Coping with COVID-19 Challenges Employee Survey
Executive Summary
April 20, 2020

Iowa State University issued the "Coping with COVID-19 Challenges" employee survey to 6,659 faculty and staff. The survey was open for completion from Wednesday, March 25 – Friday, March 27. The purpose of the survey was to capture a high-level look at how the COVID-19 pandemic and the university's response were impacting the campus community. The intent was to use the survey results to determine how leadership might better support faculty and staff and strengthen response and communication efforts.

The survey results have informed the university's ongoing response to COVID-19, including additional communication on wellness resources, IT support, employee and supervisor expectations, long-term planning, and specific outreach and information for on-campus employees.

University Human Resources and the Office of Institutional Research developed the survey instrument, which included a combination of demographic, rating, multiple choice, and open-ended questions to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

Survey results were anonymized. In order to balance anonymity with meaningful data, respondents were asked to self-identify only by employee category (Faculty, Professional & Scientific staff, Merit staff, or Contract) and by division (President, Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, or Operations and Finance). Respondents were also asked to identify their working location (remote, on-campus, or a combination).

Survey links were sent to 6,659 faculty and staff; 3,622 respondents completed the survey for a response rate of 54 percent. This included:
- 2015 out of 3274 Professional and Scientific = 62% of Professional and Scientific staff
- 685 out of 1330 Merit = 52% of Merit staff
- 892 out of 1949 Faculty = 46% of Faculty
- 30 out of 106 Contract = 28% of Contract staff

The divisional breakdown of the 3,622 respondents included:
- 1158 from Academic Affairs
- 938 did not identify
- 751 from Operations and Finance
- 451 from Student Affairs
- 324 from the President's division

The working location breakdown of the 3,622 respondents included:
- 2,186 working remotely
- 866 working from their campus/normal work location
- 570 working remotely, but portions of their job need to be performed on campus

Key findings from the survey:

Well-Being

- More than three-quarters of respondents indicated a neutral to very positive assessment of their own well-being for the following reasons:
    - Successful transition to at-home working/online environment
    - Feeling of safety
    - Healthy
    - Job security
    - Communication/support with/from supervisor/colleagues

- Respondents who indicated a negative assessment of their own well-being provided the following reasons:
    - Worries about virus/health
    - Uncertainty and stress
    - Lack of communication or lack of clarity
    - Challenges/lack of support for remote working
    - Childcare/family

- More than half of respondents strongly agreed they have the information they need for relevant wellness benefits (e.g., employee assistance, health care access and benefits, updated company processes and procedures)

- Respondents shared the following ways in which they are staying connected with others:
    - Virtual communication – including scheduled team meetups, phone call check-ins, daily meetings, emails, text messaging, "virtual happy hours"
    - Social media connections – including sharing images of pets
    - Shopping/cooking for others – including dropping off baked goods or supplies for colleagues

Leadership
- Two-thirds of respondents strongly agreed that they feel supported by their supervisor or manager at this time.

- More than half of respondents strongly agreed that they have confidence in the senior leadership to make the right decisions for Iowa State University at this time.

- More than half of respondents strongly agreed that communication about COVID-19 provided by the University has been helpful. The top three requested topics for more information included:
  - How to balance care-taking responsibilities, including child care
  - Changes to deadlines and managing work environment
  - Managing workload

Working Conditions

- More than half of remote work respondents indicated it was extremely clear what was expected of them while working from home.

- More than half of respondents indicated they had all of the essential resources they needed to do their job remotely. The top three requested resources included:
  - External monitor
  - Headphones, microphones, or camera
  - Internet or Remote desktop access

- When asked about barriers to effective remote work performance, the top five answers were:
  - Internet connectivity issues
  - Computer desk setup
  - No barriers
  - Limited private space due to family at home
  - Limited time to conduct normal workload due to family at home

- More than three-quarters of remote work respondents were satisfied with their IT support and agreed that they had the IT resources they needed to do their job successfully.

- The most common software that respondents reported _not_ being able to access from home included:
  - Adobe suite, Acrobat
  - Zoom Pro
  - Other issues included: lack of printing, inadequate remote work setup, slow or inconsistent internet, poor quality of conferencing software

- Two-thirds of respondents agreed their team is good at making informal connections and their team is good at discussing impacts when change occurs.

- About one-third of remote work respondents are providing childcare of some kind and the majority indicated it impacts their work at least some of the time.

- Two-thirds of respondents working on campus were neutral or agreed that their health and safety was being protected. One-third of respondents indicated concern.

- More than half of respondents working on campus indicated they had all the information, training, and protective equipment to safely perform their assigned work at their campus or normal work location. The top three requested topics for additional outreach included:
    - Additional supplies or resources to perform work
    - Information about what services remain open
    - Information about what buildings remain open

<u>Open-Ended</u>

A sampling of common topics from the open-ended question, *"Please provide us with any other feedback or suggestions that you think senior leadership should consider during this time."*
- Workforce Issues
    - On-Campus Employees
        - How are you protecting the health and safety of those working on campus?
        - More information about personal protective equipment
        - More cleaning supplies for those who have to work on campus
        - Allow options for staggering staff
        - Clearer guidance/enforcement of social distancing
    - Remote-work Employees
        - Will you provide compensation for using personal phone, mobile data, internet, heat, electricity to work from home?
        - If I'm working from home, can I go to my office if I forgot something?
        - Allow people working remotely to stagger times to go into the office once or twice a week
    - Delay performance reviews
        - Lower expectations for productivity

- Better guidance on Employee Leave
    - Allow employees to remain in paid status and not use accrued leave
    - Self-isolation
    - Child care

- Communication
    - Keep FAQs up-to-date
    - Hold Town Hall meetings

- o Too many communications – President, Provost, Deans, Department Chairs sending or forwarding same information
  - o Need better communication in the units
  - o Central source to direct questions

- Financial Implications
  - o What are the immediate and long-term impacts for the university?
  - o Will there be layoffs or furloughs?

- Crisis Planning
  - o What is the plan if there is a COVID-19 case on campus?
  - o What is the plan for research?

- Future Outlook
  - o What is the timeline for bringing people back?
  - o What will happen in the summer, fall?
  - o Recovery planning for the university; for the community and state?
  - o Allow remote working after this crisis is over