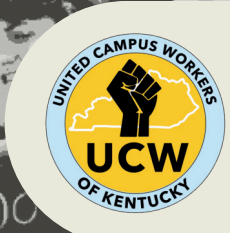


# WHEN HIGHER ED IS A LOWER PRIORITY:

## KENTUCKY CAMPUS WORKERS SOUND THE ALARM

2023



# When Higher Ed Is a Lower Priority: Kentucky Campus Workers Sound the Alarm

## INTRODUCTION

Kentucky's eight public universities and its community college system are invaluable resources to the students they serve, the communities they're in and the statewide economy. Our families, friends and neighbors make up the workforce within these institutions, and their instruction, community engagement, research and support services contribute daily to the wellbeing of the commonwealth.

And yet, two decades of per-student funding cuts and the institutional challenges that come with them have led to an inflection point in public higher education.<sup>1</sup> The General Assembly's longstanding failure to appropriate adequate state funding puts pressure on school leaders to cut or shift costs to students and employees alike through higher tuition, low or flat wages, eroded benefits, increased workloads and understaffing.

These conditions are not conducive to sustaining high-quality educational programs, a diverse student body, enrollment growth, research activity and academic success, particularly for first generation college students, students from low-income family backgrounds and students of color.

This report provides a window into how these funding pressures and unwise public policy decisions have affected public postsecondary education in Kentucky. The words of employees at public universities and community colleges across the state, collected through a survey of 1,367 public postsecondary staff and faculty, provide insight into how these mounting pressures are affecting their compensation, workload, morale, job longevity and ability to effectively conduct research, teach and support students, and provide service across Kentucky communities. One staff member at the University of Kentucky put it this way:

*"I should have never stayed as long as I have for the pay. It is truly because I love my job. At some point though, it is hard not to feel taken advantage of and bitter for the hours of work."*<sup>2</sup>

As state lawmakers return to Frankfort to craft a new two-year budget in the 2024 General Assembly, it is critical that they listen to the front-line workers who power this vital sector of our society and economy, and reverse course on the crushing trend of cuts Kentucky higher education has endured for too long.

---

<sup>1</sup> State Higher Education Finance, "State Profile: Kentucky," <https://shef.sheeo.org/state-profile/kentucky/>.

<sup>2</sup> In presenting quotes from open ended responses in the survey throughout the report, some minor changes have been made related to spelling, punctuation, capitalization, the use of acronyms or higher education trade terms not widely understood by the public and specific phrases that would make the survey respondents identifiable. Quotes are capitalized when they are stand alone statements, lower case when the quote is a portion of a complete sentence, and an ellipsis is added in cases where a portion of a statement has been cut.

## Executive Summary

Kentucky's General Assembly has cut its contribution to higher education for the past two decades with few exceptions. This has led to students carrying more of the cost burden, stagnant wages for employees of our public colleges and universities, higher workloads and poorer student and research outcomes. This report combines analysis of data about system trends with the voices of the public postsecondary workforce to better understand the effects of underfunding.

In a survey of 1,367 employees from all eight of Kentucky's public universities and its community college system, respondents were clear: making higher ed a lower priority has created a crisis.

Job quality is worsening:

- Over half (53%) of respondents selected pay as their top concern, with nearly one in three respondents saying they have not received a pay raise in the past year and two in three selecting pay as the number one consideration as to whether they will leave their job.
- 66% of respondents said their department is understaffed, and three quarters (77%) said staffing levels are worsening or not getting better. Respondents said lack of funding and low pay making it harder to recruit and retain staff are primary drivers of these staffing shortages.
- 63% of faculty respondents said their departments have cut tenure-track positions, and over half (55%) said they have lost administrative support.
- The cumulative result of these and other job quality issues is that seven in 10 respondents said they have considered leaving in the past year for reasons other than retiring.

Student and research outcomes are suffering:

- Faculty reported that a loss of administrative support is leading to more of their time spent on administrative paperwork (83%), recruitment efforts (57%) and supporting students through mental health challenges or crises (37%).
- 58% of respondents said the challenges they face are leading to critical programs or services being scaled back or cut altogether.
- One in three respondents reported that research outcomes are being compromised and that student outcomes are not being met.

Based on these findings, this report puts forward the following recommendations:

- Prioritize restoring public postsecondary appropriations from the legislature to inflation-adjusted pre-2008 levels.
- Rectify the inequities arising from the performance funding model, particularly in institutions serving students with the greatest need and address funding disparities at Kentucky State University (KSU) as highlighted by recent federal assessments.
- Allocate funding for significant salary adjustments to make up for long-term erosion of wages and salaries for faculty and staff.

- Express support for academic freedom through legislative measures such as simple resolutions, committee hearings and mandatory reports on academic activities, and alleviate political pressures on faculty members by acknowledging and protecting their right to academic freedom.
- Foster more inclusive governance structures by increasing the number of employees elected to institutional governing boards and thereby allowing faculty and staff to contribute more directly to the decision-making processes at their colleges and universities.
- Support the formation of unions by staff and faculty and recognize the rights of employees to organize and collectively bargain for fair compensation and better working conditions.

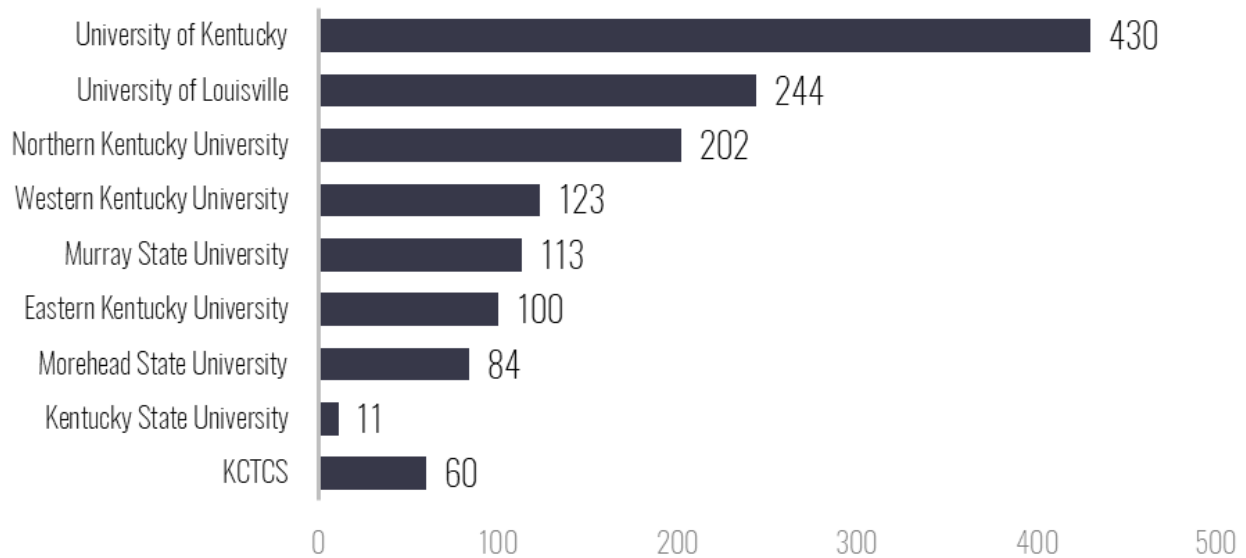
While respondents repeatedly described the value they place on their work, and the importance of the role they play in their communities and throughout the commonwealth, many are at a breaking point. Both the General Assembly and university administrators have a role to play in turning Kentucky's public higher education system around. The staff and faculty of our universities and community colleges have sounded the alarm, it's up to policy makers to heed it.

## Survey Sample

In all, 1,367 employees of Kentucky’s public postsecondary institutions completed this survey. Employees responded from every public university and community college in Kentucky, and each of the 16 community college campuses had at least one respondent. With the exception of KCTCS, the number and percentage of responses from each institution generally aligns with that institution’s relative share of the total public higher education workforce in Kentucky.

## Respondents from Every Public University and College in Kentucky

Number of respondents from each Kentucky public postsecondary education institution



Source: KyPolicy and UCW 2023 survey.



Respondents also held a range of positions within their institutions. Staff slightly outnumbered faculty respondents, and a small number of faculty/staff were already retired when they completed the survey (most of whom retired in 2023). The majority of faculty respondents were in tenure-track positions, or already tenured. Nearly all staff were full-time.

## Survey Respondents Work in Many Different Kinds of Positions

*Number and percent of respondents by position type*

Position Type	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>45%</b>
<i>Tenure-track/Tenured</i>	412	
<i>Non-tenure-track, full-time</i>	146	
<i>Non-tenure-track, adjunct/part-time</i>	36	
<i>Graduate worker</i>	20	
<b>Staff</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>Retired</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1%</b>

*Source: KyPolicy and UCW 2023 survey.*



The racial makeup of respondents was 87% white, 5% Black or African American, 3% Asian, Latinx or Hispanic, and the remaining 5% responding identified as Middle Eastern, Native American/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander or Other. In terms of gender, 61% of those who chose to answer the question identified as cisgender women, and 31% as cisgender men, with the remaining respondents identifying as a transgender man or woman, nonconforming, nonbinary, genderqueer or other. This is comparable to the overall racial, ethnic and gender composition of the public postsecondary education workforce in Kentucky.<sup>3</sup>

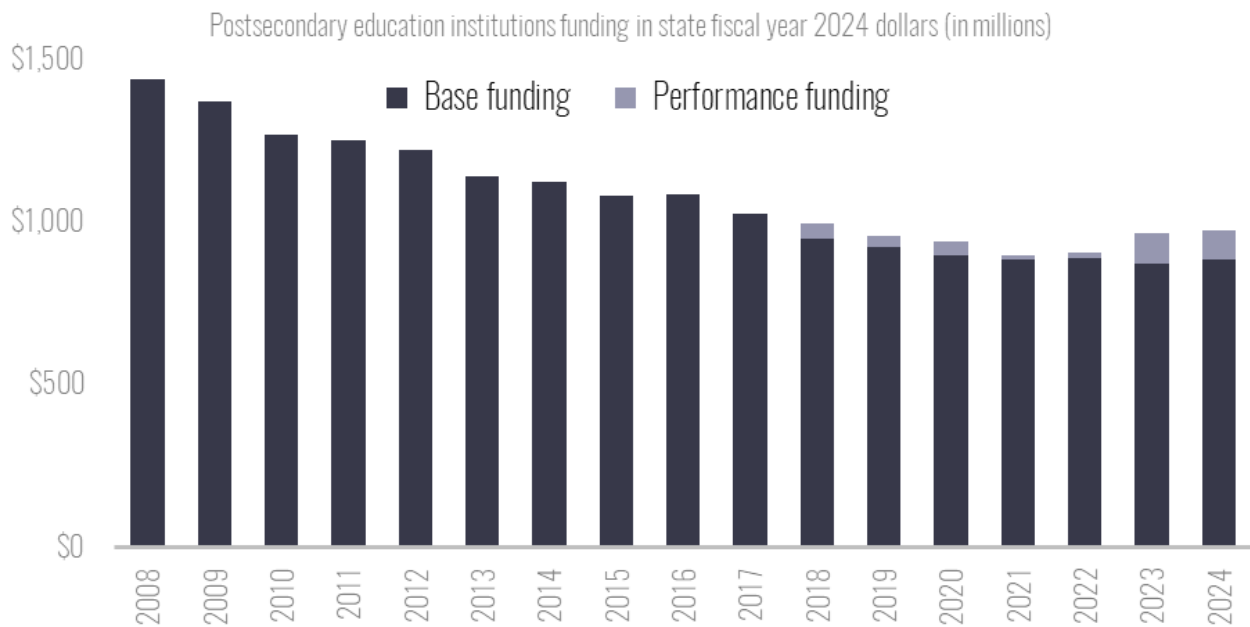
## BACKGROUND

Investments in public postsecondary education are investments in the future of our state. It is critically important that lawmakers adequately fund higher education in order to sustain a high-quality workforce and provide adequate staffing and services to support Kentucky students, families and communities. Yet cumulative state budget cuts severely hinder Kentucky’s ability to support its public postsecondary education workforce and high-quality academic programs while maintaining affordable tuition for students.

<sup>3</sup> According to IPEDS data from 2021, the gender composition of all employees (instructional and non-instructional, full-time) in Kentucky public postsecondary institutions is 53% women and 47% men. The racial/ethnic composition is 83% white, 8% Black or African American, 5% Asian, 2% Hispanic or Latinx and 1% two or more races (American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander staff were less than 1%).

Kentucky’s investment in public higher education has declined significantly in recent years. In the 2000s up until the Great Recession hit in 2008, increases in state funding failed to keep pace with significant increases in enrollment, leaving institutions with fewer state dollars per student. That forced them to raise tuition substantially. During the Great Recession and in its aftermath, the General Assembly made major cuts to higher education funding, with modest increases in the last few years making up little of the lost ground. The funding level for the state’s public universities and community colleges is 32.4% lower in fiscal year 2024 than in 2008, before the Great Recession, in inflation-adjusted terms.<sup>4</sup>

## Kentucky Public Higher Education Funding Only Recently Improved After Over a Decade of Cuts



Source: KyPolicy analysis of OSBD data and 20022-2024 budget.

Note: In 2021, \$20 million of General Fund monies were supplanted by Coronavirus Relief Funds.

2008-2019 numbers are Actual. 2020-2022 are Revised. Performance funding numbers through 2022 are as Enacted.



<sup>4</sup> KyPolicy analysis of Office of State Budget Director documents. State funding for the state’s public postsecondary institutions was \$973.9 million in state fiscal year 2024 compared to an inflation-adjusted \$1.4 billion in 2008.

Furthermore, a growing share of Kentucky’s public higher education funding in recent years has been distributed through the state’s performance funding model, which tends to provide comparatively little or no money to institutions with more low-income students and students of color. In both 2023 and 2024, KSU, the state’s public HBCU (Historically Black Public Colleges and Universities), and Morehead State University (Morehead), located in eastern Kentucky, received no performance funding dollars.<sup>5</sup>

## **Kentucky's Performance Fund Creates Winners and Losers**

*Distribution of Kentucky's public postsecondary institution Performance Fund monies*

<i>Institution</i>	<i>FY 2022-2023 Distribution</i>	<i>FY 2023-2024 Distribution</i>
<i>Eastern Kentucky University</i>	<i>\$4,927,900</i>	<i>\$3,222,900</i>
<i>Kentucky State University</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>
<i>Morehead State University</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>
<i>Murray State University</i>	<i>\$3,296,800</i>	<i>\$3,095,000</i>
<i>Northern Kentucky University</i>	<i>\$11,363,500</i>	<i>\$12,683,900</i>
<i>University of Kentucky</i>	<i>\$30,904,300</i>	<i>\$33,338,500</i>
<i>University of Louisville</i>	<i>\$17,523,600</i>	<i>\$17,594,600</i>
<i>Western Kentucky University</i>	<i>\$7,777,200</i>	<i>\$5,858,400</i>

Source: Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education



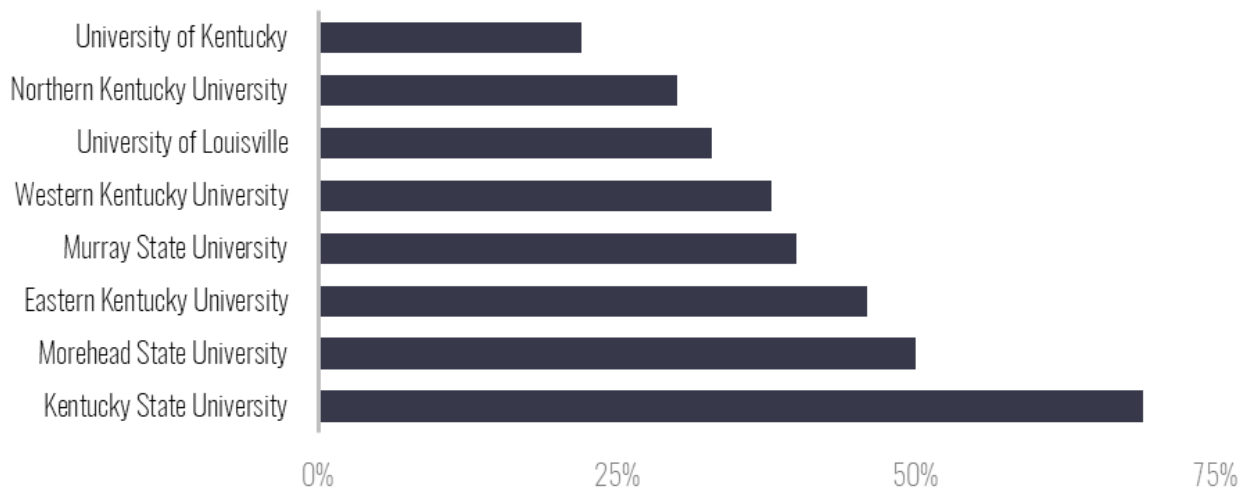
<sup>5</sup> Postsecondary Education Working Group, “Performance Funding Model Review,” July 26, 2023, [http://cpe.ky.gov/aboutus/records/perf\\_funding/agenda-2023-07-26-pf.pdf](http://cpe.ky.gov/aboutus/records/perf_funding/agenda-2023-07-26-pf.pdf).



The same two universities that received no portion of performance funds serve the highest share of low-income students, for whom success is often associated with greater investments in extra academic and social supports and help with meeting basic needs.

## Regional Public Universities Have the Highest Share of Low-income Students

Percent of the student body receiving a Pell Grant in 2021 by Kentucky public university



Source: IPEDS.



KSU faces additional financial challenges, and the General Assembly passed legislation in 2022 loaning funds to cover an immediate cash shortfall, instituting oversight measures (to be enforced by the Council on Postsecondary Education) and authorizing the distribution of additional funds in 2023 and 2024 if KSU meets various goals and benchmarks.<sup>6</sup> However, the state’s long history of underfunding KSU is an important contributor to these recent financial challenges. In 2023, Kentucky was one of 16 states to receive a letter from the federal government notifying them that they have underfunded their HBCU in violation of the law requiring equitable funding of land-grant institutions.<sup>7</sup> The letter indicates that KSU’s funding inequity compared to the University of Kentucky (UK), the state’s original 1862 land-grant institution, totals \$172 million over the last 30 years. As stated in the letter, “The longstanding and ongoing underinvestment in Kentucky State University disadvantages the

<sup>6</sup> Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, “Current Financial Status of Kentucky State University: An Assessment Conducted by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education,” November 2021, <https://cpe.ky.gov/data/reports/ksufinancialassessment.pdf>. HB 250 (2022), <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/acts/22RS/documents/0183.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Miguel Cardona (U.S. Department of Education) and Thomas J. Vilsack (United States Department of Agriculture), Letter to State Governors, Sept. 18, 2023, [https://sites.ed.gov/whhbcu/files/2023/09/Secretary-letter-1890.pdf?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=](https://sites.ed.gov/whhbcu/files/2023/09/Secretary-letter-1890.pdf?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=)

students, faculty, and community that the institution serves. Furthermore, it may contribute to a lack of economic activity that would ultimately benefit Kentucky.”

Among Kentucky’s community colleges, four institutions located in poorer parts of the state (out of the 16 total) received no performance funding dollars in 2023 and 2024: Big Sandy, Hazard, Henderson and Southeast Community and Technical Colleges.

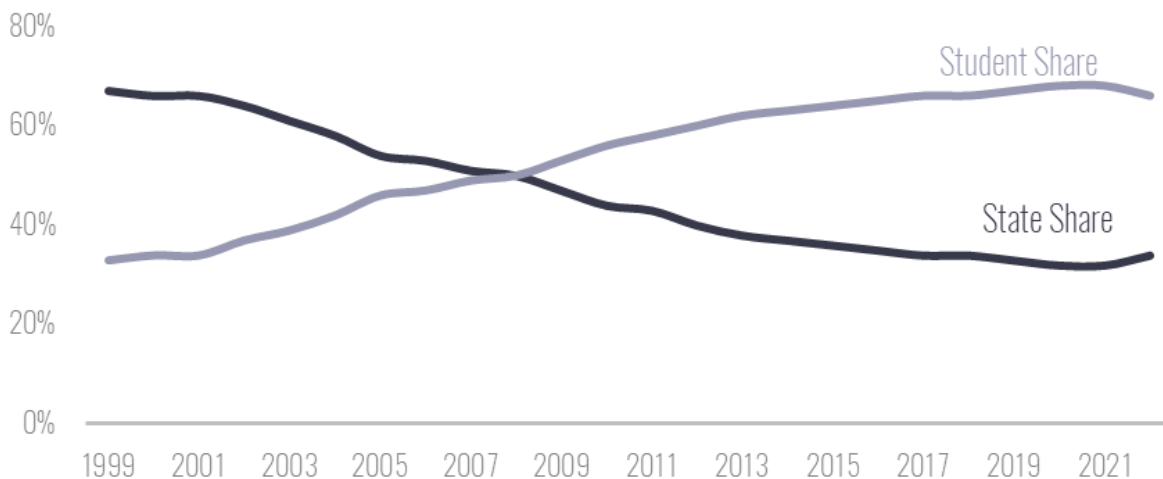
*Inadequate state funding results in declining public higher education affordability and quality*

The cumulative impact of inadequate state funding is leading to significant declines in public higher education affordability, quality and equity in Kentucky.

Facing state budget cuts, institutions have increased tuition and fees to make up for revenue losses from the state while at the same time fixed and other unavoidable costs, including inflation, have continued to increase. Since 2009, the majority of total public funds for higher education have come from students’ tuition and fees. Student tuition and fees made up 66% of funding for Kentucky’s public postsecondary institutions in 2022, compared to 34% from the state; this student-to-state cost ratio has flipped over the last 20 years.

## Cost of Higher Education Has Shifted From State to Students

State and student shares of total public postsecondary funds in Kentucky, fiscal years 1999 - 2022



Source: OSBD and Council on Postsecondary Education.



These state funding trends have exacerbated the unaffordability of higher education in Kentucky. A growing share of individuals and families are taking on debt as the cost of attending college has grown while wages and Pell Grant amounts have not kept pace.<sup>8</sup> There is also a growing recognition that many Kentucky college students struggle to meet basic needs.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time that students are paying more to attend the state's public universities and community colleges, the quality of education being provided at these institutions is suffering due to funding losses. In order to balance budgets, higher education institutions are reducing faculty and limiting course offerings, among other measures that impact quality.<sup>10</sup>

Overall instructional staffing levels are falling. After years of employment growth, instructional staff peaked at over 7,200 in 2012, but has steadily fallen since then, to a 20-year low of 6,267 in 2021.

---

<sup>8</sup> Ashley Spalding, "Student Debt Forgiveness Would Benefit Hundreds of Thousands of Kentuckians, Help With Economic Recovery and Improve Race Equity," Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, April 6, 2021, <https://kypolicy.org/student-debt-forgiveness-would-benefit-hundreds-of-thousands-of-kentuckians-help-with-economic-recovery-and-improve-race-equity/>. More than 615,000 Kentucky residents had outstanding federal student loans at the time, roughly 18% of all Kentuckians over the age of 18 (slightly higher than the national rate). The median amount owed in federal student loan debt in Kentucky was around \$18,000, but more than 125,000 Kentucky residents owed more than \$50,000.

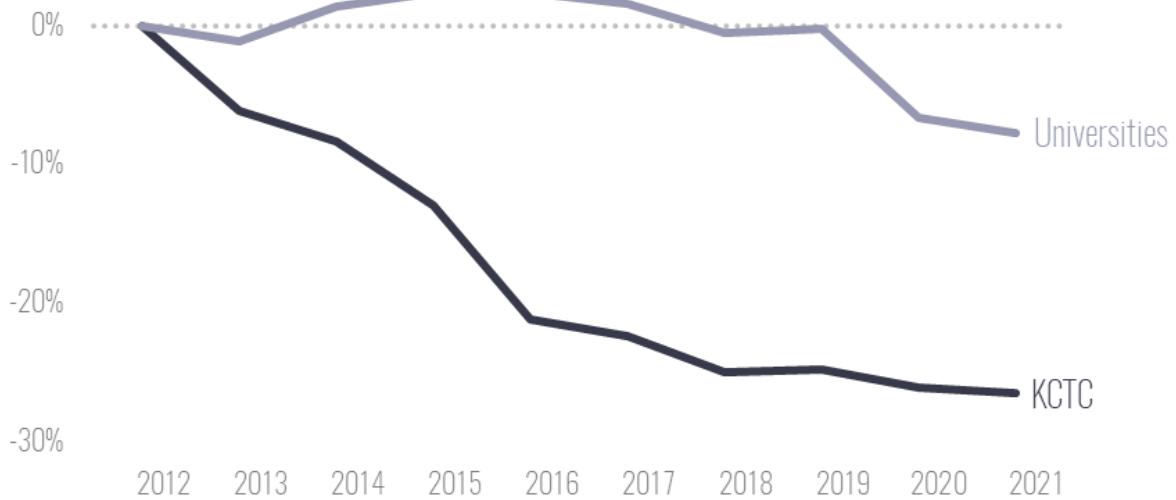
<sup>9</sup> The Kentucky Student Success Collaborative, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education and the Lumina Foundation, "Kentucky's Strategies and Recommendations to Address Students' Basic Needs," 2023, <https://cpe.ky.gov/data/reports/2023-SBNreport.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Mitchell, Michael Leachman and Kathleen Masterson, "A Lost Decade in Higher Education Funding," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Aug. 23, 2017. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/a-lost-decade-in-higher-education-funding>.

Available information about KCTCS underscores concerning trends in public higher education in the state – including a large number of unfilled positions, declining student enrollment, a shift from full-time faculty to part-time teaching staff, among other concerning trends. Huron, "KCTCS Resource and Program Optimization," <https://systemoffice.kctcs.edu/about/open-access-to-information/Huron-report-June-23/Huron%20Report%20and%20Board%20Motion%2006-16-23.pdf>.

# Instructional Staffing Has Dramatically Fallen In Recent Years

Percent of total full-time instructional staff by type of institution compared to 2012 in Kentucky



Source: KyPolicy analysis of IPEDS data.

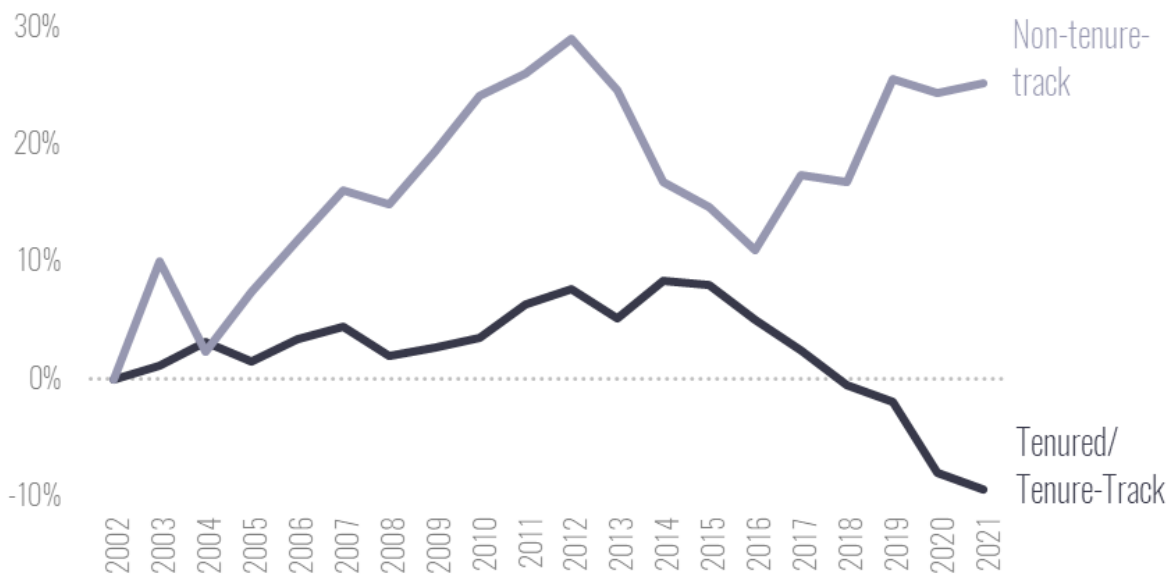


An especially troubling trend is that public universities in Kentucky are increasingly relying on non-tenured faculty for academic instruction. Many of these non-tenure-track faculty are part-time, adjunct employees working on semester-to-semester contracts without benefits and for very low pay. Education and research are critical pillars of a healthy society, and the academic tenure system was designed to protect them. Tenure provides faculty members with academic freedom after they have completed a portfolio of research and received an intensive review of their scholarship, teaching and service. If teachers and researchers believe that they may be fired if their work is not approved of by corporations, religious groups, elected officials, or other special interests, rigorous and independent inquiry and research are at risk.

Although tenured or tenure-track faculty at public, postsecondary institutions in Kentucky comprise nearly four out of five instructional staff, the long-term trend has been shifting toward non-tenure-track positions. Over the past 20 years, tenure-track positions have fallen 9.4%, whereas non-tenured instructional staff have increased 25.3%.<sup>11</sup> The last few years have seen a marked shift toward more non-tenure-track positions.

## There Is an Increasing Reliance on Non-Tenured Instructional Staff

Growth in public postsecondary non-medical instructional employment by academic rank benchmarked to 2002 in Kentucky



Source: KyPolicy analysis of data from IPEDS.

Note: Tenured/tenure track includes professors, associate professors and assistant professors; non-tenure track includes lecturers, instructors and instructional staff with no academic rank.

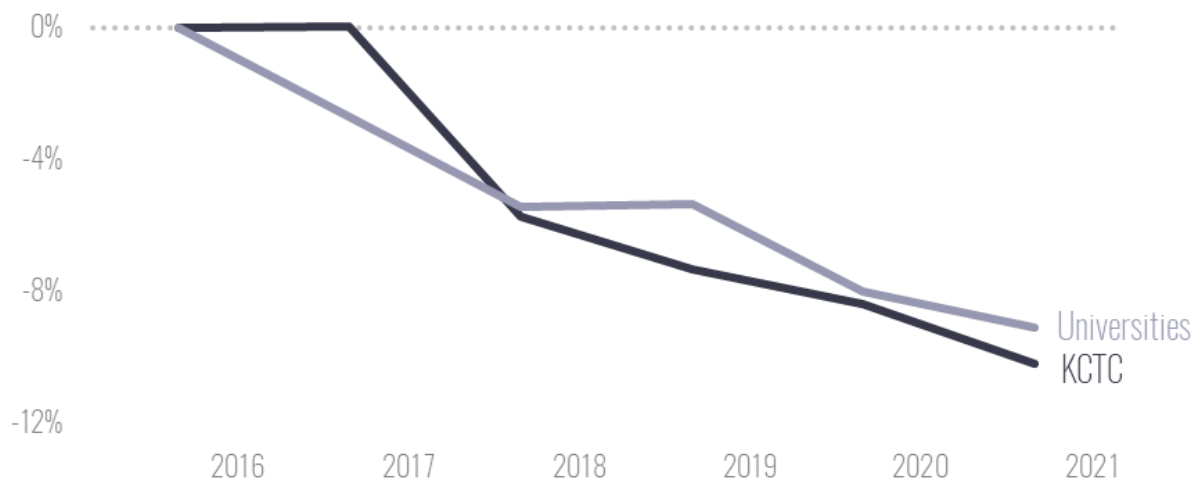


<sup>11</sup> KyPolicy analysis of IPEDS data.

In addition to an increasing reliance on non-tenured or non-tenure-track faculty, wages are not keeping up with inflation. Monthly wages for non-medical instructional staff in Kentucky's public higher education institutions in 2021 were 9.1% lower in universities and 10.2% lower in community and technical colleges compared to 2016, after adjusting for inflation.

## Instructional Salaries Are Not Keeping Pace With Inflation

Inflation-adjusted monthly salaries for non-medical instructional staff as a percent of salaries in 2016 in Kentucky from 2016-2021



Source: KyPolicy analysis of IPEDs data and the CPI-U.



## SURVEY FINDINGS

Survey respondents wrote about their deep commitment to their work, but shared concerns about insufficient pay and benefits, heavy workloads, a lack of meaningful opportunities to participate in decision making, limited opportunities for advancement, the

erosion of job security; They shared specific examples of how these challenges negatively affect research and student learning outcomes. Analysis of survey data suggests that poor and deteriorating working and learning conditions are the result when higher education is a low priority for state lawmakers.



*I became a professor because I believe in the essential value of a liberal arts education, and I'm committed to sharing the gift of a quality, affordable education with my students. Since coming to UofL, lack of funding at the institution has confounded my efforts to achieve this goal. The university sees Humanities professors as a way to pad their overstretched budgets: we teach large — and often over-enrolled — classes, we get paid less as instructors, and we don't require expensive lab equipment or overhead. This understanding cheapens our contributions to our students' learning and the worth of our professions as a whole.*

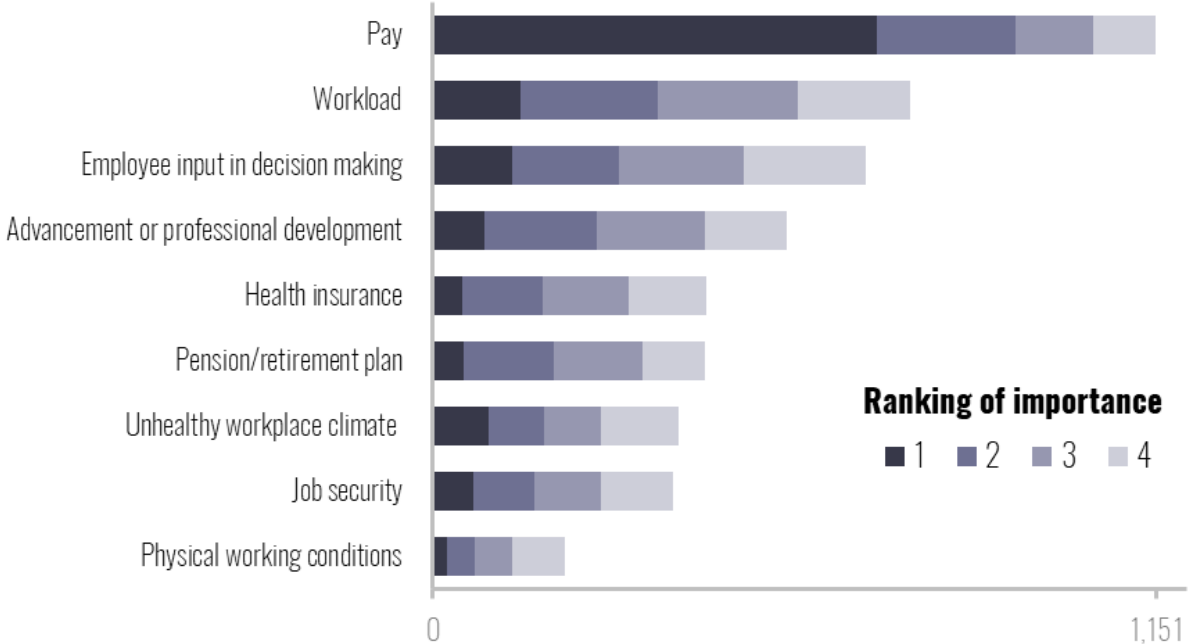
— Elise Franklin, Professor, University of Louisville

Survey respondents were asked to rank the issues they are most concerned about in their workplace out of 9 options on a scale from 1 to 4 (with a maximum of 4 selections). These issues included employee input in decision making, health insurance, inadequate opportunities for advancement or professional development, job security, pay, retirement, physical working conditions, unhealthy workplace climate (i.e. harassment, discrimination, disrespect) and workload. The chart below shows the total selections and how respondents ranked them.

Pay was by far the top concern with more than 86% of the 1,367 respondents listing it among their top four concerns, and over half (52%) naming it as their top concern. Workload and employee input in decision making were the second and third top issues for respondents. Fifty-six percent selected workload in their top four and 50% selected employee input in decision making among their top four. Inadequate opportunities for advancement or professional development was selected in the top four by 40% of respondents. About 25% chose either pension, health insurance, an unhealthy workplace climate, or job security as their top four concerns. Few respondents (15%) chose the physical working environment as one of their top four concerns, although many shared in the survey that workers and students may be working and living in unsafe or unhealthy conditions.

## Pay, Workload and Voice on the Job Were Top Concerns for Respondents

Responses to the question, "What issues are you most concerned about in your workplace?" ranked by most (1) to least (4) important, with only four total selections available



Source: KyPolicy and UCW 2023 survey.



The survey asked respondents to provide further detail to explain their ranked choices. Analysis of the open-ended responses revealed that most respondents see their key challenges at work emerging from a myriad of interconnected issues that compound over time. As one University of Louisville (UofL) staff member noted, "All of these issues are intertwined. I think adequate benefits that stay on par with a living wage, benefits that protect employees, job security, and the ability to grow are all part of a larger societal issue disregarding the need for investment in education and those that support it." A staff member at UK shared, "The combination of overwhelming workload and low salary impacts the mental, physical and emotional health of everyone I work with, and we have lost coworkers to other universities and the private sector as a result." A faculty member added, "Due to low pay and the university's tight budget, faculty hiring is minimal. Therefore, there is an increase in workload. Increased labor demands have resulted in a stressed work environment." A staff member at UofL shared, "It's hard to choose because all of these issues are so pervasive and tie into one another. The cumulative exhaustion from financial stress and being stretched so thin is taking years off our lives." These sample quotes represent hundreds of survey responses in which higher education workers identified the interconnection of these issues.

In the sections below each of the main issues identified through analysis of survey data is described in depth to provide a detailed description of the working conditions on public campuses across the state – and their impact on teaching, learning and other critical higher education outcomes.



## Insufficient Pay & Benefits

Pay is the leading concern for Kentucky's public higher education employees surveyed. When asked to rank the top four issues they are most concerned about in their workplace, more than 86% of the 1,367 respondents listed pay, with the vast majority of those workers naming it as their highest concern. These pay concerns were felt deeply across all campuses and job classes, and several responses came from people living on the edge of poverty. A staff member at Northern Kentucky University (NKU) said they struggle with basic necessities: "My biggest concern is the pay. I like who I work with and for. But not being able to keep up with bills and groceries makes me think about leaving quite a bit." Many faculty are feeling similarly squeezed by their low salaries. A faculty member at UofL shared:

I never have been able to live a middle-class lifestyle on my salary. I do not own a house, have no car and cannot pay my heating bills in the winter, not to mention fund my research without going into ever increasing credit card debt.

Low and stagnant pay are not issues unique to public higher education. Kentucky's legislators have heard the same concerns from other public sector employees. The 2022-2024 budget included large, across-the-board raises for state workers of more than 8% in FY 2023 and funding for an average 12% raise in FY 2024.<sup>12</sup> The state's educators — public school teachers and employees, along with college and university faculty and staff — were excluded from those statewide raises.

Pay stagnation has been particularly acute on Kentucky's regional campuses and across KCTCS, though survey respondents from all institutions are upset about low pay and raises that have failed to keep up with the rising cost of living. At Murray State University (Murray), for example, employees received across-the-board raises totaling 10.5% between 2009 and 2016, falling just a bit short of an 11.2% increase in inflation for that period. However, between 2016 and 2023, Murray employees received raises totaling only 7.15%, while inflation increased costs by more than 24% during that time.<sup>13</sup> This means that the actual purchasing power of those workers has fallen dramatically over the course of just a few years. Survey responses highlighted similar wage deflation. As one staff member at NKU put it, "We seem to go several years without an annual merit increase while everything else, including the cost of health insurance, parking, inflation goes up." A faculty member at UofL wrote:

The problem with my job is pay. Our department and other sciences were already paid way below our peers or jobs in the industry. This has only been exacerbated by inflation. We have had recent cost-of-living increases, but they have been outpaced by inflation exponentially.

---

<sup>12</sup> Ashley Spalding, Dustin Pugel and Jason Bailey, "Budget Agreement Includes Only Modest Increases in Most Areas of Budget, Salary Increases for State Workers," Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, March 29, 2022, <https://kypolicy.org/budget-agreement-includes-only-modest-increases-in-most-areas-of-budget-salary-increases-for-state-workers/>.

<sup>13</sup> Murray State raises are from the Board of Regents minutes and yearly factbooks. Inflation here is measured by the CPI-U index each July.



*In my time at UK I have come to know some amazing people who have dedicated most of their lives to UK, cleaning the classrooms that foster learning and providing services that are essential to the day to day function of the University. Some of those people need second, even third, jobs to survive.*

*I work 40 hours a week and do my best, but I am part of the 60% of American workers who live paycheck to paycheck. I can't save money for things like a new vehicle, a destination vacation or even new clothes. Everything goes to bills and food. One unexpected expense could put potentially my household into serious debt, something I would, statistically, never recover from.*

*— RK Carter, Custodial Worker, University of Kentucky*

Along with static salaries, worsening benefits — specifically health insurance — were also frequently mentioned as a concern in survey responses. Respondents said their health insurance options are declining, while the costs of coverage are steadily increasing. Looking again at Murray as an example, in 2015, the most affordable health insurance plan cost employees around \$80 a month for a family. Starting in January 2024, that same plan will cost a family almost \$200 a month — nearly two-and-a-half times its 2015 cost — and that's not accounting for the increased deductible and more restrictive coverage on the new plan.<sup>14</sup> Responses from other universities underscored similar issues at those institutions. As one staff member at EKU wrote:

When I began working at EKU the health insurance plan was one of the best around. The options were affordable, with affordable deductibles. Each year since, it's continued to get worse until today the insurance plans offered are simply unaffordable for most people.

A Morehead faculty member said the cost of insuring their family wasn't feasible on their salary: "It is not possible to support a family on my income. Cost of health insurance is too high, especially if you want to include dependents. Lower cost, better benefits and higher employer contributions would help. At the current rate I won't be able to afford to retire."

Several respondents stated that their increased insurance costs passed on by universities were clawing back a large part, or even all, of their meager raises. An EKU faculty member said of their pay raise for the year: "Most of it was eaten up by increases to

<sup>14</sup> Murray State University, Benefits Guides, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13-o1cYjpH0v65HPGOp4ukti8Cm4XxSvA>.

health insurance costs and didn't come close to covering increases in cost of living, so it hardly helped.” For UK employees, these issues with benefits are even following them into retirement:

UK discontinued healthcare benefits to retirees after I had been with this university for about five years. At my age, it is too late to find another position elsewhere that offers health insurance during retirement. Also, I paid into Teacher Retirement for several years at another university. UK does not participate in Teacher Retirement. I'm now faced with GPO [Government Pension Offset] issues that will cause a reduction in retirement benefits by 66%. Had I known UK would discontinue health insurance benefits for retirees, I may not have accepted the position. Universities should not legally be permitted to change retirement benefits after an employee is hired. Employee input should be allowed before any policy change of such magnitude.

Respondents' frustrations with their pay and benefits are driving many of them to contemplate leaving their jobs to seek better compensation elsewhere. When asked, “In the past year, have you considered leaving your job for reasons other than retirement?” 71% of respondents confirmed that they had. Of those “Yes” responses, 85% listed pay as the workplace issue most significantly affecting their consideration to leave. A regional university faculty member said, “In terms of my field, rank, and position, I make about the lowest salary one can possibly make. It is honestly absurdly low given my expertise, experience and workload, even in a low-cost city. This will be my reason to leave for another university and I am actively looking. Many other posted jobs literally pay double as a starting salary.”

Even workers who are happy with the other aspects of their work are being priced out of working in higher education in Kentucky. A staff member at KCTCS commented, “My boss and coworkers are great. But there is no opportunity for advancement and pay is low and getting worse with inflation. I don't know if I can ‘afford’ to stay.” A faculty member at NKU reflected on the cost of doing what they love:

I love teaching and research, but for my level of education and work experience, I could be making much more in the private sector. I try to be innovative in the classroom and go above and beyond what is required of me. However, I'm being nicked and dimed for everything, from parking to the elimination of the free gym membership. The elimination of those small benefits adds up, and now I'm looking at how I can increase my base pay, which would mean leaving the institution.

Supervisors surveyed shared that they are having trouble keeping up with the constant churn of employees leaving for better opportunities. According to a faculty supervisor at UK, “I struggle with employee retention as there is little opportunity for advancement, high workload, and pay is stagnant. I feel this in my own job as well. The only way to get a raise is to leave jobs/departments/the University. This attrition hurts our ability as a unit to perform our work and leads to burn-out for the remaining employees.” A staff supervisor at UK reported the same issues:

It is incredibly difficult to manage retention of employees with the pay scale I'm working with. There is also no negotiation, and it leaves me feeling slightly helpless. I want to keep employees long term but it's hard to disagree with them on needing to move on when they can't pay for groceries.

At UofL, a faculty member said failures in the recruitment and retention of new employees has lowered morale across campus:

We don't pay our staff a living wage and faculty pay is far below benchmark institutions. We struggle to recruit and retain employees at all levels due to pay. Staff have no way to advance in their careers unless they leave for another job. This has created an unhealthy climate with low morale. Many people want to leave.



*At the rank of Full Professor, I make approximately 25-30% less than my peers across the country with similar credentials. I constantly worry that my colleagues and I will be teaching into our 80s because we will not have been able to build enough savings for retirement.*

*I am angry, but I am also hopeful that my university and others in Kentucky will begin to invest in all instructors by compensating us at a level appropriate for educated professionals as well as basic living standards, by making more space in the budget for full-time teachers to flourish in our academic departments, and by incentivizing and rewarding retention of long-time instructors.*

*— Jill Parrott, Professor, Eastern Kentucky University*

Respondents who were considering leaving their position were also asked what would convince them to stay. Nearly 70% answered that a minimum of a 10% raise would be necessary, with many of the responses far in excess of that, up to 25% in some cases. A Western Kentucky University (WKU) faculty member said they'd need a "20% pay raise AND a fully staffed department" to consider staying. While a faculty member at UK said they'd need "a reasonable workload and feeling valued within the University." These requirements for university workers stand in stark contrast to the actual raises institutions provided in recent years, assuming any raises were awarded. One UofL staff member reflected on the most recent raise they received:

It was only a COLA raise of 2% which doesn't even come close to covering the inflation costs which have occurred during the past three years. Not to mention our increasing health insurance, parking and other costs. I'm at the point where I have to leave the institution to find a better paying job, and I'm already working two jobs.

The combination of stagnant wages, declining benefits, lack of advancement opportunities and increasingly heavy workloads threatens to drive valuable faculty and staff away, which poses a serious threat to the quality and sustainability of higher education in the state. The Lexington Herald-Leader reported that employee departures at KSU left its financial aid office completely empty this fall. KSU officials said they were forced to hire an outside financial aid consulting firm to fill three positions while they worked to hire permanent replacements.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the survey, university workers emphasized that students are negatively impacted by the effects of these issues through insufficient advising, reduced access to campus services and a lack of time for one-on-one mentoring and support. If students are to succeed in the commonwealth's higher education system, they need the support of motivated, skilled and dedicated faculty and staff, who in turn need fair compensation from university administrators and sufficient resources from state legislators.

---

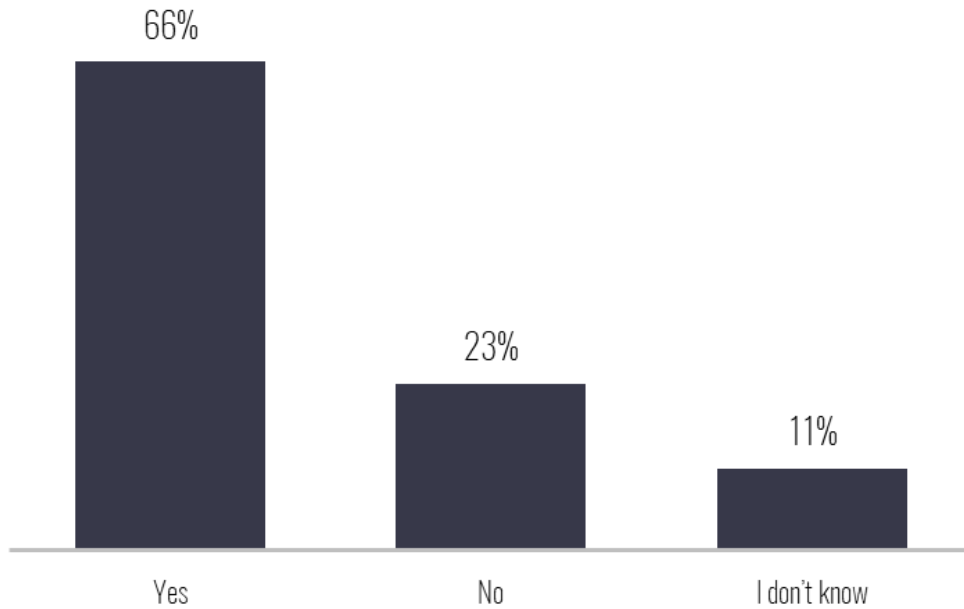
<sup>15</sup> Monica Kast, "Kentucky State University Will Outsource Financial Aid Staff as Employees Quit, Take Leave," *Lexington Herald-Leader*, Nov. 20, 2023, <https://www.kentucky.com/news/local/education/article281792503.html>.

## Understaffing

Many Kentucky higher education institutions are experiencing high rates of turnover and short staffing. The survey asked respondents, “Is your department currently understaffed?” A total of 888 respondents, or 66%, selected “Yes”; 302, or 23%, selected “I don’t know”; and 148, or 11%, selected “No.”

### 2 in 3 Respondents Report Understaffing

Percent of respondents to the question, “Is your department currently understaffed?”



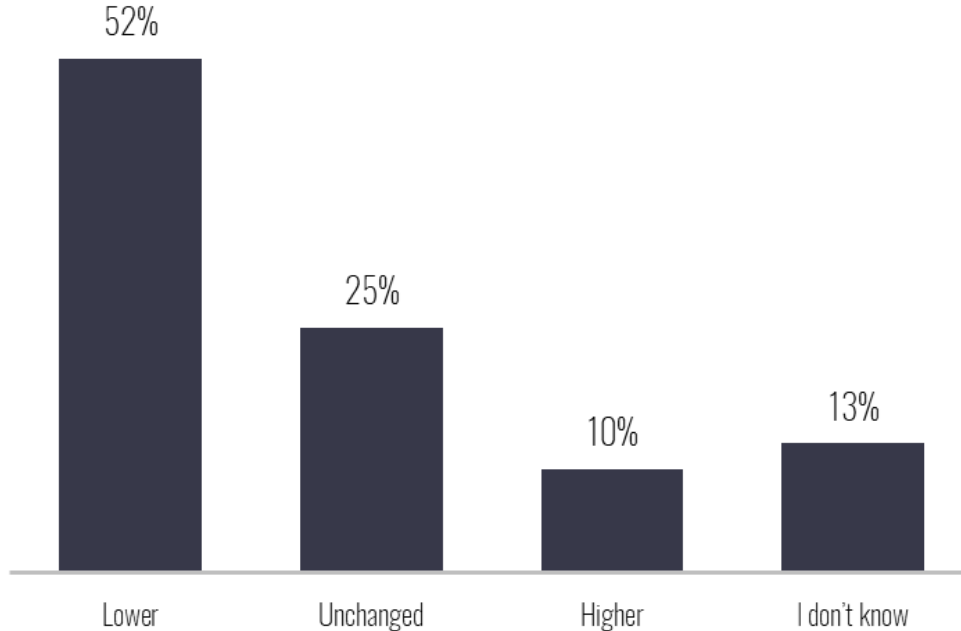
Source: KyPolicy and UCW 2023 survey.



A follow-up question designed to understand the prevalence of recent staffing changes asked, “How have staffing levels over the past year compared to your past experience?” and provided respondents with the opportunity to indicate whether staffing levels are lower, unchanged or higher than in the past. A total of 691, or 52%, of total responses said they are in departments with lower staffing levels than previous experience; 330, or 25%, indicated that staffing levels in their department are unchanged; 140, or 11%, have higher staffing levels; and 174, or 13%, selected “I don’t know.”

# Half of Respondents Report Lower Staffing Levels

Respondents to the question, "How have staffing levels over the past year compared to your past experience?"



Source: KyPolicy and UCW 2023 survey.



*Higher education holds a special place in eastern Kentucky, and EKV has a proud tradition as a resource for the working people of the region. It is a pathway out of poverty, a source of job training and research, and a cultural hub for many.*

*In 2018, I got a job working for EKV, my alma mater. Since then, my job has changed drastically as a result of positions lost through attrition.*

*I was hired to fill two open positions that were merged together, and have since been given responsibilities from at least two additional positions. My workload grew to the point that it surpassed what anyone could reasonably complete in a week. The workload at EKV prevents us from providing the quality of work our*

*students deserve. Kentucky deserves an EKV that cares about its workers, students and community.*

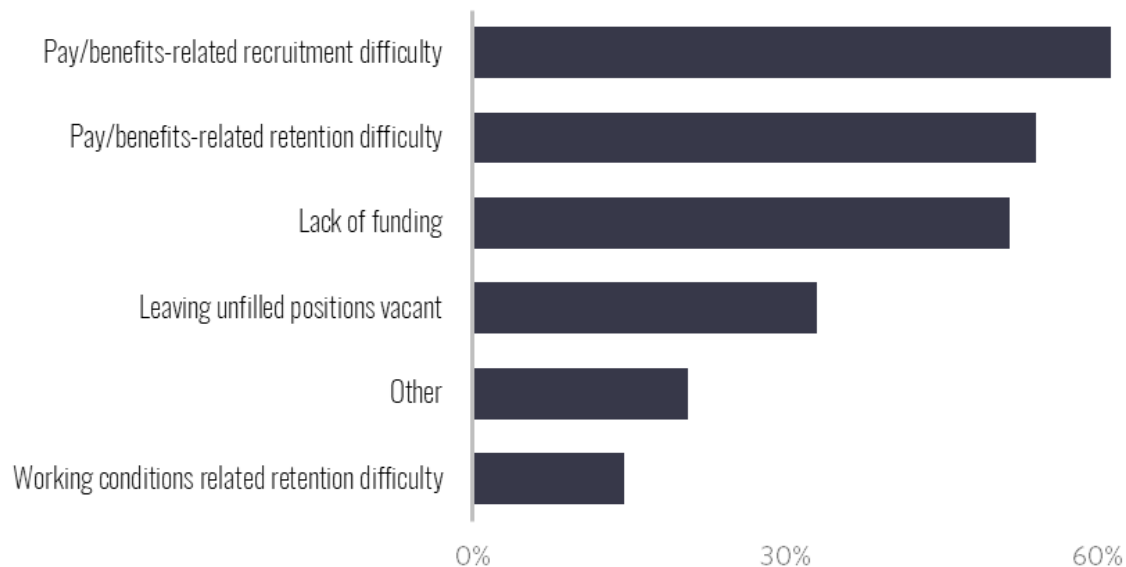
— Seth Littrell, Communications Specialist, Eastern Kentucky University

### Primary Drivers of Understaffing

The survey asked respondents to identify what they see as the primary drivers of understaffing. Many pointed to low pay and inadequate benefits, a result of underfunding, that prevent recruitment and retention. Respondents also emphasized intentional decisions by campus administration to leave positions unfilled, shift work to part-time and non-tenured faculty and graduate workers, and require that remaining employees “do more with less.” The stress, exhaustion, low morale and burnout that comes from a combination of insufficient pay, heavy work volume, lack of opportunities for advancement, a culture of long hours and high-stress conditions came up frequently as well. One faculty respondent shared that their “biggest concerns relate to state funding of higher ed, both direct appropriation (affecting salary and benefits) and funding of KTRS [the retirement system for some higher education workers].” Another faculty member wrote, “I am comfortable with my institution’s administration, but the state’s financial neglect over the years has contributed to operational concerns.” An academic affairs staff member shared, “With more and more cuts to higher education, the employees that remain keep having other duties put on them with no additional resources or financial support.” Connecting problems with pay, benefits and staffing to the disinvestment in education, a WKU employee wrote, “The paltry benefits don’t compensate for the poor salaries. It would be nice if state and federal legislatures could value education appropriately.”

## Pay, Benefits and Funding Are the Lead Drivers of Understaffing, According to Respondents

Primary drivers of understaffing, respondents were able to choose up to four options



Source: KyPolicy and UCW 2023 survey.





## Loss of Faculty Positions

A total of 556 faculty respondents answered a question about whether their department has cut tenure-track or tenure faculty positions over the last decade. A total of 360, or 64%, selected “Yes”; 78, or 14%, said “No”; and 128, or 23%, indicated that they didn’t know.

Open-ended responses from faculty members revealed the high cost for workers and students when staffing levels are low and work is transitioned from full-time, tenure-track and tenured faculty to part-time and contingent faculty. A later section of this report covers the serious cost to students and all Kentuckians in detail. Contracts for part-time faculty and full-time, non-tenure-track faculty undermine faculty governance by providing limited to no opportunities to participate. Existing faculty are asked to carry almost all of the governance and service requirements on top of their existing workload. The result is not sustainable. As one faculty member from KCTCS shared, “The number of tenured and tenure-track faculty has decreased as a result of attrition through retirement and some seeking other opportunities. This increases the workload on those that remain and inhibits participation in non-academic responsibilities.”

Comments from a faculty member at a regional campus shed light on the steep cost of cutting tenure lines and increasing workloads across the state:

I don't know what I will be teaching from semester to semester; it depends on if we can find adjuncts or instructors to teach courses. If we let a faculty member go, we are terrified the president will take away that budget line. I'm completely overwhelmed. I have no time to research, publish or present because I've taken on so much work to keep my department and program afloat. Students share that their needs are not being met. I'm looking for faculty positions in other states and many of my colleagues across the state are saying the same thing. We feel our legislators don't value or respect higher education.

Extensive secondary research on adjunct faculty reveals untenable working conditions that are supported by the responses in this survey. One adjunct faculty member at KCTCS wrote:

My hourly pay works out to just under \$10-per-hour. My students make more working in fast food restaurants. This is the second school that I've served (total of 16 years, now) and adjunct pay has gone up just \$150/semester in that time. Job security doesn't exist as an adjunct. I need even this paltry pay to make my budget, but the contract is always semester-by-semester.

Another KCTCS adjunct wrote:

It is criminal to have adjunct professors that do the majority of teaching for higher education. The majority of our teaching is online too, which is a disservice to the students. I worry about pay, I don't receive benefits, and I have no job security. The administration has all the power and gives no control to faculty or staff over major decisions.

An adjunct at UK reported, “As an adjunct faculty member, I get no pay raises, no health insurance, no retirement and no job security regardless of my workload and being here for more than 30 years. This contributes to low morale for those in my position.”

## Lack of Employee Input in Decision Making

Workers shared concerns that they have no real voice at work: few avenues or opportunities to offer ideas for change, share input, or, for faculty, to direct the academic mission of the institution. “The core strength of our institution lies in the wealth of knowledge of faculty and staff, yet this valuable resource is frequently disregarded,” a faculty respondent wrote. Another faculty member at UofL shared a similar sentiment: “Lack of employee input in decision making seems like the root cause of most issues, since it has led to faulty attempts to ‘fix’ programs, budgets, compensation and structures. Without input from the employees who understand how things actually work, we’re subject to constant instability.”



*In my time at UofL, I have served on many committees and bodies of shared governance. In all of these groups, the issues identified were essentially the same — poor communication, lack of transparency and lack of true shared governance. The work that these committees do is important, and I don’t want to discount that, but if we want true representation and a chance to affect change at our university, then we need an organization independent of the institution and its policies.*

*The system as it currently exists is broken and a culture shift has to happen. That is why I joined UCW. I have been here a long time and have tried all the typical pathways to try and make positive changes happen here and the bureaucracy, hierarchy and red tape just gets in the way. If we unite together, we can make things happen and we can make this a university that we are proud of.*

— Sarah Frankel, Libraries Staff, University of Louisville

Faculty governance is a system where faculty play a primary role in making decisions related to their expertise in a variety of areas, including research, program development and management, teaching and student success. On the importance of faculty governance, a faculty member at UofL said, “Increases in the size of upper administration inevitably leads to less of a voice for faculty. Sometimes administrators do not have the background to understand specific challenges of running a research program.” Another survey respondent from UofL noted that the institution has hired “three outside consulting firms in the last twenty years that found that UofL is too top heavy —way too many administrators, moderate mid-level management and not enough workers.”

Analysis of open-ended response patterns revealed that not only did respondents share a sense that faculty and staff governance is key to quality higher education, but many also shared examples of co-optation of established bodies and committees. “Although senior leadership will talk about shared governance, pointing to bodies like the faculty senate and staff congress, it’s very clear that these bodies, at best, are only ‘advisory,’ and, at worst, serve to reinforce or rubber stamp decisions that have already been made by the administration,” wrote one faculty member. Reflecting on the ways this issue compounds with low-morale and fear, one faculty respondent from a regional institution wrote, “Current administration does not tolerate dissent and often retaliates against those who disagree with academic and budgetary decisions.”

Including workers in decision-making processes takes time. At cash-strapped institutions, these processes may be easy targets for administrators who are forced to cut budgets in the face of state defunding and shrinking enrollment. “The emphasis is on finances and decisions are being made at the top without involving faculty. Some of these decisions are harmful to the academic mission of the university,” wrote one faculty member at a regional institution. Lack of public investment in higher education increases the need to run lean institutions and the reliance on contingent and part-time labor further undermines democratic mechanisms for worker input. At most institutions, faculty governance structures only provide formal voting rights to tenure-track and tenured faculty.

Faculty and staff surveyed want to help improve their institutions and see worker input as key to that process: “Involvement in decision making is connected with everything else. Individual and team workload and capacity is stretched, as it often is in higher ed. There is so much more that we would like to do to improve student experiences and outcomes,” noted a staff member at UofL.

## **Limited Opportunities for Advancement**

Respondents rated a lack of opportunity for advancement and the professional development opportunities necessary to support it as a significant concern. Adjunct faculty respondents shared that they have little to no access to funds for continued education and lack access to the support necessary to conduct the research and professional development that would provide them with opportunities to advance into full-time and tenure-track career ladders. Perhaps most importantly, they are struggling to make ends meet teaching multiple courses across institutions. Full-time, non-tenure-track respondents are also frustrated with the lack of a career ladder. As a non-tenure-track faculty member at UK described it, “As a lecturer, I have one opportunity for promotion and will then essentially have no room for additional advancement in my position. This drives me and people like me to

look elsewhere, including out of state, to find advancement opportunities.” Faculty respondents shared that they are increasingly asked to teach more courses each semester and are struggling to fit in time for research. “We are supposed to do research, but we teach two courses each semester, which is higher than what our competitors at other institutions have to teach,” wrote a faculty member at UofL.

Staff that responded to the survey listed a lack of opportunities for professional development or advancement as a top concern. Of the 730 staff that completed the survey, 383, or 52%, selected limited opportunities for advancement or professional development as one of their top four concerns and 193, or 26%, selected it as their number one or number two concern. This trend is in line with national research on common concerns for higher education staff. In a 2022 national survey of non-faculty higher education employees administered by the College and University Professionals Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) nearly half of respondents indicated they are not offered opportunities for advancement.<sup>16</sup>

Of the nearly 400 staff concerned about the lack of advancement, analysis of the open-ended response data revealed a significant funding-related practice undermining institutions’ ability to retain high-quality staff. Due to state underfunding, budget constraints in colleges or departments often lead administrators to fund only lower-level staff positions. This leaves a significant number of academic support staff housed in specific departments with no formal pathways to advance in pay or seniority without leaving the department, college or institution. As one UK staff member explained it, “Raises are so small and infrequent that you pretty much have to take another job at a higher pay grade to get any kind of meaningful raise. There are not many, if any, structures within departments for advancement, so employees often have to completely change work environments every few years in order to experience any professional growth.” A few staff respondents noted that to be promoted to a higher-level position they would need to leave the institution. “There is nowhere to advance without leaving the institution most of the time, and that’s just not sustainable. There is no effort to create a promotion scheme for staff members like there is for faculty,” wrote an academic advisor.

Survey data reflects a sense that staff positions are designed to be temporary, which undermines retention and quality. A staff member at a regional institution shared, “My job comes with no advancement opportunities. It feels like a job that is designed to be short-term, filled for only two to five years. This is ultimately unhelpful to the department, and the position. A job that was better built for advancement would help retain the position.”

## Erosion of Academic Freedom

A 2022 American Academy of University Professionals (AAUP) survey of institutional policies found that the number of tenure-track positions is declining and job security protections are eroding.<sup>17</sup> Kentucky is included in the list of states where tenure protections are under attack. In 2018, Republicans attempted to add last-minute language to the Senate budget bill outlining

---

<sup>16</sup> College and University Professionals Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR), “The CUPA-HR 2022 Higher Education Employee Retention Survey,” July 2022, <https://www.cupahr.org/surveys/research-briefs/higher-ed-employee-retention-survey-findings-july-2022/>.

<sup>17</sup> American Academy of University Professionals, “The 2022 AAUP Survey of Tenure Practices,” May 2022, <https://www.aaup.org/report/2022-aaup-survey-tenure-practices>.

that public institutions could let go of tenured faculty members in the case of program changes.<sup>18</sup> The bill did not pass, but the threat of future policies that erode tenure remains. In 2022, Kentucky's House Bill 250 was passed, declaring a state of emergency at Kentucky State University due to a severe budget deficit. The bill also added language that de facto eliminated tenure at KSU by providing the KSU Board of Regents the authority to terminate any employee, including tenured employees, with 30 days' notice.<sup>19</sup>

The transition of tenure-track and tenured positions to part-time and temporary teaching positions covered in this report means that there are fewer tenure-protected faculty conducting research and teaching. As one tenured survey respondent explained it, "Budget cuts have meant that retiring professors are often not replaced. Departmental cuts are always done without academic input. And continued threats to tenure make Kentucky a less comfortable place to teach." Another faculty member put it succinctly, "Tenure no longer means job security." These comments represent hundreds more like them from the survey, suggesting that even the most protected faculty in the university are increasingly afraid for their job security and uncomfortable conducting research and teaching content that may be perceived as controversial by administrators, board members and legislators. Faculty off the tenure track are even more concerned about job security. The nationwide political and public attacks on higher education influence funding and policy decisions, student and family choices about education and careers, and, for the workers in higher education, influence how they do their job day to day.

A survey question asked all faculty respondents, "In what ways are current political discourses influencing your work?" Answers from over 250 respondents, from Democrats, Republicans and Independents, revealed a powerful theme: increasing fear, alienation and worry is creating a stressful work environment where quality may be undermined as faculty are afraid to speak and act. A full-time, non-tenure-track faculty member wrote, "I feel like I have a target on me — and I am non-tenure-track, so I have to be very careful in my approach to my students." Another tenured faculty member from a regional campus shared, "I am worried about how politics will impact my students' ability to learn. We no longer challenge students to think or grow because we fear it may offend one person and lead to us losing our jobs. We are creating a disgraceful context of attacks on free thinking and open dialogue out of fear." Another respondent succinctly described what is at stake in this environment, "It's frightening and demoralizing. We fear losing tenure, losing our jobs, but mainly it's the fear that our communities lose an educated populace for the workforce. Many of us grew up in these communities and have family here."

Faculty reported that the political attacks of higher education and the policing of free speech have had a chilling effect on campus life. "Not direct censorship, but an atmosphere of caution on calling out clear threats to democracy and health," wrote one respondent. Another shared that "energy is being taken up worrying about whether our ability to teach will be compromised, energy that could be more constructively used actually teaching." Many respondents shared that they have been censoring themselves in class or changing course content in response to directives from chairs or other administrators, or on their own due to the current political climate. This influences entire academic programs. "I am hesitant to propose the courses I want to teach, due to fear of political pressure," noted one faculty member. A higher education campus where free speech is dampened

---

<sup>18</sup> Scott Jaschik, "Tenure Under Threat in Kentucky," *Inside Higher Ed*, March 28, 2018, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/03/29/kentucky-legislation-could-limit-tenure-protections>.

<sup>19</sup> HB 250 (2022), <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/acts/22RS/actsmas.pdf>.

fundamentally changes student experience. “Many students express that they value the idea of the ‘college experience’ with exposure to people from different backgrounds with different viewpoints and ideas,” said one respondent. “It’s unfortunate when higher education gets influenced by politics.”

A political climate in which the value of higher education and educators and staff are directly criticized, even if by a very small political minority, can lead to funding cuts. On the possible consequences of ongoing political attacks, one faculty member said, “Demonization of academia makes it much easier to freeze or reduce state support for higher education. That has been a huge problem as state support for the university continues to decline over a period of decades.”

## **Old and Poorly Maintained Buildings**

Two hundred ten, or 15%, of respondents from across all institutions selected physical working conditions as a primary workplace concern. Open-ended responses coded and analyzed revealed key themes, including old and poorly maintained buildings negatively affecting teaching, research, learning and employee and student health and comfort; the existence of potential fire and other occupational safety violations; a lack of ADA accessibility in specific buildings; and outdated classrooms and technology.

A faculty member at a regional institution said, “I teach in a building that has not had major ventilation upgrades potentially since it was built in 1970. Some office suites have persistent mold issues, so much so that faculty are unable to keep books in their office.” UofL employees mentioned Strickler Hall specifically. As one respondent put it, “Strickler Hall on the Belknap campus is running on fumes; temperature regulation is incredibly difficult, bugs and rodents are everywhere, and many classrooms haven’t been updated in years.” A Morehead employee wrote, “The building I work in is dilapidated and unsafe. Climate control is non-existent, meaning that humans and expensive/sensitive equipment are frequently exposed to unhealthy temperatures and humidity. Mold and asbestos are serious concerns.”

Physical working conditions are students’ learning, research and living conditions. At one regional institution a respondent shared that the institution “lacks the funds to replace the HVAC unit, and so my students and I have to work in uncomfortable conditions. Moreover, there’s a leak that nobody can stop, and I have perennial mold and mildew problems in my lab.” A staff member at ECU working and living in student dormitories said, “When I returned to campus for training one year, there was mold all over my shower space and in my air unit that got me very sick. When I brought attention to the issue, the mold was not cleaned for two weeks, and I ended up having to buy supplies to clean it myself while I was still sick.” Employees that have spent decades working in physically eroding buildings may be experiencing long-term adverse health consequences as a result of disinvestment in critical infrastructure. One employee at a regional institution shared that the building they work in “is full of black mold, which may have contributed to the asthma I was diagnosed with three years ago.” Even at UK, the state’s most well-resourced institution, employees shared similar issues: “My building is not even maintained. Heat often doesn’t work in winter, and often no AC in summer. It never gets painted, and carpets haven’t been cleaned in ten years. There is no elevator, nor other accessibility for people with disabilities,” wrote one UK staff member.

## Faculty and Staff Burnout

According to Christina Maslach, a psychologist and pioneer of research on workplace burnout, burnout involves three key features: emotional exhaustion, cynicism and feelings of ineffectiveness. Maslach's research identifies that high levels of employee burnout often leads to turnover.<sup>20</sup> A 2022 report on addressing burnout from the American Council on Education covered higher education's specific burnout problem. The authors noted that "higher education has been criticized for creating an unhealthy culture that promotes excessive work at the expense of family and personal health," and reviewed recent research on working conditions in higher education that can cause burnout. These common higher education working conditions include "an expectation that employees are always available to the organization and always working, with no family responsibilities in the home," "excessive work hours," "dissatisfaction with salary and opportunities for advancement," "and extra work that comes from unfilled positions," among others.<sup>21</sup>

All of these factors, and more, were themes in the survey and it should be no surprise that respondents reported low morale or burn out and shared detailed responses indicating the severity of their burnout and its consequences. In response to a question about what outcomes they have experienced due to understaffing, 739 respondents, or 86%, indicated that they have experienced a feeling of low morale or burnout.

Common terms used by respondents in open-ended responses included "burned out," "exhausted," "depressed," "anxious" and "stressed." A professor at UK wrote, "The university is asking employees to serve more and more students with fewer resources, and to increase their workload every year. Burnout is extensive and this is not sustainable."

Employee burnout negatively affects student education, respondents noted. A staff member at UK wrote, "Several of my colleagues are required to work above and beyond the standard 40-hour work week, and this has been an ongoing problem for over four years. Individuals burnout and quit, and this leads to major efficiency issues, and negatively affects our ability to provide quality and timely programming."

---

<sup>20</sup> Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson, "The Measurement of Experienced Burnout," *Journal of Occupational Behaviour* (April 1981): pp. 99-113.

<sup>21</sup> Margaret Sallee, "Addressing Burnout Through Cultural Change," American Council on Education, 2022, <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Addressing-Burnout.pdf>.

## Working Conditions Are Student Learning Conditions

State budget cuts for public universities and community colleges are associated with tuition increases, declining enrollment and reductions in campus diversity.<sup>22</sup> Research has also shown that the institutional spending categories most affected by declines in state funding for public postsecondary education tend to be academic support, student services and instructional spending.<sup>23</sup> And studies have found that these budget cuts can negatively impact student outcomes, including graduation rates. In addition, an analysis of 152 public research universities found a positive relationship between state appropriations and research productivity.<sup>24</sup>

The survey results raise similar, serious concerns about the impact of declining state funding on students, faculty and staff, and communities.

Faculty respondents were asked to select the four issues, out of a list of nine, that most negatively affect their ability to effectively perform their job — and to rank them in order of most (1) to least (4) negative impact. The graph below shows that “Declining state funding” and “Low pay and inadequate benefits” stand out as the issues most commonly ranked as most negatively affecting the job performance of faculty.

---

<sup>22</sup> Victoria Jackson and Matt Saenz, “States Can Choose Better Path for Higher Education Funding in COVID-19 Recession,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Feb. 17, 2021, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/states-can-choose-better-path-for-higher-education-funding-in-covid>.

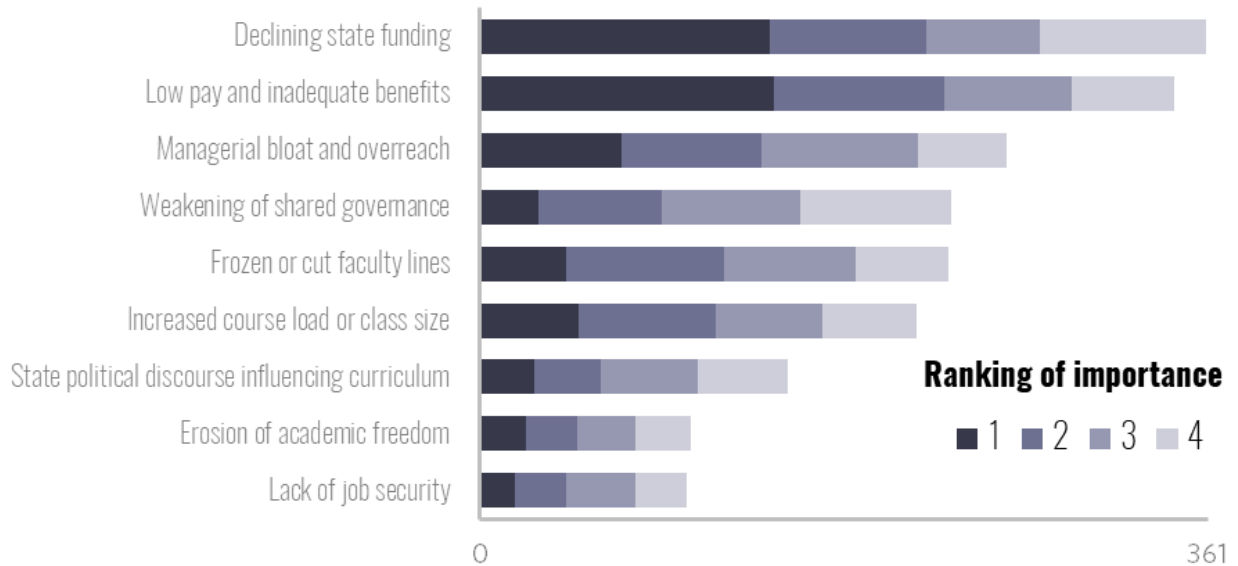
<sup>23</sup> Praveen Kumar Guraja, M. Affan Badar, Farman A. Moayed and Christopher J. Kluse, “Systematic Literature Review of the Impact of State Budget Cuts on Public Higher Education Institutions in the U.S.,” Proceedings of the International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management Istanbul, Turkey, March 7-10, 2022, <https://ieomsociety.org/proceedings/2022istanbul/796.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> T.A. Husted and L. W. Kenny, “The Effect of Reduced Support From State Government on Research in State Universities,” *Journal of Education Finance* (Fall 2018), pp. 164-174.



## Lower State Funding and Inadequate Compensation Are Harming Job Performance Among Respondents

Responses to the question, "Which of the following issues most negatively affects your ability to effectively perform your job?" ranked by most (1) to least (4), with only four total selections available



Source: KyPolicy and UCW 2023 survey.



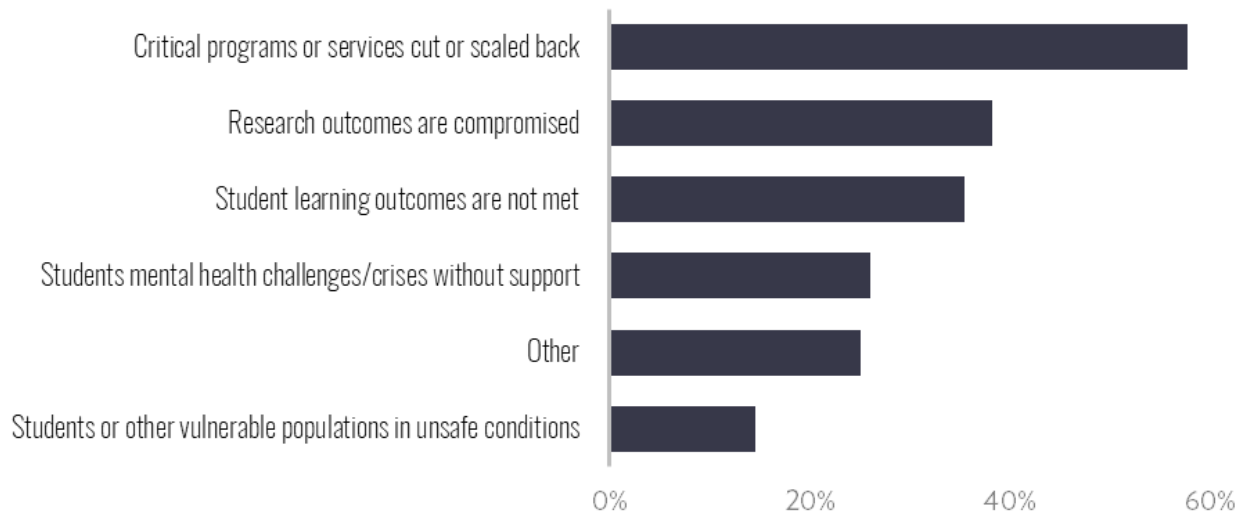
When the public higher education workforce is compromised in their ability to effectively carry out their work, there are negative repercussions across institutions — for students, faculty and members of local communities.

Several survey questions asked about the effects of understaffing on campuses. Seventy-one percent of all survey participants responded yes to the question, “Has understaffing impacted your department’s ability to provide quality services?” (12% answered “No,” 17% responded “I don’t know.”)

In response to a follow-up question for the 71% that indicated understaffing has impacted the quality of services in their department, more than half indicated that “critical programs or services have been cut or significantly scaled back.” More than a third answered that “research outcomes are compromised” and “student learning outcomes are not met.” And an alarming 26% of respondents reported that “students experience mental health challenges or crises without adequate support.”

# Understaffing Is Causing Cuts, Compromised Research and Student Mental Health Challenges for Respondents

Responses to the question, "Has understaffing affected the quality of services in your department in any of the following ways?"  
Respondents could select all that apply



Source: Source: KyPolicy and UCW 2023 survey.



A total of 25% of these respondents specified an additional “Other” example of how the quality of services in their department have been affected by understaffing. For the most part, these open-ended “Other” responses can be characterized as a general decline in a program’s quality as well as services specifically being low/reduced quality. Many “Other” responses focused on how students are negatively affected by the quality of services, including related to teaching and learning, advising and financial aid supports.

Understaffing can lead departments to limit their course offerings, even when student interest is high, one faculty member said. A UK staff member reported the cancellation of classes due to a lack of teaching faculty. A professor at Morehead said, “I think the quality of student/faculty interactions have been impacted due to shortage of time. Staff/student interactions are also impacted because staff are under a great deal of stress and pressure.”

In some cases, class size has increased due to understaffing. As one faculty member at NKU said, “We have been forced to offer a few very large course sections (e.g., 50-80 students) which is not typical for us, so it’s likely that some students have suffered from not receiving more attention from the teachers of these large class sections.” A faculty member at EKU said, “The quality of instruction is negatively impacted due to lack of time for instructors to prepare for class and provide constructive feedback.”

The inadequacy of a range of student support services comes through in the survey responses as well. For example, one faculty member at ECU said, “Student advising needs are not met” and a faculty member at UK said, “Students don't receive enough or accurate guidance.” Some responses specifically described the low quality of financial aid services. A staff member in student and academic affairs shared that “aid is not being processed at a reasonable pace, students are not getting responses from us until days after reaching out;” another staff member in student and academic affairs put it simply, “DELAYED FINANCIAL SUPPORT.”

A number of the “Other” responses described the impact of understaffing on the quality of services for groups other than students. “Community Members [are] not receiving the support they expect from Extension,” was a response from someone who works for a university’s Cooperative Extension program.



*Murray State University routinely touts its strengths as an institution that serves a high number of first-generation students, offers small class sizes and significant one-on-one attention from supportive faculty, and ensures reliable faculty advising to guide students through their degrees. These are among the many reasons I chose to work here, and they speak to the dedication and talent of my colleagues, most of whom are paid far below market rates for their ranks and years of service.*

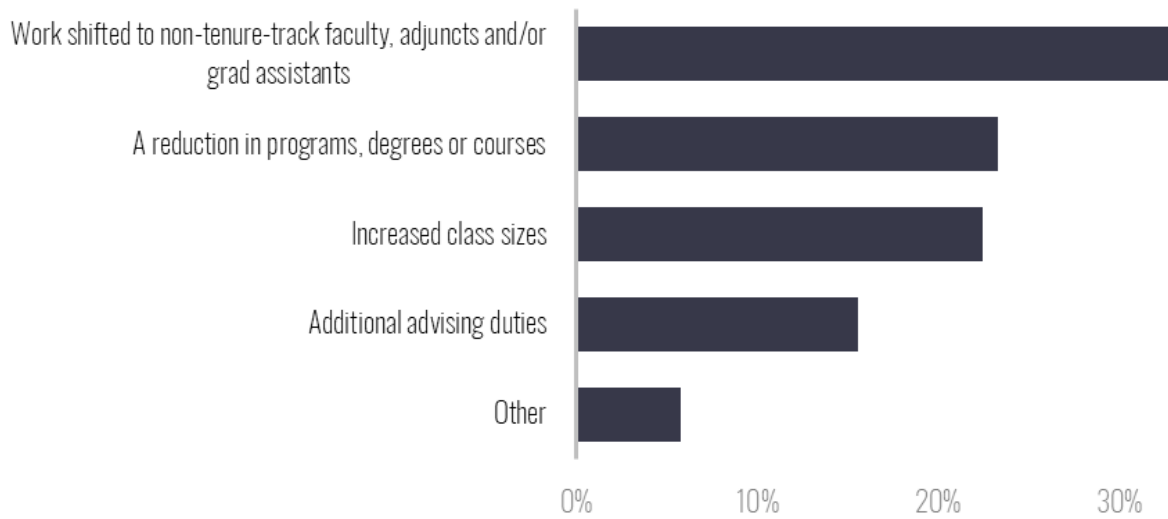
*Yet we cannot adequately meet the needs of first-generation students, maintain small class sizes, provide substantial one-on-one attention, and offer the highest quality faculty advising if the pool of tenure-track faculty in our department continues to shrink despite steady or growing enrollment.*

*— Ray Horton, Associate Professor, Murray State University*

The survey also specifically asked faculty respondents to identify the effects of the loss of tenured and tenure-track positions on outcomes that included working conditions, academic program quality, teaching and learning.

## Loss of Tenured and Tenure-Track Positions Is Leading to Poorer Outcomes

Percent of respondents to the question, "Has the loss of tenure-track faculty positions led to any of the following?"



Source: Source: KyPolicy and UCW 2023 survey.



Less than 10% of respondents indicated an outcome "Other" than those listed, which included a smattering of outcomes mentioned in responses to other survey questions – such as a decline in program quality, research outcomes being compromised, critical programs or services being cut or significantly scaled back and an increase in faculty workload.

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Kentucky has a real and substantial interest in fostering a robust public system of higher education. First, there is evidence that investing in higher education supports a stronger economy. College-educated residents not only earn more but contribute more to their local economies.<sup>25</sup> According to one study that looked at the local economic impact of Pell Grants, every 1% increase in spending resulted in a 2.4% increase in local incomes, and the effect is greater for nonprofit institutions such as public universities.<sup>26</sup>

This benefit to local economies extends to its effect on surrounding industries, a so-called “spillover effect.” There is evidence that research and development (R&D) activities are greater in firms surrounding a university than those that are not, even if those nearby firms don’t invest as much in R&D. It has also been found that higher total university funding is associated with more firm innovations in the same city, and that government funding is especially potent in this regard.<sup>27</sup>

Even without considering the economic benefits, investing in public postsecondary education offers communities social, civic and cultural benefits. Universities act as community hubs, venues for entertainment, civic centers and provide other forms of community development.<sup>28</sup> A more educated population can support arts and creative expression, foster civic engagement and build a more robust democracy.

And those who graduate from universities and community colleges also benefit directly. Higher educational attainment is associated with a host of financial, social and health benefits that last throughout life.<sup>29</sup> As one faculty respondent wrote, “We work in the regions where we live. Our students are important and feel like family. We develop them not simply to be good and productive citizens but importantly to continue to build our community after we are gone.”

But all of these benefits depend on a higher education workforce that is well compensated and supported in their roles. This survey has demonstrated the many ways our public postsecondary workforce is unable to fully, perhaps even adequately, fulfill its role. The results of this survey also point to two main ways in which the General Assembly and university administrations can support a better system of higher education: improved funding and more inclusive governance.

---

<sup>25</sup> Jonathan Rothwell, “What Colleges Do for Local Economies: A Direct Measure Based on Consumption,” Brookings Institute, Nov. 17, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/what-colleges-do-for-local-economies-a-direct-measure-based-on-consumption/>.

<sup>26</sup> Maarten De Ridder, Simona M Hannon and Damjan Pfajfar, “The Multiplier Effect of Education Expenditure,” Federal Reserve Board, May 28, 2020, <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/feds/files/2020058pap.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Zoltan J Acs, David B Audretsch and Maryann P Feldman, “R&D Spillovers and Innovative Activity,” *Managerial and Decision Economics*, March-April 1994, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2487786>.

Li Xiaoying and Tan Ying, “University R&D Activities and Firm Innovations,” *Finance Research Letters*, November 2020, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1544612319308165>.

<sup>28</sup> Jason Smith, Lynn E. Pelco, Alex Rooke, “The Emerging Role of Universities in Collective Impact Initiatives for Community Benefit,” Virginia Commonwealth University, 2017, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1165784.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Dana Mitra, “Pennsylvania’s Best Investment: The Social and Economic Benefits of Public Education,” Pennsylvania State University, May 2011, [https://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/BestInvestment\\_Full\\_Report\\_6.27.11.pdf](https://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/BestInvestment_Full_Report_6.27.11.pdf).

Sarah Reber, Chenoah Sinclair and Hannah Van Drie, “Public Colleges Are the Workhorses of Middle-Class Mobility,” Brookings Institute, July 22, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/public-colleges-are-the-workhorses-of-middle-class-mobility/>.

### *Funding*

As mentioned before, the General Assembly has substantially reduced its real commitment to Kentucky's public postsecondary institutions over the last couple of decades. Accounting for inflation and the addition of the performance fund, the legislature appropriated \$357 million less to postsecondary institutions in 2023 than it did in 2008, and that is after two years of modest increases in state fiscal years 2023 and 2024.

The General Assembly's first priority should be to restore public postsecondary appropriations to inflation-adjusted pre-2008 levels. Regaining the ground that has been lost over that time period will help institutions reinvest in core capacity, improve employee recruitment and retention and secure adequate staffing. It will help curb harmful tuition and fee increases and reduce the pressures that have led to harmful working conditions for employees and poor outcomes for students.

And as many respondents to the survey pointed out, funding is also needed specifically for raises. The General Assembly should provide enough funding to Kentucky's universities and community colleges to ensure wages can make up ground that has been lost from years of inadequate or missing cost-of-living adjustments. Instructional staff at Kentucky's universities have seen their wages diminish by 9.1% on average, and KCTCS by 10.2%, while the private sector's wages continue to rise. The state cannot sustain this discrepancy and hope to retain a talented workforce.

Part of restoring funding to higher education should also include addressing the inequities created by the performance funding model, which harms those institutions serving the students with greatest need. And the legislature must rectify the funding inequities it created at KSU as recently identified by the U. S. Departments of Education and Agriculture.

### *Governance and employee voice*

A consistent theme in responses to our survey is that employees feel they don't have a sufficient voice on the job. The General Assembly and school administration officials both have a role to play in ensuring faculty and staff share in the governance of the institutions they are serving.

Most directly, each institution should welcome efforts by staff and faculty to form unions and recognize their role in advocating for compensation and working conditions that best fit their needs. Unions are the most powerful way employees can voice their concerns and directly negotiate for wages and benefits, and university administrations can support this right by immediately recognizing them when they are formed, rather than attempting to disrupt the efforts of their employees to organize their workplaces.

One way the state could give workers a more powerful voice in the decision-making process at Kentucky's public colleges and universities would be to increase the number of faculty and staff allowed to participate in institutional governance. As it stands, only a small number of employees are allowed to sit on the boards of their own institutions, and there are few non-supervisory

staff in Kentucky's postsecondary governance structures. Opening up additional opportunities for staff and faculty to have board seats and other governing roles would better allow their input on the decisions that most affect them and the learning and research outcomes they contribute to.

The General Assembly can also support faculty, specifically, by voicing its support for academic freedom through simple resolutions, committee hearings and mandatory reports on academic activities. One theme that was repeated by respondents was they felt undue pressure from their institution and outside political influence that prevented them from fully engaging in their academic discipline. Having expressed support for academic freedom from Kentucky's legislature would create a more supportive environment for professional faculty.

Kentucky higher education is at a pivotal moment in its history. Years of funding cuts have resulted in seriously degraded job quality at these institutions, harming their vital mission of education, research and service. And many are concerned about what a charged political environment could mean for higher education in the future. The critical benefits of the public postsecondary system can only be realized when Kentucky's leaders support and recognize its workforce as essential to a thriving economy and society.





## Appendix A: Research Methods

This report uses a mixed-methods approach to understand the key workforce challenges preventing public higher education from fulfilling its promise to all Kentuckians. Researchers combined analysis of quantitative survey responses and qualitative survey data. Additional data from supplemental sources also informed the survey design and analysis, including informal interviews with Kentucky public higher education employees who are members of United Campus Workers of Kentucky, Communications Workers of America Local 3365 (UCWKY-CWA), as well as secondary data sources documenting Kentucky higher education and industry-wide trends. These supplemental data sources informed the broader research and specific survey questions and were consulted in the analysis stage to substantiate findings from survey results.

### *Survey design*

The online survey instrument was developed for distribution to both faculty and staff at the state's public universities and community colleges in order to answer two primary research questions:

- What are the challenges facing Kentucky's public higher education workforce?
- What are the effects of the working conditions of faculty and staff on students and communities across the state?

Specific survey questions were determined collaboratively by researchers at the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy (KyPolicy) and UCWKY-CWA. Before the survey was finalized, 12 UCW members, including five tenured faculty, two full-time non-tenure-track faculty, three academic support staff, and two skilled-trade employees from four of the eight public universities in Kentucky reviewed the questions for content and wording. Finalized survey questions were distributed using Alchemer, an online survey software tool.

The survey instrument consisted of 40 questions. Survey instructions included a note that the data would be analyzed for use in KyPolicy and UCW-CWA's legislative advocacy, reports, press releases and other communications. It also said individual responses will only be shared after personally identifiable data had been removed. Participants were also informed that their participation in the survey was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the survey and study at any time and for any reason. A list of the survey questions is included in Appendix A of this report.

### *Survey data collection*

The survey instrument was emailed directly to all employees, with the exception of upper-level administration and confidential employees, at EKV, KSU, Morehead, Murray, NKU, WKU, the UK, UofL, and the KCTCS for whom email addresses were provided through open records requests. In addition to these batch emails, KyPolicy followed up separately with individual emails to faculty and staff contacts at these institutions and individualized follow-up emails were sent from UCWKY-CWA to their members and their contacts at these campuses.

In order for the sample of respondents to reflect the range of public higher education institutions across the state, as well as faculty and staff positions, researchers set a goal of at least a 10% response rate based on total full-time equivalent academic employment in each job category for each of the eight universities as well as the KCTCS. Where gaps in survey participation at

specific institutions or in job categories were identified, researchers and UCWKY members conducted additional outreach to target groups in order to achieve as representative a sample as possible.

Survey responses were collected between July and September 2023, at which time the sampling goal was met.

#### Survey data analysis

Many of the questions in the survey instrument were open-ended or gave respondents a chance to provide a response that was other than those offered as pre-filled options. For analysis of these qualitative responses, the authors divided up the survey questions and coded responses in a spreadsheet in reference to a list of “a priori” codes that were determined prior to data collection and “emergent” codes that were decided upon during initial analysis of the qualitative responses.

The coded qualitative responses were then combined with the quantitative responses for analysis and development of research findings. Research findings were reviewed by several additional UCWKY-CWA members prior to publication of this report.

#### *Supplemental data sources*

Knowledge gained from informal interviews with UCWKY-CWA members, as well as secondary sources such as employment data, state budget documents and published research studies, was used in the research design phase of the project to inform the content and wording of survey questions, and in the data analysis phase to provide further substantiation of key themes and patterns in the survey response data prior to determining the research findings. Relevant secondary data sources are cited throughout the report.

## Appendix B: 2023 Kentucky Higher Education Staffing Survey

### Background

Kentucky Center for Economic Policy (KyPolicy) and the United Campus Workers of Kentucky, Communications Workers of America (UCWKY-CWA) are surveying public higher education employees to inform statewide efforts to improve working and learning conditions. This survey asks a series of questions that will take approximately 5-7 minutes to complete.

The data in this survey will be analyzed for use in KyPolicy and UCWKY-CWA's legislative advocacy, reports, press releases, and other communications. Individual responses will only be shared after personally identifiable data has been removed.

### Participation

Your participation in this survey is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time and for any reason.

We appreciate your support of efforts to improve public higher education in Kentucky!

---

Employment Information

1) Institution\*

- University of Kentucky
- University of Louisville
- Murray State University
- Morehead State University
- Eastern Kentucky University
- Northern Kentucky University
- Western Kentucky University
- Kentucky State University
- KCTCS

2) Which KCTCS college/s do you work for?

- Ashland Community & Technical College
- Big Sandy Community & Technical College
- Bluegrass Community & Technical College
- Elizabethtown Community & Technical College
- Gateway Community & Technical College
- Hazard Community & Technical College
- Henderson Community College
- Hopkinsville Community College
- Jefferson Community & Technical College
- Madisonville Community College
- Maysville Community & Technical College
- Owensboro Community & Technical College
- Somerset Community College
- Southcentral Kentucky Community & Technical College
- Southeast Kentucky Community & Technical College

3) Job Category\*

- Faculty - Tenure-track/Tenured
- Faculty - Non-tenure-track, full-time
- Faculty - Non-tenure-track, adjunct/part-time
- Graduate Worker
- Staff
- Retired

4) When did you retire?

5) Please select your job classification from the list below\*

- Librarians, Curators, and Archivists
- Student and Academic Affairs and Other Education Services
- Management
- Business and Financial Operations
- Computer, Engineering, and Science
- Community Service, Social Service, Legal, Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media
- Healthcare Practitioners
- Service
- Sales
- Office and Administrative Support
- Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance

6) Department

7) Job Title

8) Years of Service in KY public higher education\*

- 0
- 1-4
- 5-9
- 10-14
- 15-19
- 20-24
- 25-29
- 30+

9) Are you a full-time or a part-time employee?\*

- Full-time
- Part-time

10) Are you exempt (salaried) or non-exempt (hourly)?\*

- Exempt
- Non-exempt

11) What issues are you most concerned about in your workplace? Please rank up to 4 with "1" being your biggest concern.\*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Employee input in decision making
- \_\_\_\_\_ Health insurance
- \_\_\_\_\_ Inadequate opportunities for advancement or professional development
- \_\_\_\_\_ Job security
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pay
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pension/retirement plan
- \_\_\_\_\_ Physical working conditions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unhealthy workplace climate (i.e. harassment, discrimination, disrespect)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Workload
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other - Write In

12) Please explain your answer choices to the previous question.

#### Staffing Levels

13) Is your department currently understaffed?\*

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

14) How have staffing levels over the past year compared to your past experience?\*

- Lower
- Unchanged
- Higher
- I don't know

15) What do you believe are the primary drivers of understaffing in your department? Please select up to 3.\*

- Qualified workers are not interested in applying for positions in our department due to low pay and/or inadequate benefits
- New hires cannot be retained due to low pay and/or inadequate benefits
- New hires cannot be retained due to poor working conditions
- Lack of funding
- Management does not prioritize recruiting and hiring to fill open positions
- Other - Write In: \_\_\_\_\_

16) Have you experienced any of the following outcomes as a result of understaffing? Select all that apply.\*

- The assignment of additional tasks outside of your job description
- A feeling of low morale or burnout
- An inability to meet deadlines or otherwise complete work on time

- Increased workload
- Tasks that I previously performed are no longer being performed
- Unsafe or unhealthy working conditions
- Other - Write In: \_\_\_\_\_

17) Has understaffing impacted your department's ability to provide quality services?\*

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

18) Has understaffing affected the quality of services in your department in any of the following ways? Select all that apply.\*

- Critical programs or services have been cut or significantly scaled back
- Research outcomes are compromised
- Students or other vulnerable populations are in unsafe conditions
- Students experience mental health challenges or crises without adequate support
- Student learning outcomes are not met
- Other - Write In: \_\_\_\_\_

19) Please provide specific examples of how understaffing has impacted the quality of services in your workplace

#### Faculty Questions

20) Has your department lost tenure-track positions over the last decade?\*

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

21) Has the loss of tenure-track faculty positions led to any of the following? \*

- A reduction in programs, degrees, or courses
- Increased class sizes
- Work previously performed by faculty has shifted to non-tenure-track faculty, adjuncts, and/or grad assistants
- Additional advising duties
- Other - Write In: \_\_\_\_\_

22) About what percentage of departmental work would you estimate has shifted from tenured faculty to non-tenure-track faculty, adjuncts, or graduate assistants?\*

- 1-5%
- 6-10%
- 11-15%

- 16-20%
- 21-25%
- 26-30%
- 31-35%
- 36-40%
- 41-45%
- 46-50%
- 51-55%
- 56-60%
- 61-65%
- 66-70%
- Greater than 70%

23) Which of the following issues most negatively affects your ability to effectively perform your job? Please rank up to 4 with "1" being the issue that most negatively affects your ability to effectively perform your job. \*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Frozen or cut faculty lines
- \_\_\_\_\_ Increased course load or class size
- \_\_\_\_\_ Managerial bloat and overreach
- \_\_\_\_\_ Weakening of shared governance
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of job security
- \_\_\_\_\_ Low pay and inadequate benefits
- \_\_\_\_\_ Erosion of academic freedom
- \_\_\_\_\_ State political discourse influencing curriculum
- \_\_\_\_\_ Declining state funding for public higher education
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other - Write In (Required)

24) Has your department lost administrative support staff over the last decade?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

25) Due to the loss of administrative support staff, have faculty been asked to take on new/increased duties in any of the following areas?

- Academic advising
- Recruitment and retention efforts
- Administrative work (e.g. reimbursement paperwork, grant administration)
- Supporting students through mental health challenges or crises
- Other - Write In: \_\_\_\_\_

26) Can you share specific examples of how the loss of tenured faculty or administrative support staff has affected your work?

27) In what ways are current political discourses influencing your work?

Pay Raises

28) Have you received a pay raise in the last year?\*

Yes

No

29) What percent total pay raise did you receive?

30) Please describe how the pay raise affected your overall job satisfaction.

31) Would you have stayed in this position if you had not received a pay raise?\*

Yes

No

I don't know

Job Satisfaction

32) In the past year, have you considered leaving your job for reasons other than retirement?\*

Yes

No

33) What are the top concerns affecting your consideration to leave? Please rank up to 3.\*

\_\_\_\_\_ Pay

\_\_\_\_\_ Health insurance

\_\_\_\_\_ Pension/retirement plan

\_\_\_\_\_ Employee input in decision making

\_\_\_\_\_ Physical working conditions

\_\_\_\_\_ Inadequate opportunities for advancement or professional development

\_\_\_\_\_ Unhealthy workplace climate (i.e. harassment, discrimination, disrespect)

\_\_\_\_\_ Job security

\_\_\_\_\_ Other - Write In

34) If you are still actively considering leaving your position, would any of the following convince you to stay?\*

A pay raise of at least 10%

A fully staffed department

Other - Write In: \_\_\_\_\_



Final Comments

35) Do you have any additional comments on workplace concerns that you would like to share?

36) Race

White/Euro American

Black/African American/Afro Caribbean

East Asian/Asian American

South Asian/Indian American

Latinx/Hispanic American

Middle Eastern/Middle Eastern American

Native American/Alaskan Native

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Other - Write In: \_\_\_\_\_

37) Gender

Cisgender man

Cisgender woman

Gender nonconforming

Gender nonbinary

Genderqueer

Transgender woman

Transgender man

Other - Write In: \_\_\_\_\_

38) Name \_\_\_\_\_

39) Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

40) Email address \_\_\_\_\_

United Campus Workers of Kentucky  
PO Box 54986, Lexington, KY 40555  
[ucwkentucky.org](http://ucwkentucky.org)  
(847) 533-0711

Kentucky Center for Economic Policy  
433 Chestnut Street, Berea, KY 40403  
[kypolicy.org](http://kypolicy.org)  
(859) 756-4605

