



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

**Start something.**

# What we heard.

2024 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY  
AHEAD OF TOMORROW OPERATIONS PLAN

## INTRODUCTION

The University of Calgary powers positive change.

We do so purposefully by being ready to think and act ***Ahead of Tomorrow***.

As defined by our [2023-2030 strategic plan](#), it is our collective role to strive for excellence through innovative teaching and learning, cutting-edge exploration, and community linkage.

Universities exist to educate, to discover and to enrich the societies they both serve and lead.

University operations, in turn, exist to support that mission by creating, running and sustaining best-in-class processes and services that enable students, postdocs, faculty and staff to reach their goals and achieve their ambitions.

Results of the 2024 Employee Engagement Survey will form one of several baseline metrics for ongoing measurements being established.

## SUMMARY

Employee engagement surveys are a key tool for the University of Calgary to gain an understanding of the current work environment and identify opportunities to support employees as they achieve our strategic plan's goals.

In February 2024, 6,752 employees were invited to participate in the 2024 Employee Engagement Survey, which was sent to all full-time and part-time permanent UCalgary staff and academics with more than six months continuous service.

There were 2,899 unique individuals who completed the survey, representing a 43% response rate, with a combined 18,860 comments.

### Respondents included:

- › Executive and senior leaders
- › Academic staff (TUCFA)
- › Management and professional staff (MaPS)
- › Support staff (AUPE)
- › Postdocs (PDA)
- › Graduate assistants (GSA)

### Major themes we heard included:

- › Requests for more permanent support to address staffing and employee turnover.
- › Greater workload-management options, including addressing administrative and teaching load concerns.
- › Flexibility offered through work-from-home policies is appreciated.
- › Strengthen connections to strategic decision-making through increased communication.
- › Keep enhancing UCalgary's diverse community through EDIA (equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility) and Indigenous initiatives.
- › Engage with end users in developing and implementing process changes.
- › Importance of tuition-support program and professional-development opportunities.
- › Increased investment of time and resources in employee growth and development.
- › Address systemic barriers to getting work done.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The 2024 Employee Engagement Survey is the first step in a multi-year listening strategy to gather insight into levels of employee commitment and satisfaction across various dimensions.

The survey was administered by third-party vendor, TalentMap, from Jan. 30 to Feb. 26, 2024.

As designed using industry best practices, the survey featured secure links for each respondent to collect anonymous responses that were aggregated to ensure confidentiality for participants.

The survey collected data in two ways: ratings using a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” (see [survey results](#)) and comments in open boxes, that were analyzed using secure AI technology to generate key themes and insights (see [what we heard](#)).

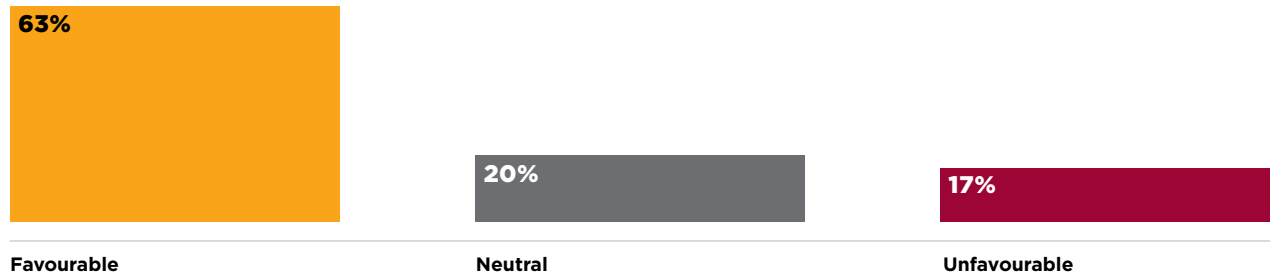
The results of the survey will set a baseline for measurement going forward and help to inform the future development of both institutional and faculty/unit action plans. It will also help us continue to build engagement and retention strategies aligned with *Ahead of Tomorrow*.

## SURVEY RESULTS | UNIVERSITY-WIDE RESULTS

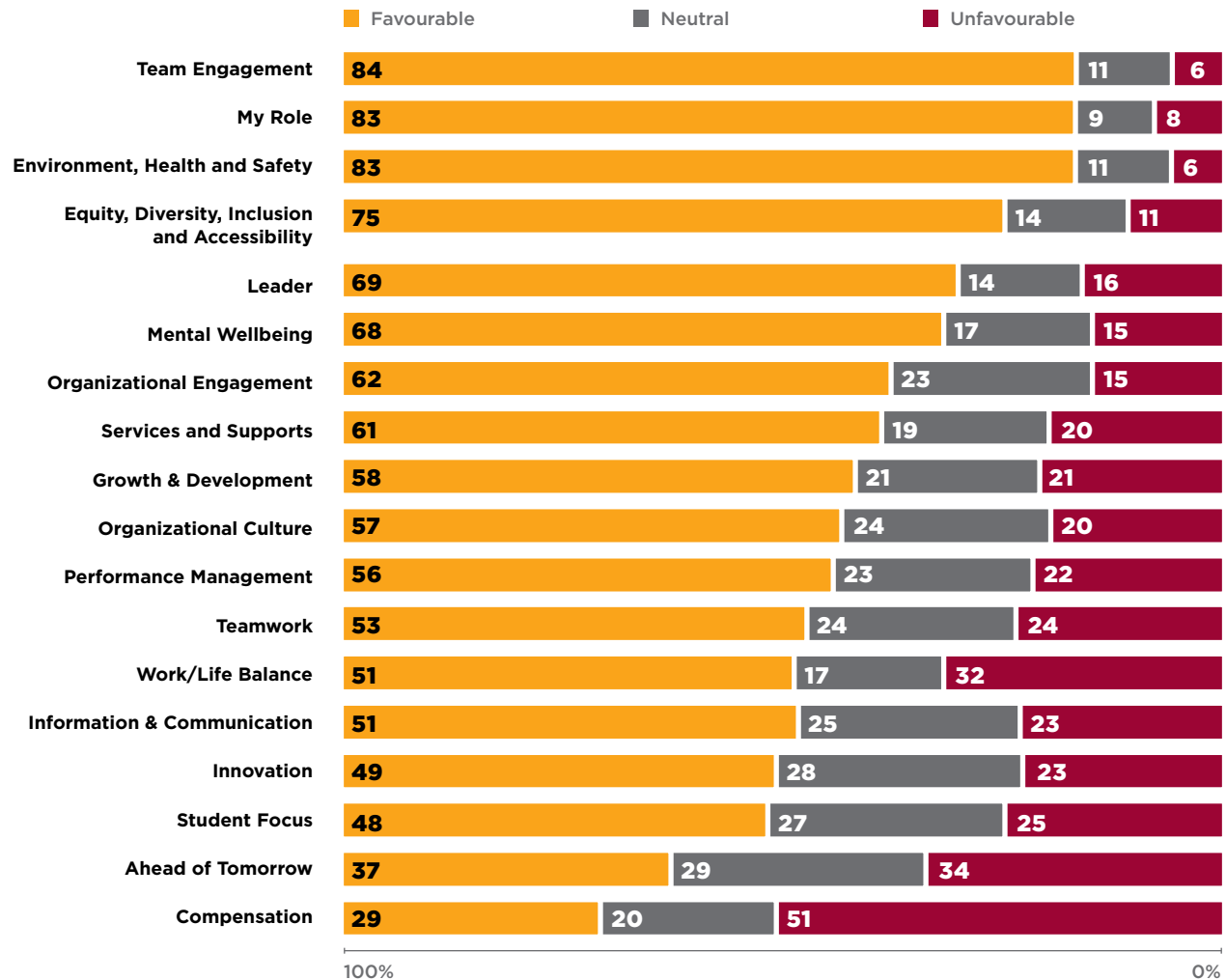
### Employee engagement

TalentMap defines employee engagement as a strong emotional and intellectual connection that employees have for their job, coworkers, manager, senior leaders and the organization. It is what inspires and motivates individuals. Engagement includes factors such as how connected employees are to the organization, optimism about the future, the odds of an employee staying or leaving, and overall satisfaction with their place of work.

Based on overall responses, 2024 UCalgary employee engagement ratings are:



The survey consisted of closed- and open-response questions over 18 themes. Below is a more detailed breakdown of university-wide responses in the survey. Results reported include responses across all employee groups, faculties and units.



## **WHAT WE HEARD | STAFF RESOURCES AND RETENTION**

### **What's going well**

#### **Peer support**

Staff and faculty often step in to assist each other. This peer support is highly valued.

#### **Resilience and adaptability**

Departments and staff continue to work and support all functions, despite resource challenges.

#### **Professional development**

Opportunities for career and professional development do exist, although time constraints limit their utilization.

### **Where we can improve**

#### **Understaffing**

Lack of sufficient administration and technical support staff is leading to increased workload for existing staff.

#### **High turnover**

Creates disruption, lack of continuity, inefficiencies and a consistent need for retraining new staff, particularly in administrative roles.

#### **Workload distribution**

Individuals feeling overburdened due to the need to cover multiple roles or departments.

## **WHAT WE HEARD | WORKLOAD MANAGEMENT AND FLEXIBILITY**

### **What's going well**

#### **Work-from-home flexibility**

Implementing of work from home policies has been recognized as a success, providing staff greater flexibility in managing their work and personal lives.

#### **Knowledge sharing**

Strong culture of sharing of knowledge and helping each other.

#### **Adaptation to changing circumstances**

Ability to adapt to remote teaching and work during the COVID-19 pandemic was seen by many as a strength.

### **Where we can improve**

#### **Heavy workloads**

Unsustainable workloads resulting from a combination of cuts to support and increasing demands.

#### **Administrative support**

Reductions in staffing levels have increased workload.

#### **Teaching load concerns**

Restricts time available for research and professional development.

## WHAT WE HEARD | TRANSPARENCY AND DECISION-MAKING

### What's going well

#### Openness to new ideas

Leaders display openness to exploring possibilities, such as faculty transitioning between streams or adjusting roles.

#### Strategic vision

ELT has a vision for the future of the university tied to investments in specific strategic areas, reflecting the orientation towards growth and advancement.

#### Engagement

There are instances when employee input is solicited, and leadership is open to incorporating feedback from faculty and staff.

### Where we can improve

#### Transparency and inclusiveness

Faculty and staff feel disconnected from significant strategic decisions and perceive a lack of transparency from leadership.

#### Communication

Decisions are sometimes communicated in ways that are perceived as simplistic or lacking substance.

#### Recognition of expertise

Staff and faculty urge a more collaborative approach to decision-making that respects and utilizes the specialized knowledge of individuals across the university.

## WHAT WE HEARD | EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

### What's going well

#### Department makeup

Many respondents indicated their immediate work units or departments are quite diverse in terms of nationality, culture, subculture and gender.

#### Indigenous voices

The Indigenous Strategy (*ii' taa'poh'to'p*) and the Indigenous Research Support team are recognized positively for bringing Indigenous voices to campus and providing good examples of diversity in action.

#### Recognition of diversity

Efforts to recognize diversity in staff/students is an area of pride for the university.

### Where we can improve

#### Authenticity

EDIA efforts can sometimes appear tokenistic, rather than substantive.

#### Negative experiences

Some experience microaggressions, believe there is discrimination in hiring/promotion practices, and feel there is underlying bias and misinformation about EDIA.

#### Physical Accessibility

Issues have not been adequately addressed, particularly in older buildings.



## WHAT WE HEARD | SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

### What's going well

#### Strong sense of community

Staff rely on each other to navigate complex processes.

#### Consultation with end users

Some departments are actively engaging and consulting with end users when implementing changes, leading to better outcomes.

#### Localized successes

Some faculties and services are providing excellent support and are recognized for their efforts.

### Where we can improve

#### Staffing

Staffing across the university is below levels required to accomplish missions, leading to strain on services.

#### Communication

Communication between departments is often insufficient and processes can be frustratingly bureaucratic and time-consuming.

#### Centralization Initiatives

Have reduced the localized, department-specific support that once streamlined various administrative processes.

## WHAT WE HEARD | GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

### What's going well

#### Professional development

There is an appreciation for the opportunities available.

#### Tuition support

The tuition support program is valued for furthering education.

### Where we can improve

#### Leadership support

Many employees feel they lack the support from leadership for professional growth or to nurture talent effectively.

#### Internal Promotion

Internal talent development and promotion are perceived to be lacking, with a tendency to hire external candidates.

## WHAT WE HEARD | ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

### What's going well

#### Front-line support

Staff and faculty are supportive and contribute to a welcoming culture.

#### Recognition in certain fields

Successes are celebrated, particularly in areas like quantum physics or interdisciplinary studies.

#### Positivity

Some individuals report having a positive team and supportive leaders with logical processes where they feel listened to.

### Where we can improve

#### Open environment

Individuals feel discouraged from voicing opinions; handling of incidents related to mental health support and harassment suggest gaps in support structures; observations of disrespect towards staff members.

#### Recognition and support

Perception that recognition is given selectively, and some departments/roles feel devalued due to inadequate support and funding.

#### Compensation and benefits

There is a feeling that compensation does not reflect the current economic landscape nor acknowledge the value of contributions made by employees.

## WHAT WE HEARD | INNOVATION

### What's going well

#### Reputation

The university has a reputation for promoting innovation and creativity, especially in research areas.

#### Indigenous Strategy

The positive approach to Indigenous strategies is considered deeply innovative within Canadian post-secondary context.

#### Entrepreneurial spirit

The university shows a willingness to explore new technologies and has pockets of talent that could lead to innovation, with some department and individual recognized for being innovative and having a strong entrepreneurial spirit.

### Where we can improve

#### Resources

Reduced opportunities for development and innovation stifles creativity and learning.

#### Resistance to change

Certain leaders or staff cling to legacy system or the way things have always been.

#### Empowerment

There is a perceived lack of genuine empowerment for employees to bring ideas forward or to create significant changes within the university's operations.

## REFLECTIONS

The University of Calgary recognizes the integral role faculty and staff play in fostering a thriving academic and research environment. The 2024 Employee Engagement Survey highlights a solid foundation of pride in our institution, while also identifying strategic areas for development and support.

The candid feedback provided by employees is invaluable and deeply appreciated. Insights provided within this Employee Engagement Survey will help spark meaningful change for the betterment of our university community.

Together, we will continue to build on our strengths, address our challenges, and foster a dynamic and supportive environment for all.

## NEXT STEPS

Any measurement is only as good as what we do with it.

This summer, the Executive Leadership Team will choose two to three key institutional priorities to focus on, based on survey results. Senior leaders can then set additional goals for their areas that align with these key institutional priorities. Once these priorities are established, action plans will be developed to ensure we meet our commitments to our employees.

The Employee Engagement Surveys will be repeated at regular intervals for the duration of the *Ahead of Tomorrow* strategic plan in order to measure our progress.

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**Questions about this report's conclusions or methodology?**

[\*\*Learn more.\*\*](#)

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