MUSSA distributed the following questions to classified staff in the MUS system for comment. The following is a summary of the answers received for each question listed in order by the numbers of responses received.

1. **What parts of our compensation package are helping our campuses’ ability to recruit and retain capable faculty and staff? Why?**
   1) The number one answer from classified staff is the Health Insurance/Medical, Dental, Vision, Life insurance, and Wellness Programs
   - Classified staff value the insurance benefits and other wellness programs. Most cited insurance benefits were important to them when choosing employment in the MUS system. “Our insurance package, while not perfect, is better than many non-campus organizations offer.”
   2) Leave (annual, sick and paid holidays)
   - The ability to accrue and use vacation and sick leave within the first year of employment is considered a valuable recruiting tool by staff. The amount of leave accrued during the year and the flexibility to use it is seen as a valued retention tool.
   3) Retirement benefits
   - Retirement benefits are considered valuable for recruitment and retention – some site the lack of this benefit in the private sector.
   4) Tuition waivers
   - Tuition waivers for staff and their families are considered a valuable benefit for recruitment and retention. “The tuition waiver is a good benefit – encourages staff to pursue more education, participate on campus, and assist dependents in pursuing education.”

The four answers above received the most responses – some other benefits listed were: A great work environment, job security, opportunity for flex time, free tickets to performances, free bus passes, low cost on blood draws, wellness program, low cost to staff for Microsoft software.

2. **What parts of our compensation package are hindering our campuses’ ability to recruit and retain capable faculty and staff? Why?**
   1) Wages and the compensation structure
   - Wages
   1. MUS wage trends fall well below the Consumer Price Index
   2. Positions being advertised on campus often have required skill sets that are disproportionate to the compensation being offered.
      a. Those that do accept positions on campus are not likely to remain once the economy starts to recover and private sector jobs, which typically pay more for the same skill requirements, are available.
   3. Longtime staff members will eventually “give up” on the hope of their wage catching-up with the region and leave the MUS. The institutional memory lost and cost of constant training place a burden on other staff, units, etc., which can breed frustration and lower morale.
   4. Some full-time staff qualify for public assistance. This is a morale buster.
   5. Many staff hold more than one job to pay the bills and put food on the table.
6. Most staff work very hard and report that they love their work. It is a drain on those enthusiastic employees to give the MUS 150% and not receive acknowledgement in the form of a living wage.

- **Compensation Structure**
  
  1. The current structure does not allow matching a candidate’s skill set with a wage. For instance, during the recruitment process, the position description lists a range of pay. Employees coming into the system are paid at the lowest rate as their wages cannot exceed the lowest paid classified staff position at the institution.
  
  2. Minimal or no advancement opportunities
     
     a. The career ladder of in-range progression process is cumbersome, difficult to manage and expensive for the department/unit.
     
        i. For example: one institution has a $25k pool set aside for career ladders. A jump from an Admin II position to an Admin III will cost $2606.24. The unit/department can receive up to $1,000 from the pool – if there is money left. The additional cost to the unit is $1606.24 – if they are lucky enough to receive the pool contribution or the entire amount if they are not.
     
        ii. Many staff report additional duties and responsibilities added to their workload with no pay increase.
  
  3. Inability to compensate for staff members’ educational background or years of service. At this point, for a classified staff member to receive a pay increase they would need to get a new job. There is not any sort of compensation/recognition of educational background or years of service. The system seems to just pay folks based on a position title.
  
  4. Inequity in similar jobs across the campus.
  
  5. Fees affecting take home pay, specifically the need for employees to purchase a parking permit so that they can park at work are a morale buster. It feels to employees that they are being charged for the privilege of working at the university.
  
  6. Compression and inversion are long ongoing problems with the current compensation structure.

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3. **What significant challenges are ahead of us that you think the Regents should be anticipating and preparing for? (staffing and compensation related)**

   1) **Funding**
      
      - Identify funding sources to “fix” the current compensation structure
      - Realigning priorities in the system to free up funding for faculty and staff compensation

   2) **Retention**
      
      - Many “seasoned” employees will leave the MUS to retire or start a second career with a higher paying job once the economy starts to recover. This will result in a significant loss of institutional memory.
      - Workloads continue to increase as the upward trend in enrollments and reporting has become the norm. Without increasing the reward for taking on additional responsibility, employees may go elsewhere.
      - New employees are not being retained, primarily due to the lack of competitive salaries which fuels a spiral of decreasing morale due to the need for other employees to “pick up the slack” when positions are vacant and new employees are being trained.
3) Economic improvement – As counter intuitive as this appears, as the economy improves enrollments are likely to drop because those who came back to retrain will return to the workforce. This means less tuition money available for budgeting.

4) Decrease in the number of high school graduates which again means fewer tuition dollars available for staffing and compensation related expenses.

5) Demand for more and more online learning opportunities without the infrastructure to support them.

4. What solutions or approaches do you recommend the Regents consider? (economic and non-economic)

1) Realign priorities and identify inefficiencies in the system to free up funding.
2) Restructure the compensation package
3) Continue the conversation with staff and faculty.
4) Create a merit pay increment system for staff much like the merit system for faculty
   - Encourage and reward supervisors and or departments for building a team environment which rewards good customer service, hard work and dedication to the mission and our students.
5) Modify the provision of dependent tuition waivers for employees such that there is a benefit for new employees and an increased benefit for long term employees (rather than not being available until an employee has been in the system for 5 years). For example, put dependent tuition waivers on a sliding schedule as follows:
   - At initial employment an employee is eligible for 25% of the amount currently available for a tuition waiver.
   - During the second year of employment an employee is eligible for 50% of the amount currently available for a tuition waiver.
   - During the third year of employment an employee is eligible for 75% of the amount currently available for a tuition waiver.
   - During the fourth year of employment an employee is eligible for 100% of the amount currently available for a tuition waiver.
   - During the fifth year of employment an employee is eligible for 100% of the amount currently available for a tuition waiver for one child and is eligible for 25% of the amount currently available for a tuition waiver for a second child.
   - Continue the pattern above.

6) Expand the wellness program to promote a healthier campus which would lower health care costs.

7) Create a professional development program for staff within the MUS.

8) Reward educational advancement by encouraging supervisors to grant release time for staff to attend classes (within reason).