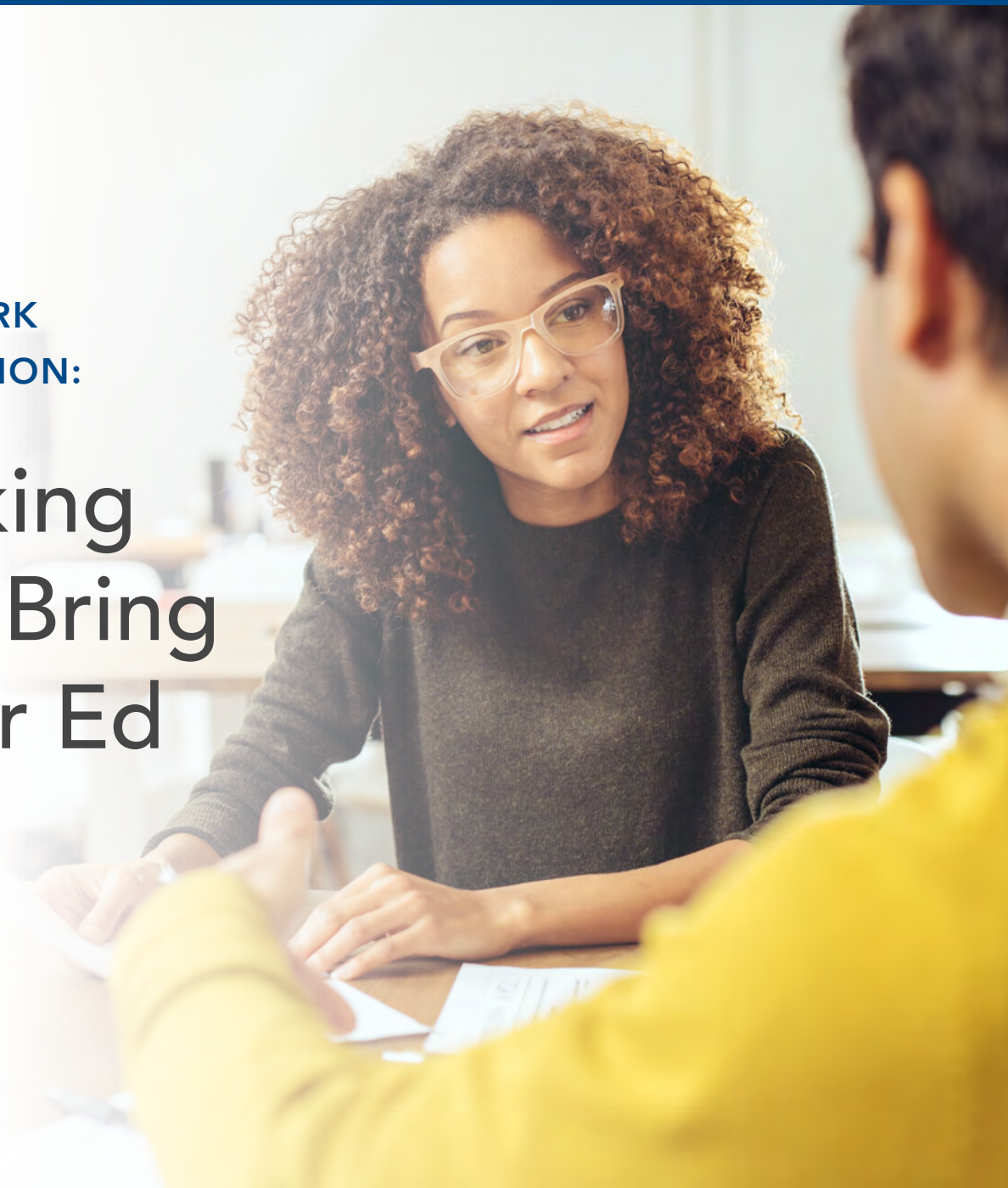


FLEXIBILITY IS THE NEW HALLMARK
OF A FUTURE-PROOFED INSTITUTION:

How Time-Tracking and Scheduling Bring Agility to Higher Ed



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Higher education faces permanent changes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. From a 25% spike in enrollment deferments to a shift in the location of the learning experience, higher education institutions continue to pivot to manage the change and come out on top. But there's one area where higher ed is not getting the attention it deserves — managing the workforce that supports the changes taking place for students and faculty.

Fortunately, there's a silver lining to all the change taking place. COVID-19 revealed the opportunity institutions have to be more flexible and productive in how they approach workforce time management. As these changes take root at the administrative level, benefits of increased productivity, flexibility and agility are becoming even more clear — which is especially important in higher ed, where faculty, staff and employees make up different and diverse types of employment.

"The typical college campus is really six industries in one," explains Ryan Betzing, enterprise account executive at TCP Software. "Dining services typically consist of chain restaurants, catering and hospitality. The operations group is typically overseeing a maintenance team, and sometimes housekeeping for student housing. Most campuses have a large student rec center that needs to be staffed. Finally, most campuses have their own police department. So, colleges have to run all of those different types of businesses before you get to what we typically think of when we think of higher education, such as faculty and instructional staff."





And therein lies the real challenge higher education institutions face when managing their workforce post-COVID-19. The remote and hybrid trend does not split the work — **it splits the workforce.** Some employees will continue to need to be onsite, some will not, and higher ed must find a way to manage them all.

To further explore this topic, TCP Software partnered with Higher Education Dive’s studioID to survey 115 higher education professionals about their use of time-tracking software in the wake of COVID-19.

The survey reveals compelling evidence that the status quo has been broken. Before the pandemic, higher ed institutions could navigate around the need for technology that helped them manage their mixed workforce, but the pandemic put too much pressure on those points of challenge. Here are four findings from the survey that reveal how institutions can use the technology to future-proof their workforce and be prepared for anything that comes next:



From a school’s perspective, COVID-19 is not the only time an institution will have to pivot quickly. Time-tracking technology gives schools insights into what students and staff are doing so they have the right tools in place to make decisions about how and when to change.”

Maggie Campbell Wilkerson

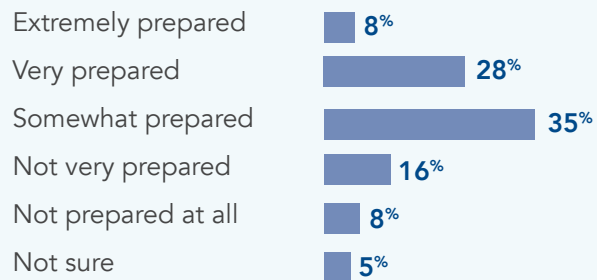
Founder & President, [Time2Track](#), a Liaison Company

FINDING #1:

Institutions were not altogether prepared for hybrid work

According to the results of the survey, just over one in three higher education professionals (36%) said their institutions were extremely or very prepared to monitor the time, attendance and scheduling needs of faculty, staff and administrative personnel in response to COVID-19. Overall, 59% of those surveyed indicated they were only somewhat prepared, not very prepared or not prepared at all.

Institutions were not fully prepared to monitor the time, attendance and scheduling needs of their faculty, staff and administrative personnel in response to COVID-19.



These results explain why time-tracking software was such a boon to higher education institutions that used more traditional and manual processes, such as punching time cards and turning in and reviewing timesheets. Shifting these processes to the cloud via convenient mobile devices allowed administrators to gather all of the data they need in one place and evaluate it in the correct context.

“The pandemic pushed higher ed to be more efficient because they were suddenly managing so many moving pieces,” says Betzing. “If an employee is able to do their job remotely, most schools are allowing that. But there are still roles where people have to be onsite to run a cash register or accept and review paperwork in person. Having flexibility in how you track time and make schedules for institutions, departments and teams that have split on-site, off-site and hybrid roles helps institutions get the right people in the right places at the right times.”



We can't always know what will come next. The workforce scheduling and time-tracking needs of higher ed expand and contract and shift with every academic year. The only thing we know is that higher ed needs to be prepared for whatever might come next, whether teams of staff members are on campus, working virtually or both.”

Candice Staloch
SMB Manager, TCP Software



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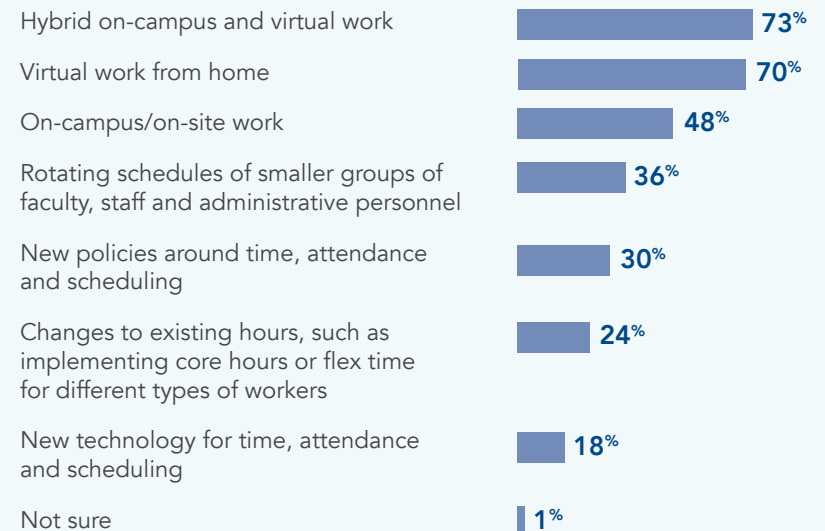


FINDING #2:

Using time-tracking software makes room for hybrid work

The two most frequently implemented time, attendance and scheduling options in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are hybrid on-campus and virtual work (73%) and virtual work from home (70%). These high numbers make sense in the context of industry data indicating that before the pandemic, in 2018, [about one-third of students](#) had taken an online class. Today, [every major higher education institution](#) offers online tracks for their degree programs, which allows faculty and instructional staff to work virtually or hybrid on-site/remote.

Hybrid on-campus and virtual work and virtual work from home are the two most frequently implemented time, attendance and scheduling options in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Interestingly, the majority of those surveyed did not find the shift to hybrid or remote work to be daunting. Only up to 29% of survey respondents indicated they had issues with the shift; those issues most frequently rated as extremely or very challenging were the approval of funding for new systems (29%) and deployment of technology to different employee types, such as staff, faculty, hourly workers, etc. (28%).

Other issues are seen as extremely or very challenging by fewer higher education professionals.

26%

Integration of new system(s) with existing technology

26%

Developing and managing scheduling for students

25%

Siloed or inaccurate time, attendance and scheduling

22%

Employee adoption and ongoing participation

“Even as parts of the institutional workforce return to campus, it’s safe to say there will be more flexibility now that we’ve been forced to be in a virtual environment,” says Candice Staloch, SMB manager at TCP Software. “There are some parts of some jobs that simply don’t need to be visible in the office, and this was a wake-up call for both institutions and their staff members to build systems around the logistics of the situation so they could prepare and avoid a logistical nightmare.”



It’s an important distinction that the hybrid or remote trend does not split your work — it splits your workforce. Some of your people will need to be on site, some will not, and higher ed must find a way to manage them all.”

Ryan Betzing

Enterprise Account Executive, TCP Software



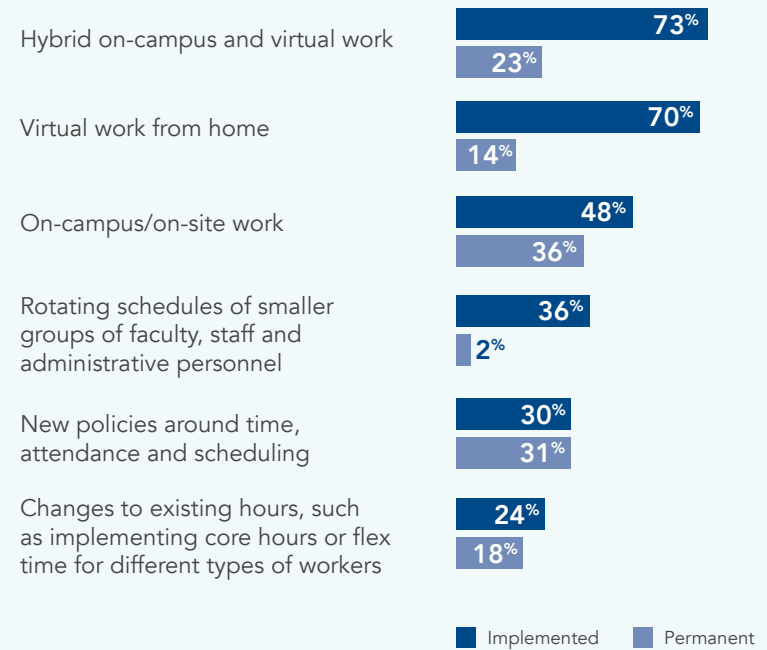
FINDING #3:

Using time-tracking software for increased flexibility

Not all of these changes related to the higher ed workforce are intended to be permanent, however. Of the 73% of respondents that implemented hybrid on-campus and virtual work, only 23% say it will be permanent. And of the 70% of respondents that implemented virtual work from home, only 14% say it will be permanent.

The most permanent changes are connected to how institutions track time. About 52% of higher education professionals whose institutions implemented new technology for time, attendance and scheduling say the change will be permanent. (About 18% implemented this.)

Workforce changes are seen as permanent by a minority of respondents:



The adoption of new strategies that may or may not be permanent highlights the flexible and agile approach higher ed must bring to decisions around workforce and time management. Administrators must be able to move forward with solutions that allow them to maintain the same level of quality and ease of process around time management data no matter where staff members choose to work from — today from home, tomorrow from campus.

“A lot of what’s permanent and what’s temporary in higher ed will be dictated by the workforce,” says Maggie Campbell Wilkerson, founder and president of Time2Track, a Liaison company. “As more organizations and institutions permanently transition to hybrid or even fully online learning models, higher ed employees will see they have options. They won’t hesitate to find another job that allows them the flexibility they want, if their position is able to be flexible.”

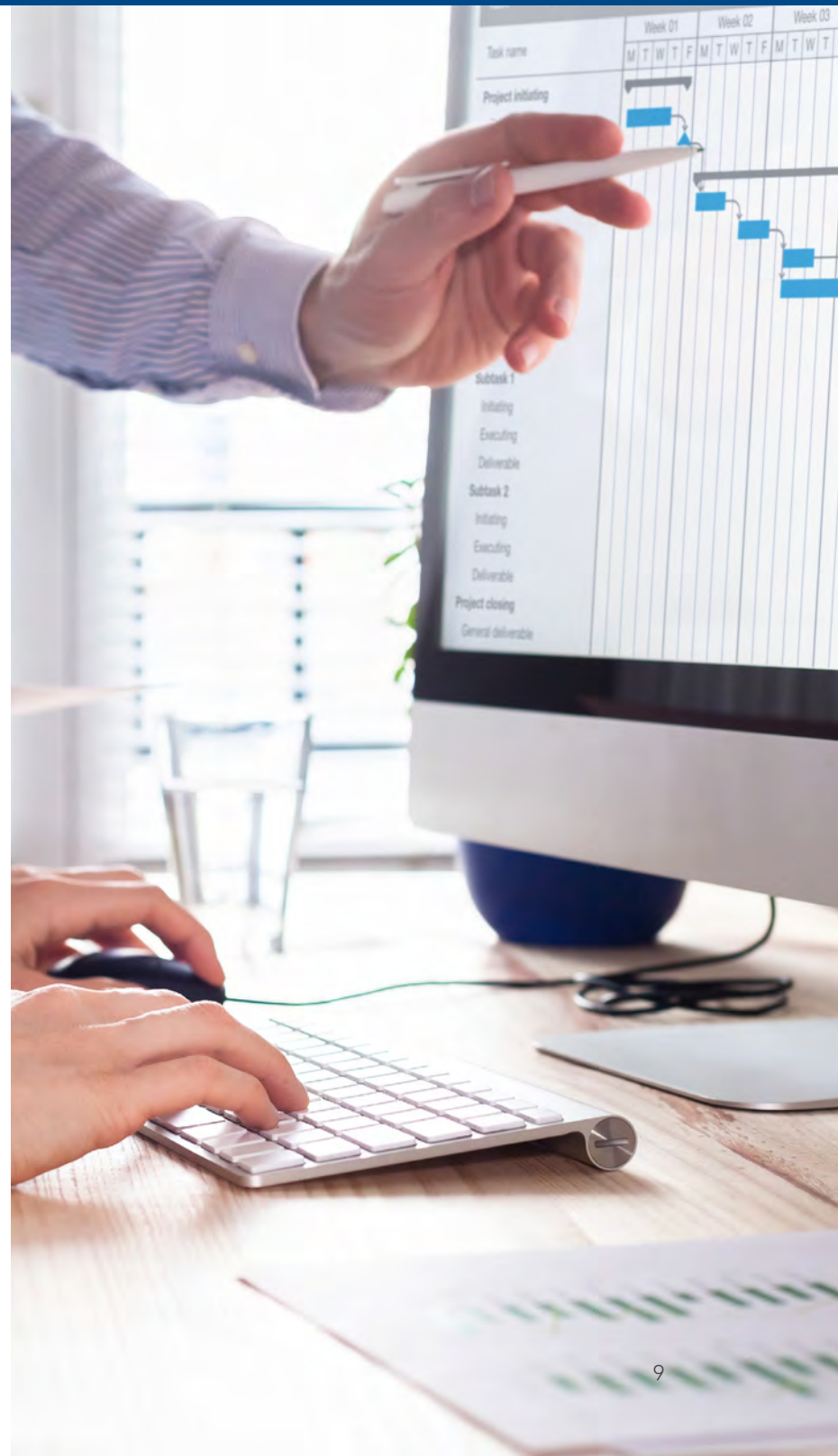
Time-tracking software enables institutions to put the processes in place to fully embrace hybrid work, not just use it as a stopgap, Wilkerson explains. When a hybrid workforce is measurably just as efficient and productive as an on-site workforce, it’s easier to see a future that is flexible, agile and prepared for anything.



We can’t rely on the days of stopping by someone’s desk to chat and request time off. Institutions need a single source of truth about scheduling and time-tracking that allows both the institution and the staff member to have more control and oversight into where their time is going.”

Ryan Betzing

Enterprise Account Executive, TCP Software



FINDING #4:

Using time-tracking data to seek out productivity improvements

Most respondents saw time-tracking activity as a way to take positive action around productivity, rather than a way to take punitive action about employee behavior. Such a future-focused approach allows institutions to carefully evaluate which employees and roles can be done virtually and which can't — and whether or not those choices will work for the long haul.

For example, according to the survey results, the most frequently sought benefits of tracking time, attendance and scheduling initiatives at the beginning of 2020 (before the pandemic) was monitoring for losses in efficiency and/or productivity losses (37%), capturing baseline productivity levels across different segments of faculty, staff and administrative personnel (33%) and collecting data for strategic workforce insights in the future (31%). The least frequently mentioned benefits included incorporating more advanced time-tracking technology such as biometric tracking (fingerprints), card swipes and web clocks (9%) and minimizing time-tracking or time-card fraud (15%).





MOST IMPORTANT OUTCOMES PRE-COVID-19

Most frequently mentioned

- Monitoring for losses in efficiency and/or productivity losses **(37%)**
- Capturing baseline productivity levels across different segments of faculty, staff and administrative personnel **(33%)**
- Collecting data for strategic workforce insights in the future **(31%)**
- Capturing baseline productivity levels across different departments and college campuses **(30%)**

Less frequently mentioned

- Saving time on manual day-to-day processes and calculations such as time off, overtime, grant tracking and hourly labor **(23%)**
- Creating a single source of truth for the variety of schedules maintained by faculty, staff and administrative personnel **(19%)**
- Minimizing time-tracking or time-card fraud **(15%)**
- Incorporating more advanced time-tracking technology such as biometric tracking (fingerprints), card swipes and web clocks **(9%)**

After COVID-19, the most important opportunities changed slightly. Identifying opportunities to improve efficiency and/or productivity became more important (from 37% to 54%), and creating a single source of truth for the variety of schedules maintained by faculty, staff and administrative personnel moved up to second place (from 19% to 50%).

MOST IMPORTANT OUTCOMES POST-COVID-19

Most frequently mentioned

- Identifying opportunities to improve efficiency and/or productivity **(54%)**
- Creating a single source of truth for the variety of schedules maintained by faculty, staff and administrative personnel **(50%)**
- Saving time on manual day-to-day processes and calculations such as time off, overtime, grant tracking and hourly labor **(44%)**
- Collecting data for strategic workforce insights in the future **(44%)**
- Incorporating more advanced time-tracking technology such as biometric tracking (fingerprints), card swipes and web clocks **(40%)**

Less frequently mentioned

- Capturing baseline productivity levels across different segments of faculty, staff and administrative personnel **(34%)**
- Capturing baseline productivity levels across different departments and college campuses **(32%)**
- Monitoring for losses in efficiency and/or productivity losses **(31%)**
- Minimizing time-tracking and time-card fraud **(18%)**





A few other interesting shifts took place in priorities before and after COVID-19, indicating that the role of data and insights became even more important for institutions navigating this new world:

- Incorporating more advanced time-tracking technology such as biometric tracking (fingerprints), card swipes and web clocks increased from 9% to 40%.
- Collecting data for strategic workforce insights in the future increased from 31% to 44%.
- Saving time on manual day-to-day processes and calculations such as time off, overtime, grant tracking and hourly labor increased from 23% to 44%.

“Scheduling for a diverse workforce has always been a complex process, and it varies by institution,” Staloch says. “For example, one institution might have a large student workforce, which requires a higher level of customization and adaptability, while another institution might employ a large number of virtual instructional staff, which requires a more modern approach to time-tracking. The increased demand for a single source of truth — as well as other shifts in the importance of time-tracking data — tells us how important it is for institutions to start to centralize this information.”



FINDING #5:

Institutions are looking ahead at challenges

Higher education professionals face an untold number of time, attendance and scheduling challenges over the next six to 12 months. But when asked to identify the most pressing challenges, three key themes emerged:

PERSONAL SAFETY

Definition:

Ensuring the safety of faculty, staff and students in light of new COVID variants, the desire to move back onto campus and changing government guidelines.

Quote from survey respondent:



"Keeping everyone safe in the face of new COVID variants and being flexible enough to respond to any new virus surges in spread."

Expert thoughts:

Betzing emphasizes the importance of taking precautions to make employees feel safe to come to work, which in many cases comes down to allowing those who can productively work remotely to do so and to minimize on-campus, in-person workers to roles that can be done only onsite.

"Institutions often can't just have employees work more hours because there is a finite number of employees and perhaps even restrictions around how many hours certain students can work," Betzing says. "It's far more efficient to use time-tracking technology to maximize the hours and schedule of the employees you do have."

EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND MORALE

Definition:

Accommodating all employee needs while stressing equity and comparable workloads

Quote from survey respondent:



"Chronic absenteeism and monitoring attendance to ensure students are learning just as effectively."

Expert thoughts:

Staloch advises institutions to be proactive about how they implement the change in processes around timesheets and time-tracking to make sure staff and administrators understand it's fundamentally in their favor, not something to track their movements and micromanage their day.

"Time-tracking can be a shift for a lot of employees who might previously never been tracked except by time sheet," Staloch says. "It's important for higher-level administrators and leaders to introduce it as a positive resource to make their lives easier."

MEASURING PRODUCTIVITY

Definition:

Coming to grips with whether there are productivity issues when faculty, staff and students are working from home.



Quote from survey respondent:

"User adoption is slow and takes time to fully onboard."

Expert thoughts:

Wilkerson points out that online learning and remote working have prompted a lot of thought about the role of technology in higher ed and the speed of adoption. Institutions need to look beyond the pressures of today to think about how technology will support productivity in the long term.

"Institutions can no longer ignore the fact that they are not prepared for disruptive situations like COVID-19 and the effect of that disruption on productivity," Wilkerson says. "It's inspiring a lot of thought about the type of technology that needs to be introduced and the kind of systems that will serve their needs moving forward."

CONCLUSION

Facing the Future of Higher Ed With Confidence

Heavily siloed, manual and time-consuming forms of managing workload, schedules and productivity might have gotten the job done in the past. But in the wake of dramatic and permanent changes to how work happens in higher education, institutions are under pressure to make sure employees, faculty and staff are showing up and putting in their time.

Today, institutions must consider the role of technology in enabling the flexibility and adaptability required to be productive amid changing circumstances. At its most basic level, that comes down to how they manage the schedules and time of a diverse workforce.

“Change is taking place constantly,” Wilkerson says. “There’s no waiting one more year to implement the software and processes you need for proper oversight into your workforce’s time. Some of those changes will stick, and some won’t, and schools need to be able to respond to those changes as they’re happening.”





For more than 30 years, TCP Software has helped organizations engage their people by providing flexible, mobile timekeeping, scheduling and workforce management solutions. Trusted by tens of thousands of customers and millions of users, TCP delivers best-in-class technology and personalized support to organizations of all sizes in the public and private sectors to meet their complex time tracking, employee scheduling, leave management and other workforce needs.

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