn post].

    https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/job-hopping-bad-get-hired-by-linkedin-news/

Frank, F. D., Finnegan, R. P., & Taylor, C. R. (2004). The race for talent: Retaining and

    engaging workers in the 21st Century. *Human Resource Planning, 27*(3), 12-25.

    https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/race-

    talent-retaining-engaging-workers-21st/docview/224568480/se-

    2?accountid=14608

Frank, T. E. (2013). *Why do they leave? Departure from the student affairs profession*.

    ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1512626829).

https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-

com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertations-theses/why-do-they-leave-departure-student-

affairs/docview/1512626829/se-2?accountid=14608

Fried, M. J. (2014). *Socialization, commitment and attrition in student affairs work*.

ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1553234441).

https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-

theses/socialization-commitment-attrition-student/docview/1553234441/se-

2?accountid=14608

Fried, M. (2023). The great resignation and higher education employees. *Ithaka

S+R.* https://sr.ithaka.org/blog/the-great-resignation-and-higher-education-

employees/#:~:text=High%20turnover%20can%20negatively%20impact%20the

%20student%20experience.&text=The%20resulting%20staff%20shortages%20ca

n,times%20to%20degree%20for%20students.

Gallup. (2023). *State of the global workplace: 2023 report.*

https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-

workplace.aspx?thank-you-report-form=1

Gberevbie, D. E. (2008). Employee retention strategies and organizational

performance. *Ife Psychologia, 16*(2), 148-173.

https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-

journals/employee-retention-strategies-organizational/docview/219530640/se-

2?accountid=14608

Gilmore, D. C., & Turner, M. (2010). Improving executive recruitment and retention. *The Psychologist Manager Journal, 13*(2), 125.

https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-

journals/improving-executive-recruitment-retention/docview/375573336/se-

2?accountid=14608

Graybill, J. O., Hudson Carpenter, M. T., Offord, J. Jr., Piorun, M., & Shaffer, G. (2013). Employee onboarding: Identification of best practices in ACRL libraries. *Library Management, 34*(3), 200–218. https://doi-

org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1108/01435121311310897

Greenwood, L., & Kelly, C. (2019). A systematic literature review to explore how staff in schools describe how a sense of belonging is created for their pupils. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 24*(1), 3–19. https://www-tandfonline-

com.du.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1080/13632752.2018.1511113

Hacker, C. A. (2004). New employee orientation: Make it pay dividends for years to come. *Information Systems Management, 21*(1),

89. https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-

journals/new-employee-orientation-make-pay-dividends-

years/docview/214124243/se-2?accountid=14608

Hagerty, B. M. K., Lynch-Sauer, J., Patusky, K., Bouwsema, M., & Collier, P. (1992). Sense of belonging: A vital mental health concept. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, *6*, 172–177.

Hagerty, B. M. K. & Patusky, K. (1995). Developing a measure of sense of belonging. *Nursing Research, 44*(1), 9–13. 10.1097/00006199-199501000-00003

Hall, K. (2014). Create a sense of belonging: Finding ways to belong can help ease the pain of loneliness. *Psychology Today*. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/pieces-mind/201403/create-sense-belonging

Hawes, C. & Reynolds, S. (2022). Radical retention: How higher education can rise to the challenges of the great resignation and beyond. *National Association of Colleges and Employers.* https://www.naceweb.org/career-development/best-practices/radical-retention-how-higher-education-can-rise-to-the-challenges-of-the-great-resignation-and-beyond/

He, H., & Brown, A. D. (2013). Organizational identity and organizational identification: A review of the literature and suggestions for future research. *Group & Organization Management, 38*(1), 3-25. doi: 10.1177/1059601112473815

Hempfling, M. S. (2015). *Happiness, work engagement, and perception of organizational support of student affairs professionals.* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1769034677). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-

com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertations-theses/happiness-work-engagement-

perception/docview/1769034677/se-2?accountid=14608

Hines, M. (2022). *Exploring employee engagement of higher education staff through

vigor, dedication, and absorption*. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

(2660741674).

https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-

theses/exploring-employee-engagement-higher-

education/docview/2660741674/se-2

Hogg, M. A. & Terry, D. J. (2000). Social identity and self-categorization processes in

organizational contexts. *The Academy of Management Review, 25*(1), 121–

140. https://www.jstor.org/stable/259266

Holiday, M. (2021, February 8). Employee retention vs. turnover: Key differences & why

it matters. https://www.netsuite.com/portal/resource/articles/human-

resources/employee-retention-turnover.shtml

Holmes, A.G.D. (2020). Researcher positionality – A consideration of its influence and

place in qualitative research – A new researcher guide. *Shanlax International

Journal of Education, 8*(4), 1–10. DOI:

https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232

Hom, P. W. & Kinicki, A. J. (2001). Toward a greater understanding of how

    dissatisfaction drives employee turnover. *The Academy of Management Journal,*

    44(5), 975-987. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3069441

Howard-Hamilton, M., Palmer, C., Johnson, S., & Kicklighter, M. (1998). Burnout and

    related factors: Differences between women and men in student affairs. *College*

    Student Affairs Journal, 17(2), 80–91.

    https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-

    com.du.idm.oclc.org/scholarly-journals/burnout-related-factors-differences-

    between-women/docview/224817930/se-2?accountid=14608

Hoyt, J. E. (2021). Student Connections: The critical role of student affairs and academic

    support services in retention efforts. *Journal of College Student Retention:*

    Research, Theory & Practice, 0(0) 1–12. DOI: 10.1177/1521025121991502

Human Resources & Inclusive Community [HRIC]. (2023). https://www.du.edu/human-

    resources

Hyatt, K. (2022). Stressors in higher education that lead to burnout and solutions to avoid

    it. *Journal of Business and Educational Leadership, 12*(1), 110–125.

    https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-

    journals/stressors-higher-education-that-lead-burnout/docview/2697170741/se-2

Hylton, N. R., & Vu, J. A. (2019). Creating a work environment that supports staff

    retention. *Young Children, 74*(4), 34-

38. https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/creating-work-environment-that-supports-staff/docview/2293634888/se-2?accountid=14608

Ikram, A., Fiaz, M., Mahmood, A., Ahmad, A., & Ashfaq, R. (2021). Internal corporate responsibility as a legitimacy strategy for branding and employee retention: A perspective of higher education institutions. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity, 7*(1), 52. https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc7010052

Jacques, T. W. (2020). *A phenomenological study of the organizational commitment of new student affairs professionals.* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2421153472). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/phenomenological-study-organizational-commitment/docview/2421153472/se-2?accountid=14608

Janice, D. B., & Winston, R. B. Jr. (2006). Supervision of new professionals in student affairs: Assessing and addressing needs. *College Student Affairs Journal, 26*(1), 64–89. https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/supervision-new-professionals-student-affairs/docview/224810184/se-2?accountid=14608

Jennings, E. & Tvaruzka, K. (n.d.). Building staff morale and creating a positive
workplace. *Workplace Culture in Academic Libraries.*

Jo, V. H. (2008). Voluntary turnover and women administrators in higher
education. *Higher Education, 56*(5), 565–582. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-
008-9111-y

Jyoti, J., Sharma, P., Kour, S., & Kour, H. (2021). The role of job involvement and career
commitment between person–job fit and organizational commitment: A study of
higher education sector. *The International Journal of Educational Management,
35*(1), 109–130. https://doi-org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1108/IJEM-06-2019-0205

Keating, D. (2007). Improving retention with a recognition overhaul. *Strategic HR
Review, 6*(2), 32–35.
https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-
journals/improving-retention-with-recognition-overhaul/docview/217179241/se-
2?accountid=14608

Khusanova, R., Kang, S. W., & Choi, S. B. (2021). Work engagement among public
employees: Antecedents and consequences. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*,
684495. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.684495

King, V., Roed, J., & Wilson, L. (2018). It's very different here: Practice-based academic
staff induction and retention. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and
Management, 40*(5), 470-484. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2018.1496516

Kipkebut, D. J. (2013). The effects of demographic characteristics on organisational

    commitment, job satisfaction and turnover Intentions: The case of employees in

    Kenyan universities. *Journal of Organisation and Human Behaviour, 2*(1), 20-33.

    https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-

    journals/effects-demographic-characteristics-on/docview/1478026793/se-

    2?accountid=14608

Klein, H. J., & Weaver, N. A. (2000). The effectiveness of an organizational-level

    orientation training program in the socialization of new hires. *Personnel*

    Psychology, 53(1), 47.

    https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-

    journals/effectiveness-organizational-level-orientation/docview/1634026184/se-

    2?accountid=14608

Klein, H. J., & Park, H. (2015). Organizational commitment. *International Encyclopedia*

    of the Social & Behavioral Sciences. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-

    8.22032-1

Kolvitz, M., Cederbaum, E., Clark, H., & Durham, D. (2000). Institutional commitment

    and faculty/staff development. *A Report of the National Task Force on Quality of*

    Services in the Postsecondary Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students.

Kundu, S. C., & Lata, K. (2017). Effects of supportive work environment on employee

    retention. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 25*(4), 703-

    722. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-12-2016-1100

Kuzior, A., Kettler, K., & Rab, L. (2022). Great resignation—Ethical, cultural, relational,

    and personal dimensions of generation Y and Z employees'

    engagement. *Sustainability 2022, 14*(6764), 1-9.

    https://doi.org/10.3390/su14116764

Lee, T. W., Hom, P., Eberly, M., & Li, J. (2018). Managing employee retention and

    turnover with 21st century ideas. *Organizational Dynamics, 47*, 88–98.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2017.08.004

Liu, W., & Liu, Y. (2022). The impact of incentives on job performance, business cycle,

    and population health in emerging economies. *Frontiers in Public Health,*

    9(778101). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.778101

Little, S. (2019, February 26). What is employee onboarding – And why do you need

    it? *SHRM Blog*. https://blog.shrm.org/blog/what-is-employee-onboarding-and-

    why-do-you-need-it?_ga=2.263965509.874186603.1687058331-

    696644961.1687058331

Lombardi, K. M., & Mather, P. C. (2016). Understanding anticipatory socialization for

    new student affairs professionals. *College Student Affairs Journal, 34*(1), 85–

97. https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/understanding-anticipatory-socialization-new/docview/1783397471/se-2

Long, D. (2012). The foundations of student affairs: A guide to the profession. In L. J. Hinchliffe & M. A. Wong (Eds.), *Environments for student growth and development: Librarians and student affairs in collaboration* (pp. 1–39). Chicago: Association of College & Research Libraries.

Lorden, L. P. (1998). Attrition in the student affairs profession. *NASPA Journal, 35*(3), 207-216, DOI: 10.2202/1949-6605.1049

Lu, L., Liu, J., & Zhao, N. (2017). Why employees stay: The roles of psychological ownership, territoriality, and work relationship closeness in affecting employee turnover intention. *Frontiers of Business Research in China, 11*(2), 186–207. http://dx.doi.org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1186/s11782-017-0010-x

Lynch, C. C. (2019). *Understanding factors that contribute to career commitment in new student affairs professionals.* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2489305012). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertations-theses/understanding-factors-that-contribute-career/docview/2489305012/se-2?accountid=14608

Macmillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology, 14*, 6–23.

Manogharan, M. W., Thivaharan, T., & Abd Rahman, R. (2018). Academic staff

    retention in private higher education institute: Case study of private colleges in

    Kuala Lumpur. *International Journal of Higher Education*, *7*(3), 52-78.

    doi:10.5430/ijhe.v7n3p52

Marshall, S. M., Gardner, M. M., Hughes, C., & Lowery, U. (2016). Attrition from

    student affairs: Perspectives from those who exited the profession. *Journal of*

    Student Affairs Research and Practice, 53(2), 146–159.

    http://dx.doi.org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/19496591.2016.1147359

Masango, R. S., Mpofu, M. (2013). Staff retention in higher education institutions: A

    case of selected South African universities. *Journal of Public Administration,*

    48(1), 883-896. https://journals.co.za/doi/epdf/10.10520/EJC149781

Mathieu, C., Fabi, B., Lacoursiere, R., & Raymond, L. (2016). The role of supervisory

    behavior, job satisfaction and organizational commitment on employee

    turnover. *Journal of Management & Organization, 22*(1), 113–129.

    doi:10.1017/jmo.2015.25

Maurer, R. (n.d.). New employee onboarding guide. *SHRM*.

    https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/new-

    employee-onboarding-

    guide.aspx#:~:text=Onboarding%20new%20hires%20at%20an,crucial%20to%20

    ensuring%20high%20retention.

McDonald, J. S. (2015). *The relationship between university employees' work engagement and the perception of their influence on student integration and retention.* ProQuest Central. (1710095983). https://search.proquest.com/docview/1710095983?accountid=193269

McMillan, D. W. & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology, 14,* 6–23.

Merriam, S.B. (2001). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mertens, D. M. & Wilson, A. T. (2018). *Program evaluation theory and practice*. Guilford Publications.

Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review, 1*(1), 61–89. https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822(91)90011-Z

Meyer, J. P., & Herscovitch, L. (2001). Commitment in the workplace: Toward a general model. *Human Resource Management Review, 11*, 299–326.

Meyer, J. P., Becker, T. E., & Vandenberghe, C. (2004). Employee commitment and motivation: A conceptual analysis and integrative model. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 89*, 991–1107. DOI: 10.1037/0021-9010.89.6.991

Mobley, W.H. (1982). *Employee turnover: Causes, consequences, and control.* Addison Wesley Publishing Company, New York.

Morales, A. (2022, June). Take this job and (change) it: The great resignation in higher

    education. *National Association of Student Personnel*

    Administrators. https://www.naspa.org/blog/take-this-job-and-change-it-the-great-

    resignation-in-higher-

    education#:~:text=Deemed%20%E2%80%9CThe%20Great%20Resignation%E2

    %80%9D%20by,work%E2%80%9D%20(Smith%2C%202022)

Moreira-Ramirez, N. (2020). *A collaborative inquiry to address burn-out in student*

    affairs professionals on college campuses. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses

    Global. (2466019276).

    https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-

    theses/collaborative-inquiry-address-burn-out-student/docview/2466019276/se-2

Mosley, E. & Irvine, D. (2021). *Making work human: How human-centered companies*

    are changing the future of work and the world. McGraw Hill.

Moustakas, C. (1994). Epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and

    synthesis. In *Phenomenological research methods* (pp. 84-102). Sage

    Publications, Inc., https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412995658

Mowday, R., Porter, L. & Steers, R. (1982). *Employee—organization linkages: The*

    psychology of commitment, absenteeism, and turnover. Academic Press, New

    York.

Mullen, P. R., Malone, A., Denney, A., & Dietz, S. S. (2018). Job stress, burnout, job

    satisfaction, and turnover intention among student affairs professionals. *College*

    Student Affairs Journal, 36(1), 94. https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-

    proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/scholarly-journals/job-stress-burnout-satisfaction-

    turnover/docview/2160297221/se-2?accountid=14608

Naifeh, Z. T. (2019). *Keeping the engine running: Perceptions of wellness and attrition*

    intentions in new student affairs professionals. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses

    Global. (2313670938). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-

    com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertations-theses/keeping-engine-running-perceptions-

    wellness/docview/2313670938/se-2?accountid=14608

Netswera, F. G., Rankhumise, E. M., & Mavundla, T. R. (2005). Employee retention

    factors for South African higher education institutions: A case study. *SA Journal*

    of Human Resource Management, 3(2), 36-

    40. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/47727807_Employee_Retention_Fa

    ctors_For_South_African_Higher_Education_Institutions_A_Case_Study

Ngirande, H. (2021). Occupational stress, uncertainty and organisational commitment in

    higher education: Job satisfaction as a moderator. *SA Journal of Human Resource*

    Management, *19*. https://doi-org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v19i0.1376

Oakley, A., Strange, V., Bonell, C., Allen, E., & Stephenson, J. (2006). Process

    evaluation in randomised controlled trials of complex interventions. *BMJ: British*

221

Medical Journal, 332(7538), 413.

http://dx.doi.org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1136/bmj.332.7538.413

Onochie, L.A. (2020). The changing nature of new employee orientation: "Staff retention

and turnover reduction" an empirical study in the Gambia's public and private

sectors. https://ssrn.com/abstract=3585208

Pattnaik, S., & Tripathy, S. K. (2020). Organizational identification (OID): A review of

major developments in the field and recommendations for future research. *South

Asian Journal of Management, 27*(1), 28–53.

https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-

com.du.idm.oclc.org/scholarly-journals/organizational-identification-oid-review-

major/docview/2410492424/se-2?accountid=14608

Patton, M.Q. (1978). *Utilization-focused evaluation.* Beverly Hills: Sage.

Patton, M.Q. (1997). *Utilization-focused evaluation* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Patton, M.Q. (2008). *Utilization-focused evaluation* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Patton, M.Q. & Horton, D. (2009). Utilization-focused evaluation for agricultural

innovation. *ILAC Brief, 22*, 1–16. DOI 10.22004/ag.econ.52533

Patton, M.Q & Campbell-Patton, C.E. (2022). *Utilization-focused evaluation (5th ed.)*.

Sage.

Paul, M. (2020, April 22). Umbrella summary: Job embeddedness. *Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development*. https://www.qic-wd.org/umbrella/job-embeddedness

Phillips, J. J. & Connell, A. O. (2003). *Managing employee retention: A strategic accountability approach.* Franklin Covey.

Pittman, E. C., & Foubert, J. D. (2016). Predictors of professional identity development for student affairs professionals. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 53*(1), 13-25. http://dx.doi.org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/19496591.2016.1087857

Pizzo, M. (2012). *How long can we keep them? Staff retention through a mentoring program in an undergraduate admissions office.* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (930490305). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/how-long-can-we-keep-them-staff-retention-through/docview/930490305/se-2?accountid=14608

Pokornowski, A. L. (2018). *The relationship between perceived competence levels of student affairs professionals and their job satisfaction.* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2063148478). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertations-theses/relationship-between-perceived-competence-levels/docview/2063148478/se-2?accountid=14608

Porter, L., Steers, R., Mowday, R., & Boulian, P. (1974). Organizational commitment,

    job satisfaction, and turnover among psychiatric technicians. *Journal of Applied*

    Psychology, 59(5), 603–609.

Quirindongo-Cruz, Y. (2016). *Employee retention: The use of realistic job preview and*

    realistic job expectations for organizational success. ProQuest Central.

    (1836803054).

    https://search.proquest.com/docview/1836803054?accountid=193269

Ray, D. C. (2004). Supervising new professionals in student affairs. *Journal of College*

    Student Development, 45(4), 473–

    475. https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-

    journals/supervising-new-professionals-student-affairs/docview/195183345/se-2

Ramirez, R. & Brodhead, D. (2013). *Utilization focused evaluation: A primer for*

    evaluators. George Town: Southbound Sdn. Bhd.

Renn, K. A. & Hodges, J. (2007). The first year on the job: Experiences of new

    professionals in student affairs. *NASPA Journal, 44*(2), 367-391, DOI:

    10.2202/1949-6605.1800

Rosser, V. J., & Javinar, J. M. (2003). Midlevel student affairs leaders' intentions to

    leave: Examining the quality of their professional and institutional work

    life. *Journal of College Student Development, 44*(6), 813-830.

    https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-

com.du.idm.oclc.org/scholarly-journals/midlevel-student-affairs-leaders-
intentions-leave/docview/195176808/se-2?accountid=14608

Rossi, P.H., Lipsey, M.W., & Freeman, H.E. (2004). *Evaluation: A systematic
approach.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Saliba, S. (2007). *Organizational strategies that inspire and improve employee retention
and morale.* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (304718785).
https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-
theses/organizational-strategies-that-inspire-improve/docview/304718785/se-
2?accountid=14608

Satardien, M., Jano, R., & Mahembe, B. (2019). The relationship between perceived
organisational support, organisational commitment and turnover intention among
employees in a selected organisation in the aviation industry. *SA Journal of
Human Resource Management, 17*. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v17i0.1123

Selesho, J. M., & Naile, I. (2014). Academic staff retention as a human resource factor:
University perspective. *The International Business & Economics Research
Journal, 13*(2), 295–304. http://dx.doi.org/10.19030/iber.v13i2.8444

Setterberg, G., Morrone, D.J., & Glowa, T. (2022, June). Addressing the great resignation
in turbulent times.
https://www.grantthornton.com/insights/articles/nfp/2022/addressing-the-great-
resignation-in-turbulent-times

Sheridan, K. (2012). *How to attract and retain top talent to create an engaged, productive workforce: Building a magnetic culture.* McGraw-Hill.

Shupp, M. R. (2007). *Synergistic supervision: An analysis of one key to retaining entry-level student affairs professionals*. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (304715900). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/synergistic-supervision-analysis-one-key/docview/304715900/se-2?accountid=14608

Shupp, M. R., & Arminio, J. L. (2012). Synergistic supervision: A confirmed key to retaining entry-level student affairs professionals. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 49*(2), 157–174. http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/1949-6605.6295

Singh, A., & Gupta, B. (2015). Job involvement, organizational commitment, professional commitment, and team commitment: A study of generational diversity. *Benchmarking, 22*(6), 1192–1211. https://doi-org.du.idm.oclc.org/10.1108/BIJ-01-2014-0007

Skallerup Bessette, L. (2020). Where are the career paths for staff on campus? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. https://www.chronicle.com/article/where-are-the-career-paths-for-staff-on-campus

Slatten, L.A., Bendickson, J.S., Diamond, M., & McDowell, W.C. (2020). Staffing of

    small nonprofit organizations: A model for retaining employees. *Journal of*

    Innovation & Knowledge, 6, 50–57. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2020.10.003

Smith, K. K. & Testani, J. A. (2022). *The great retention strategy for student*

    affairs [Thumbnail with link attached] [Post]. LinkedIn.

    https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/great-retention-strategy-student-affairs-

    kelli/?trk=public_post

Snyman, A. M. (2022). Predictors of staff retention satisfaction: The role of the

    psychological contract and job satisfaction. *Journal of Psychology in Africa,*

    32(5), 459-465. https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2022.2121047

Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM]. (2016). The SHRM competency

    model. chrome-

    extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.shrm.org/learningand

    career/competency-

    model/publishingimages/pages/default/shrm%20competency%20model_detailed

    %20report_final_secured.pdf

Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM]. (2021a). Managing for employee

    retention. https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and

    samples/toolkits/pages/managingforemployeeretention.aspx

Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM]. (2021b, October 20). *SHRM research highlights lasting impact of the 'great resignation' on workers who choose to stay* [Press release]. https://www.shrm.org/about-shrm/press-room/press-releases/pages/shrm-research-highlights-lasting-impact-of-the-%E2%80%98resignation-tsunami%E2%80%99-on-workers-who-choose-to-stay.aspx

Stufflebeam, D.L. (2001). Evaluation models. *New Directions for Evaluation, 89*, 7-98. https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.3

Stufflebeam, D. L., & Coryn, C. L. (2014). *Evaluation theory, models, and applications,* (Vol. 50). John Wiley & Sons.

Sull, D., Sull, C., Cipolli, W., & Brighenti, C. (2002-a). Why every leader needs to worry about toxic culture. https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/why-every-leader-needs-to-worry-about-toxic-culture/

Sull, D., Sull, C., & Zweig, B. (2022-b). Toxic culture is driving the great resignation. *MIT Sloan Management Review, 63*(2), 1-9. https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/scholarly-journals/toxic-culture-is-driving-great-resignation/docview/2633007986/se-2

Takawira, N., Coetzee, M., & Schreuder, D. (2014). Job embeddedness, work engagement and turnover intention of staff in a higher education institution: An

exploratory study. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management, 12*(1), 1-10. https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/job-embeddedness-work-engagement-turnover/docview/1530407690/se-2

Travisano, J. A. (2016). Evaluation of the relationship between employee engagement and student engagement and student retention at a large, private, not-for-profit research university. *ProQuest Central*. (1783602109). https://search.proquest.com/docview/1783602109?accountid=193269

Tull, A. (2006). Synergistic supervision, job satisfaction, and intention to turnover of new professionals in student affairs. *Journal of College Student Development, 47*(4), 465–480. https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/synergistic-supervision-job-satisfaction/docview/195177122/se-2?accountid=14608

Tull, A. (2014). An examination of community college senior student affairs officers', role perception, job satisfaction, and propensity to leave their institutions. *College Student Affairs Journal, 32*(1), 53–65. https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/examination-community-college-senior-student/docview/1611000742/se-2?accountid=14608

Umpierrez, A. (2021). Higher ed institutions facing increased turnover due to burnout

    during pandemic. https://www.plansponsor.com/higher-ed-institutions-facing-

    increased-turnover-due-burnout-pandemic/

University of Denver [DU]. (2021a). Human resources and inclusive community.

    https://www.du.edu/human-resources/index.html

University of Denver [DU]. (2021b). Staff Advisory Council. https://www.du.edu/staff

University of Denver [DU]. (2022c). Overview. https://www.du.edu/about/overview

University of Denver [DU]. (2022d). Thriving at DU: New hire orientation.

    https://www.du.edu/human-resources/new-employees/orientation

University of Denver [DU]. (2023a). Discoveries orientation.

    https://studentaffairs.du.edu/orientation

University of Denver [DU]. (2023b). Employee resources. https://www.du.edu/human-

    resources/about-us/employee-resources

University of Denver [DU]. (2023c). Inclusive excellence.

    https://operations.du.edu/inclusive-teaching/inclusive-excellence

US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022, July 6). *Job openings and labor turnover*

    summary. www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.nr0.htm.

US Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023, April 12). *Consumer price index, Denver-Aurora-*

    Lakewood area – March 2023: Mountain–Plains Information Office. US Bureau

of Labor Statistics. https://www.bls.gov/regions/mountain-plains/news-release/consumerpriceindex_denver.htm

Van Dick, R., Christ, O., Stellmacher, J., Wagner, U., Ahlswede, O., Grubba, C., Hauptmeier, M., Hohfeld, C., Moltzen, K., & Tissington, P. A. (2004). Should I stay or should I go? Explaining turnover intentions with organizational identification and job satisfaction. *British Journal of Management, 15*, 351–360.

Violanti, K. M. (2007). *Student affairs professionals in academic roles: The investigation of stress, job satisfaction and emotional well-being in a private higher educational setting.* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (304777919). https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/dissertations-theses/student-affairs-professionals-academic-roles/docview/304777919/se-2?accountid=14608

Wasilowski, S. (2018). Employee engagement in higher education: Financial impact of engagement in higher education. *Journal of Social Science Research, 12*(2), 2699-2712. DOI 10.24297/jssr.v12i2.7435

Weiss, C. W. (1998). *Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies*, 2nd Edition. Prentice Hall.

Wickham, J. (2019, March 8). Is having a sense of belonging important? *Mayo Clinic Health System.* https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/is-having-a-sense-of-belonging-important

Wiener, Y. (1982). Commitment in organizations: A normative view. *Academy of*

    Management Review, 7, 418–428.

Work Human. (2022). Two years into COVID: The state of human connection at work.

    https://www.workhuman.com/resources/employee-recognition/two-years-into-

    covid-the-state-of-human-connection-at-work

Work Institute. (2020). *2020 retention report: Insights on 2019 turnover trends, reasons,*

    costs & recommendations. https://info.workinstitute.com/en/retention-report-2020

Work Institute. (2021). *2021 retention report: The COVID edition.*

    https://info.workinstitute.com/en/retention-report-2021

Work Institute. (2022). *2022 retention report: How employees caused the great*

    resignation. https://info.workinstitute.com/2022-retention-report

Young, J. A. (2012). Job embeddedness theory: Can it help explain employee retention?

    [Unpublished dissertation]. https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/1625

Zackal, J. (2022, Sept.). The great resignation is about this 'dream-job elixir.'

    https://www.higheredjobs.com/Articles/articleDisplay.cfm?ID=3179&utm_source

    =09_21_2022&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=InsiderUpdate&utm_conten

    t=1&VersID=1&SchedVersID=128

Appendix A

Participation Email and Letter

SUBJECT: Invitation to Participate in Research Evaluation Regarding Staff Retention

Dear [NAME]:

My name is Vanessa McWhirt, and I am a doctorate student in the higher education program at the University of Denver (DU). I am working on a research study that examines staff retention through a new employee's first year of employment. I am reaching out to you today because you recently started working at DU and I am looking for participants to tell me about their onboarding experience.

Participation will entail **two** 60-minute interviews in person, virtually, or over the phone depending on your availability, comfortability, and COVID restrictions. See below for additional information.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to understand the effects new employee orientation (NEO) & onboarding has on staff engagement, retention, and their sense of identity and commitment to the university and their department. Of interest are the ways in which NEO can restructure their orientation program to improve engagement, and to understand the needs of staff throughout their first year of employment to increase retention. You will be asked to participate in two interviews. The first interview will be one month after you started working at DU. The interview will focus on your onboarding

and orientation experience. The second interview will be sixth months after you started

working at DU and will focus on your commitment to DU and your department.

RISKS & BENEFITS: I do not foresee any harm to participants. Interviews will be

audio-recorded and transcribed. All audio files and transcriptions will be encrypted, and

password protected. Additionally, participant information will be anonymized to further

protect the identity of those participating.

PUBLICATIONS: When this evaluation is finished, DU's Human Resources department

will be provided with a final report, and I will include findings and analyses in

publications. These publications will not include your name.

VOLUNTARY: Voluntary means that you do not have to be in this study if you do not

want to be. If you agree to participate and become uncomfortable at any point during the

interview, you are welcome to end the interview. You can also skip any of the questions

you do not want to answer.

COMPENSATION: After our final interview, you will receive a $10 Amazon gift card

for your participation.

QUESTIONS: You can ask questions now or whenever you wish. If you want to, you

may email me at vanessa.mcwhirt@du.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about

your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the DU Human

Research Protections Program by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121

to speak to someone other than the researcher.

Thank you again for considering participation in this study. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Vanessa McWhirt, M.A.

EdD candidate, Higher Education

University of Denver

Informed Consent

TITLE OF STUDY

Investing in Your Employees: Understanding the Impact Organizational Commitment

Has on Staff Retention

RESEARCHER

Vanessa McWhirt, M.A.

Morgridge College of Education

vanessa.mcwhirt@du.edu

PURPOSE OF STUDY

Hello, my name is Vanessa McWhirt, and I am a doctorate student in the higher

education program at the University of Denver (DU). I am reaching out to you today

because you have recently started working at DU and I am looking for participants to tell

me about their onboarding experience. My research involves employee retention,

specifically, staff (e.g., academic advisors, financial aid advisors, admissions counselors,

career counselors, etc.). I have chosen this population because there is a lack of staff

representation in retention strategies and research. Throughout my research I have

learned that staff and faculty have different needs; therefore, we must start researching

staff to help DU develop better retention strategies, improve employee engagement, and

increase retention.

STUDY PROCEDURES

There will be **two** 60-minute interviews. The first interview will occur a month after you have started working at DU, and the last interview will be after six months of employment. Interviews will occur virtually, in person, or over the phone depending on your comfortability, availability, and COVID protocols. Each interview will be recorded. Your name will not be used in any reports or publications that result from this research study. If I quote you, I will be sure to protect your identity and not use your name or any identifying characteristics. If at any time during our interview you want to end the conversation, please feel free to do so.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by creating folders that only the researcher will have access to. Data will be kept for at least 5 years, as required by the university.

COMPENSATION

After our final interview, you will receive a $10 Amazon gift card for your participation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as a

result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided above.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have read and understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Printed Name of Participant _____ Date _____

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

<div align="center">

Appendix C:

Interview Questions

</div>

Interview Protocol – First Month

Interviewee:

Date:

Location:

Start Time: **End Time:**

My name is Vanessa McWhirt, and I am a doctorate student in the higher education program at the University of Denver (DU). I am working on a research study that examines staff retention through a new employee's first year of employment. I am reaching out to you because you recently started working at DU and I am looking for participants to tell me about their onboarding experience.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. We will talk for **60 minutes**. As I mentioned in the email, I will be recording our conversation. Your name will not be used in any reports or publications that result from this research study. If I quote you, I protect your identity and not use your name or any identifying characteristics. If at any time during our interview you want to end the conversation, please feel free to do so. Do you have any questions before we get started? I am going to start recording now. Is that okay?

I'd like to start off by hearing a little bit about your background.

1. How long have you worked in higher education?

    a. What types of positions have you held while working in higher education?

2. What is your role here at DU?

3. Why did you join DU?

4. What are your goals working here at DU?

Now I'd like to talk briefly about your onboarding experience.

5. What information did you receive prior to orientation?

6. How would you describe your onboarding experience?

7. What aspects of your onboarding helped you feel engaged to DU?

8. How much support did you receive throughout your onboarding experience?

9. Is there anything you would change or improve regarding onboarding?

Now I'd like to talk about your experience with the New Employee Orientation.

10. What were your thoughts on the orientation?

11. What were you expecting or hoping to gain/learn from orientation?

12. What aspects of new employee orientation helped you feel engaged to DU?

13. Is there anything you would change or improve regarding orientation?

14. How was your first check-in with your manager/supervisor?

    a. What did your check-in consist of?

15. How often do you think your manager/supervisor should be checking in to make you feel more engaged and committed to DU?

16. How would you describe your engagement and commitment to DU after your check-in with your manager/supervisor?

17. Have you heard the phrase "organizational commitment"? Describe what organizational commitment means to you in the workplace.

18. How would you describe your relationship to DU?

19. How would you describe your level of commitment to DU?

20. How would you describe your level of satisfaction toward your job?

21. How would you describe your sense of belonging to DU?

22. What aspects of onboarding and new employee orientation helped you feel engaged to DU?

23. What aspects of onboarding and new employee orientation helped you feel committed to DU?

Concluding Questions

24. How often do you think Human Resources should be checking in to make you feel engaged and committed to DU?

25. Is there anything else you'd like to say about anything we talked about?

Interview Questions

Interview Protocol – Sixth Month

Interviewee:

Date:

Location:

Start Time: _____ **End Time:** _____

My name is Vanessa McWhirt, and I am a doctorate student in the higher education program at the University of Denver (DU). I am working on a research study that examines staff retention through a new employee's first year of employment. I am reaching out to you because you recently started working at DU and I am looking for participants to tell me about their onboarding experience.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. We will talk for **60 minutes**. As I mentioned in the email, I will be recording our conversation. Your name will not be used in any reports or publications that result from this research study. If I quote you, I protect your identity and not use your name or any identifying characteristics. If at any time during our interview you want to end the conversation, please feel free to do so. Do you have any questions before we get started? I am going to start recording now. Is that okay?

1. Now that you're halfway through your first year, please reflect on how it's gone so far. Any updates or changes?

242

2. Has HR reached out to you since our last interview and if so, what did their outreach entail?

a. If not, what would you want HR to be reaching out about to make you feel more engaged and a part of DU?

b. What practices could HR implement to make you feel more engaged?

3. How would you define commitment?

a. Given that definition of commitment, how would you describe your level of commitment to DU?

b. What has shaped your level of commitment?

c. What sustains your level of commitment?

d. What diminishes your level of commitment?

e. Has your commitment changed since you started?

f. Research tells us there are three possible reasons for an employee to commit to an organization. Reason number one is because you identify with the values. Reason number two is because there are financial or other personal benefits associated with the job. Reason number three is because there is a sense of duty or calling. Of those three reasons, is there one that stands out to you as a reason for your commitment to DU/dept/job? Please explain your answer.

     g. How has your commitment impacted your professional growth these past

         sixth months?

4. What makes you satisfied with your job?

     a. What keeps you staying in this role?

     b. What would help you feel more satisfied with your job?

     c. What could HR do to make you more satisfied with your job?

     d. What makes you dissatisfied with your job?

     e. Have you thought about leaving the institution? If so, what factors made

         you think about leaving?

5. What would help you feel more committed to DU?

6. Can you describe any work-related experiences that could contribute to employee

   turnover?

Concluding Questions

7. Is there anything else you'd like to say about anything we talked about?