

## Executive Summary Report

### Oakland University

2025 Oakland University OU & You Employee Engagement Survey

*Prepared by:*

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## Survey Overview

This report is based on responses from Oakland University faculty and staff gathered between **April 10, 2025, and May 5, 2025.**

The *2025 OU and You Employee Engagement Survey* was undertaken to gather views and perspectives on how Oakland University can become, as President Pescovitz has articulated, “a more welcoming and inspiring learning environment, and a workplace distinguished by civility, compassion and collegiality. Aggregate results will be used to inform efforts to improve faculty and staff recruitment and retention strategies.”

When the Oakland University faculty and staff completed the Survey, they were asked to respond to fifty-five Core Survey statements and ten Faculty Only Experience statements on a 5-point agreement scale, ten Benefits on a 5-point satisfaction scale, and two open-ended questions. They were additionally asked to voluntarily share information on six demographics.

The overall response rate for the Survey was **54% (1091 /2003)**. In addition, Job Category designations were supplied by Oakland University along with the email addresses of Survey participants. The response rate breakdown listed below is based on those designations.

| Pre-Loaded Job Category | Total | Responded | % Responded |
|-------------------------|-------|-----------|-------------|
| All Employees           | 2003  | 1091      | 54%         |
| Faculty                 | 849   | 367       | 43%         |
| Staff                   | 1154  | 724       | 63%         |

With “first-time” deployments of the Survey we generally expect to see overall response rates ranging from 36-46%. Oakland’s overall response rate of 54% is particularly strong for a first-time deployment. Anecdotally, it suggests that the majority of employees saw the benefit of participating in the survey and were comfortable doing so. From an analytical perspective, we can operate at the 95% confidence level with a margin of error +/- 2% when the data set is reflective of the Oakland University population as a whole.

### **How to Read the Executive Summary**

This summary document has been prepared to give a succinct overview of the key strengths upon which to build and on opportunities for improving the experience of faculty and staff at Oakland University. The report presents Oakland's data within the context of Carnegie Classification peer institutions, the ModernThink Great Colleges Honor Roll, and the custom peer benchmark prepared specifically for Oakland. Where applicable, this summary will also highlight significant changes in Survey responses between 2025, and the previous ModernThink Survey conducted in 2016. A description of the Survey Dimensions, explanation of the Interpretation Ranges, and a description of the three benchmarks are included as Appendices.

## Strengths

Having a thorough understanding of the strengths identified by the Survey is an essential starting point because an institution's strengths provide a foundation for improvement work. Also, sometimes, rather than focusing on an opportunity, it is of more strategic importance to invest institutional bandwidth in building on an existing strength.

### Job Satisfaction & Support

This Dimension provides insight into faculty and staff satisfaction with job fit, autonomy and resources. The Beliefs Statements in this section are fundamental to the day-to-day work experience, and several statements have been linked in the research to feelings of engagement. This Dimension is composed of seven statements, the four in the table below score in the Good-Excellent range. Additionally, one statement scores in the Fair range and one in Warrants Attention.

| Survey Statement |   | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% positive | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% negative |
|------------------|---|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| 1                | My job makes good use of my skills and abilities.       | 76                                       | 8  | 82  | 6   | 87   | 4  | 73                                      | 9                                       |
| 2                | I am given the responsibility and freedom to do my job. | 79                                       | 6  | 84  | 5   | 89   | 3  | 77                                      | 8                                       |
| 24               | The work I do is meaningful to me.                      | 85                                       | 3  | 90  | 2   | 91   | 2  | 83                                      | 4                                       |
| 34               | Oakland's benefits meet my needs.                       | 73                                       | 11                                       | 74  | 9   | 85   | 4  | 64                                      | 14                                      |

### Faculty & Staff Wellbeing

More than ever, well-being is being recognized as a vital element of the overall work experience that ultimately impacts feelings of engagement. The focus on well-being, which took root during the COVID-19 Pandemic, has intensified given the current issues facing US higher education. The five statements in this Dimension address perceptions of physical, emotional, and mental well-being. All five statements are included in the table below. Two statements score in the Excellent range, two in Good, and one in Fair.

| Survey Statement |   | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% positive | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% negative |
|------------------|---|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| 15               | My supervisor/ department chair shows genuine interest in my well-being.                                    | 76                                       | 10                                       | 81  | 8   | 87   | 4  | 74                                      | 12                                      |
| 33               | Oakland's policies and practices give me the flexibility to manage my work and personal life.               | 69                                       | 12                                       | 74  | 11  | 84   | 6  | 56                                      | 21                                      |
| 39               | Oakland University takes appropriate steps to protect the health and safety of faculty, staff and students. | 62                                       | 13                                       | 74  | 9   | 84   | 5  | 52                                      | 23                                      |
| 44               | At work, I know where to go for help with my mental or emotional well-being.                                | 74                                       | 14                                       | 75  | 12  | 82   | 7  | 66                                      | 17                                      |
| 47               | My supervisor/ department chair supports my efforts to balance my work and personal life.                   | 78                                       | 8  | 84  | 6   | 91   | 3  | 75                                      | 10                                      |

### Inclusion, Belonging and Community

This important Dimension asks faculty and staff to evaluate the institution's inclusion efforts, as well as the individual's own personal sense of belonging. Research links feelings of belonging to retention, recruitment and, potentially, to lowering feelings of burnout. The Survey includes six Belief Statements related to this Dimension. Oakland scores five in the Good – Excellent range and one in the Fair range.

| Survey Statement |   | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% positive | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% negative |
|------------------|---|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| 29               | In my department, we welcome people of all backgrounds.   | 90                                       | 3  | 92  | 3   | 94   | 2  | 81                                      | 8                                       |
| 40               | At Oakland University, we value people of all backgrounds.  | 80                                       | 5  | 82  | 6   | 88   | 4  | 65                                      | 13                                      |
| 50               | Oakland University places sufficient emphasis on having faculty, administrators and staff of all backgrounds. | 71                                       | 8  | 75  | 9   | 82   | 5  | 59                                      | 16                                      |

### Mission and Pride

This Survey Dimension evaluates the sense of pride and connection that faculty and staff report regarding their affiliation with the institution. Research links feelings of alignment relating to mission and pride to both retention and recruitment. Seven Belief Statements comprise this Dimension. All the Belief Statements score in the Good-Excellent range, with the exception of Belief Statement #54 *Oakland's culture is special – something you don't find just anywhere.*

| Survey Statement |  | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% positive | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% negative |
|------------------|--|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| 5                | I understand how my job contributes to Oakland's mission.              | 88                                       | 3  | 90  | 3   | 94   | 2  | 80                                      | 7                                       |
| 25               | Overall, my department is a good place to work.                        | 75                                       | 9  | 82  | 6   | 87   | 4  | 70                                      | 10                                      |
| 36               | I am proud to be part of Oakland University.                           | 79                                       | 5  | 78  | 6   | 88   | 3  | 63                                      | 12                                      |
| 49               | Oakland University actively contributes to the community.              | 79                                       | 4  | 83  | 5   | 91   | 2  | 66                                      | 10                                      |
| 51               | I would recommend working here to my family and/or friends.            | 68                                       | 11                                       | 70  | 12  | 84   | 5  | 54                                      | 20                                      |
| 54               | Oakland's culture is special – something you don't find just anywhere. | 45                                       | 23                                       | 63  | 16  | 76   | 8  | 36                                      | 37                                      |
| 55               | All things considered, this is a great place to work.                  | 65                                       | 9  | 72  | 9   | 85   | 4  | 51                                      | 19                                      |



## Solid Dimensions

While not necessarily key strengths, Dimensions in the Fair – Good Range are often solid. This may be important to consider when prioritizing where to invest in institutional improvement bandwidth.

In two of the ten Dimensions surveyed, Oaklands’s scores came back solidly in the Fair to Good range. Belief Statements in these two Dimensions allow faculty and staff to evaluate their daily workplace experience with their supervisor or department chair, as well as what they envision as the support and possibilities for career growth at the institution.

| Survey Statement |   | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% positive | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% negative |
|------------------|---|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
|                  | Professional Development                  | 57                                       | 18                                       | 66  | 14  | 77   | 8  | 55                                      | 20                                      |
|                  | Supervisor/Department Chair Effectiveness | 70                                       | 12                                       | 76  | 10  | 83   | 6  | 67                                      | 15                                      |

## Improvement Opportunities

The improvement opportunities that surfaced in the Survey are not unusual for higher education. Once specific priorities are identified and improvement initiatives are launched, it will be possible to make gains over the next two-to-three year Survey cycle.

### Opportunity: Confidence in Senior Leadership

As the table below illustrates, responses to Belief Statements relating to confidence and trust in Oakland's senior leadership were positive less than half of the time, with those reporting inconsistent experiences and those responding negatively to Belief Statements about senior leadership in the majority.

| Survey Statement |  | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% positive | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% negative |
|------------------|--|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| 27               | Senior leadership provides a clear direction for Oakland's future.                               | 38                                       | 29                                       | 55  | 20  | 69   | 10   | 31                                      | 43                                      |
| 32               | Senior leadership has the competence necessary for institutional success.                        | 49                                       | 20                                       | 66  | 14  | 78   | 7  | 42                                      | 31                                      |
| 37               | Senior leadership shows genuine interest in the well-being of faculty, administrators and staff. | 45                                       | 25                                       | 60  | 18  | 74   | 10   | 35                                      | 39                                      |
| 41               | Senior leadership communicates openly about important matters.                                   | 40                                       | 27                                       | 55  | 19  | 69   | 11   | 35                                      | 38                                      |
| 45               | I believe what I am told by senior leadership.   | 44                                       | 21                                       | 60  | 16  | 73   | 9  | 38                                      | 33                                      |
| 52               | Oakland University is well run.  | 41                                       | 22                                       | 56  | 17  | 74   | 7  | 30                                      | 39                                      |

### Opportunity: Leadership Development

The Dimensions in the table below make up several key components of the broader leadership culture at Oakland University. While relationships between faculty and staff and their direct supervisors are quite good (see Strengths, page 6), the overall leadership culture at the university falls into the Warrants Attention range, with Performance Management and Onboarding returning Acute scores.

| Survey Statement |                                   | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% positive | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% negative |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
|                  | Communication                     | 53                                       | 19                                       | 62  | 15  | 71   | 10   | 48                                      | 24                                      |
|                  | Collaboration                     | 50                                       | 19                                       | 62  | 15  | 71   | 9  | 46                                      | 26                                      |
|                  | Performance Management            | 43                                       | 29                                       | 56  | 20  | 65   | 13   | 43                                      | 32                                      |
|                  | Onboarding (Belief Statement #30) | 43                                       | 27                                       | 55  | 19  | 68   | 10   | 43                                      | 28                                      |

### Opportunity: Perception of Culture

Over the years, ModernThink has found that faculty and staff perception of a special culture differentiates GREAT from good workplaces. Oakland's score of 45% is at the bottom of the Warrants Attention range.

| Survey Statement |  | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% positive | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% negative |
|------------------|--|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| 54               | Oakland's culture is special – something you don't find just anywhere. | 45                                       | 23                                       | 63  | 16  | 76   | 8  | 36                                      | 37                                      |

### Opportunity: Participation, Teamwork & Engagement

The Survey Belief Statements that look at engagement and cooperation within and across units at the institutional level all fall into the Warrants Attention and Acute ranges.

| Survey Statement   | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% positive | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% negative |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| 22 Changes that affect me are discussed prior to being implemented.                        | 46                                       | 25                                       | 52  | 20  | 61   | 14   | 41                                      | 30                                      |
| 43 At Oakland University, we discuss and debate issues respectfully to get better results. | 46                                       | 19                                       | 56  | 17  | 69   | 10   | 35                                      | 30                                      |
| 26 I can count on people to cooperate across departments.                                  | 46                                       | 15                                       | 57  | 12  | 68   | 7  | 41                                      | 23                                      |
| 42 There are sufficient opportunities to participate in institutional planning.            | 42                                       | 24                                       | 52  | 22  | 61   | 16   | 37                                      | 31                                      |
| 53 There is a sense that we're all on the same team at Oakland.                            | 35                                       | 30                                       | 53  | 21  | 69   | 11   | 30                                      | 45                                      |

### Opportunity: Compensation

The 28% positive score on the Belief Statement related to compensation is so low that it will likely make it difficult to make progress on other improvement priorities.

| Survey Statement                     | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% positive | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% negative |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| 11 I am paid fairly for my work.     | 28                                       | 48                                       | 47  | 32  | 57   | 22   | 39                                      | 41                                      |
| 34 Oakland's benefits meet my needs. | 73                                       | 11                                       | 74  | 9   | 85   | 4  | 64                                      | 14                                      |

### Opportunity: Performance Management

The Performance Management Dimension represents another facet of the leadership culture. Belief Statements in this Dimension are often low in the higher education sector. In addition to directly addressing the Performance Management process, this Dimension also looks at non-compensation rewards, promotion and recognition. illustrate further aspects of dissatisfaction. Three of the Belief Statement Warrant Attention while two are in the Acute range. Approximately 30% of the responses to the Belief Statements in this Dimension are in the so-called “Fence-Sitter” column (respondents who chose the “sometimes agree, sometimes disagree” response option). This is important to note because often smaller, targeted intervention strategies can be effectively used to move Fence-Sitters into the top box.

| Survey Statement  | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Fence<br>Sitters | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% positive | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% negative |
|---|--|--------------------------|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| 9 I am regularly recognized for my contributions.                   | 49                                       | 26                       | 25                                       | 60  | 18  | 69   | 11   | 49                                      | 27                                      |
| 16 Promotions in my department are based on a person's performance. | 47                                       | 25                       | 28                                       | 60  | 19  | 64   | 14   | 46                                      | 31                                      |
| 17 Oakland's review process accurately measures my job performance. | 38                                       | 30                       | 32                                       | 58  | 19  | 67   | 12   | 48                                      | 28                                      |
| 18 Issues of low performance are addressed in my department.        | 41                                       | 28                       | 31                                       | 53  | 22  | 63   | 14   | 38                                      | 35                                      |
| 35 Our recognition and awards programs are meaningful to me.        | 41                                       | 32                       | 27                                       | 50  | 24  | 63   | 15   | 34                                      | 39                                      |

### Opportunity: Onboarding

The Belief Statement related to Onboarding is frequently low across the higher education sector. Onboarding is of strategic importance because it is often the first exposure the new faculty and staff have to an institution's culture.

| Survey Statement   | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% positive | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% negative |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| 30 Our onboarding processes prepare new faculty and staff to be effective. | 43                                       | 27                                       | 55  | 19  | 68   | 10   | 43                                      | 28                                      |
| 54 Oakland's culture is special -- something you don't find just anywhere. | 45                                       | 23                                       | 63  | 16  | 76   | 8  | 36                                      | 37                                      |

### Opportunity: Faculty Experience

The subset of Belief Statements that specifically address faculty experience are shown in the table below. While comparator institutions have scores in the Mediocre to Good ranges, Oakland's scores across the spectrum of faculty experience fall into Warrants Attention to Fair. The most acutely low scores in the faculty experience Belief Statements appear in the role of faculty in governance and the support given faculty to produce high-quality scholarship.

| Survey Statement |  | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Carnegie<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Honor<br>Roll<br>Overall<br>% negative | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% positive | 2025<br>Peer<br>Benchmark<br>% negative |
|------------------|--|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| 56               | The role of faculty in shared governance is clearly stated and publicized. (Faculty Only)  | 39                                       | 27                                       | 59  | 21  | 65   | 15   | 43                                      | 33                                      |
| 57               | Faculty are appropriately involved in decisions related to the education program (e.g. curriculum development, evaluation). (Faculty Only) | 51                                       | 18                                       | 65  | 17  | 75   | 11   | 47                                      | 30                                      |
| 58               | There is appropriate recognition of innovative and high-quality teaching. (Faculty Only)   | 45                                       | 29                                       | 58  | 21  | 69   | 12   | 39                                      | 35                                      |
| 59               | Advancement and promotion processes are clear. (Faculty Only)  | 56                                       | 21                                       | 64  | 16  | 64   | 17   | 53                                      | 23                                      |
| 60               | There is a good balance of teaching, service and research at Oakland University (general survey).  | 50                                       | 28                                       | 56  | 24  | 69   | 14   | 39                                      | 36                                      |

| Survey Statement |   | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% positive | 2025<br>Oakland<br>Overall<br>% negative |
|------------------|---|--|--|
| 61               | There is appropriate recognition for high-quality scholarship.  | 57                                       | 17                                       |
| 62               | There is appropriate support for high-quality scholarship.  | 33                                       | 40                                       |
| 63               | At Oakland, the teaching expectations are reasonable given the scholarship and service expectations.  | 55                                       | 20                                       |
| 64               | At Oakland, the service expectations are reasonable given the scholarship and teaching expectations.  | 49                                       | 29                                       |
| 65               | At Oakland, the scholarship expectations are reasonable, given the teaching and service expectations. | 55                                       | 22                                       |

## Best Practices

The approaches noted below reflect best practices demonstrated by ModernThink clients. Oakland University will need to evaluate which of these are relevant and are a good fit with the institutional culture. It will also be essential to prioritize possible action strategies based on a realistic assessment of institutional bandwidth.

### Best Practices Related to Strengths

- Examine which areas of the institution report the highest job satisfaction and well-being to identify local best practices.
- Continue providing—and communicating—Oakland’s benefits structure.
- Build on current levels of trust between university and faculty and staff when it comes to belonging and inclusion. Consider multiple angles from which to reinforce and tell the story of engagement and satisfaction at Oakland.
- Capitalize on relatively high positivity around the mission of the University by connecting more people directly to the University’s mission. Use the Comment Analysis Report to gain insight into comments on mission, pride, and other markers of Oakland’s culture.

### Best Practices Related to Solid Dimensions

- Consider leadership and mentoring programs for both new and long-time mid-level leaders (Chairs and Supervisors) to harmonize best practices.
- Analyze career progression standards for faculty and staff, consider establishing formal and informal supports for career growth.

## Best Practices Related to Improvement Opportunities

### Leadership

- Undertake senior group development focused on:
  - articulation and alignment of personal values and sources of passion for the institutional mission.
  - ensuring that all senior leaders are conversationally fluent in the Strategic Priorities and Institutional Values.
  - development of personally meaningful “elevator speeches” that authentically communicate this personal passion for institutional values.
  - identifying highly visible opportunities for senior leaders to model behaviors related to the values of the desired culture.
- Increase opportunities for senior leaders to participate in caring, humane, relational contexts – to be known as a person, not just a role.
- Emphasize consistent communication from senior leaders across all contexts, including challenging ones. Develop a communication strategy that builds connection to (relationship), confidence in (trust) and credibility of senior leaders. Communication is accurate, timely and transparent, intentionally planned – not left to chance. With:
  - consistent talking points.
  - highly visible communications and intentional critical conversations
  - consistent key messages intentionally cascaded through all levels of leadership.
- Cascade intentional leadership development to department chairs, managers, and other mid-level leaders to amplify anticipated positive culture change happening higher in the organizational chart.

### Workplace Culture Development

- Create a variety of opportunities to tell the story of the attributes that make Oakland’s culture “special”, including on-going culture development efforts based upon feedback.
- Implement (or reinforce) a disciplined approach to change management that includes high-visibility opportunities for feedback and participation.
- Identify opportunities for cross-functional awareness-building and collaboration.
  - Highlight the results of these efforts.
- Set collaboration and communication standards and metrics for leaders at all levels.
- Incentivize innovation through collaboration.
- Enhance recognition and awards for teamwork and engagement.



### Human Resource Processes

- Use the survey process to create a comprehensive communication strategy around total compensation.
- The Acute level of dissatisfaction with compensation needs to be addressed in parallel with other changes under consideration in order to underscore the institution's commitment to its faculty and staff.
- Commit to regular surveys and periodic demographic deep-dives to determine salary discrepancies, market comparisons, etc.
- Involve multiple stakeholder groups, including HR, to design a process and associated benchmarks for Performance Management and Development that reflect the values of the institution.
- Develop or enhance a year-long onboarding system that covers both job specifics AND culture building through relationships, shared values.

### Faculty Experience

Enhancing the relationship between faculty and senior leadership should be a priority for Oakland University.

- Conduct a series of listening sessions around the needs and aspirations of the faculty in the design of Oakland's future.
- Signpost anticipated changes that address longstanding issues.
- Partnering with The Research Office, strengthen and develop research support services and recognition. This Acute level of dissatisfaction with compensation needs to be addressed in parallel with other changes under consideration in order to underscore the institution's commitment to its faculty and staff.

## Appendix 1 – Dimension Definitions

The *ModernThink Higher Education Insight Survey*® measures 10 core dimensions, plus a Faculty Experience dimension, reflecting managerial and organizational competencies specific to higher education:

### Job Satisfaction & Support

This dimension provides insight into the satisfaction with job fit, autonomy and resources. This dimension is composed of seven statements such as item #4: *I am provided the resources I need to be effective in my job.*

### Professional Development

Support for faculty/staff professional development is critical both in terms of building organizational capacity and acknowledging and supporting individual development needs. The dimension provides insight into the reported satisfaction with career/professional development opportunities for staff and support for research and clarity of the tenure process for faculty. There are four statements/questions in this dimension including item #6: *I am given the opportunity to develop my skills at this institution.*

### Faculty & Staff Well-being

More than ever, employee well-being is being recognized as a vital element of the overall work experience and ultimately employee engagement. This dimension includes five statements that address an employee's physical, emotional and mental well-being. For example, one statement included in this dimension is item #15: *My supervisor/department chair shows genuine interest in my well-being.*

### Performance Management

This dimension measures the efficiency of policies, procedures and processes within the college. It also evaluates the college's efforts in employee recognition. An example statement included in this dimension is item #17: *Our review process accurately measures my job performance.*

### Supervisors/Department Chair Effectiveness

This dimension provides insight into the relationship faculty/employees report with their department chair or supervisor and assesses critical managerial competencies. There has been significant research measuring the importance of the relationship an employee has with his or her supervisor or direct report. Accordingly, there are five statements that measure managerial competencies and the health of this important relationship (e.g. item #3: *My supervisor/department chair makes their expectations clear.*)

### Communication

The purpose of this dimension is to assess the quality of internal communications specifically related to transparency, clarity and interactivity. Five specific statements summarize this theme, like item #21: *In my department, we communicate openly about issues that impact each other's work.*

### **Collaboration**

The goal of this dimension is to measure the perceived cooperation and collegiality within workgroups and across the institution. Five different statements comprise this theme, including item #23: *People in my department work well together.*

### **Inclusion, Belonging & Community**

This important dimension gauges faculty and staff perceptions of the levels of inclusion, belonging, and sense of community at the institution. It asks employees to evaluate the institution's inclusion efforts, as well as the individual's own personal sense of belonging. Six statements compose this dimension, including item #46: *We are making progress towards becoming an institution where everyone feels included.*

### **Mission & Pride**

This dimension evaluates the sense of pride and connection faculty/employees report regarding their affiliation with the institution. Seven different statements comprise this theme, including item #55: *All things considered, this is a great place to work.*

### **Confidence in Senior Leadership**

This dimension measures the confidence faculty and staff report in the capabilities and credibility of senior leadership. Senior leadership is defined as the most senior members of the institution (e.g., chancellor or president and those who report directly to him/her). There are six statements on the survey that directly reference senior leadership, one example being item #27: *Senior leadership provides a clear direction for this institution's future.*

### **Faculty Experience**

The standard survey also includes a Faculty Experience dimension, comprising five statements posed to Faculty and Adjuncts only. The Faculty Experience dimension asks faculty and adjuncts to provide insight into key faculty-specific topics such as curriculum planning, recognition of high-quality teaching and the balance between teaching, service and research at the institution. This dimension can be removed for a staff-only survey project.

## Appendix 2 – Interpretation Ranges

**Response Options:** *Strongly Agree, Agree, Sometimes Agree/Sometimes Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Not Applicable*

### Positive Responses

*Strongly Agree, Agree*

### Negative Responses

*Strongly Disagree, Disagree*

| Guideline Score | Description        | Guideline Score |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 75% +           | Excellent          | < 10%           |
| 65-74%          | Good - Very Good   | 10-14%          |
| 55-64%          | Fair - Mediocre    | 15-19%          |
| 45-54%          | Warrants Attention | 20-29%          |
| < 45%           | Acute              | 30% +           |

## Appendix 3 – Benchmark Definitions

### 2025 Honor Roll

The 2025 Honor Roll benchmark is comprised of the average percent positive, or percent negative, of those institutions recognized on the 2025 Honor Roll in your institution's enrollment size classification. The Honor Roll distinction is awarded to the 10 four-year colleges and the 4 two-year colleges recognized the greatest number of times in their enrollment size classification. "Small" institutions have fewer than 3,000 student, "medium" institutions have between 3,000 and 9,999 students, and "large" institutions have 10,000 or more students.

### 2025 Carnegie Classification

The Carnegie benchmark reflects the average percent positive, or percent negative, of all institutions in your Carnegie Classification for 2025.

### 2025 Oakland University Peer Benchmark

Oakland University provided ModernThink with two peer groups for benchmarking purposes: the **Michigan Public Universities (MPU)** and the **Oakland University peer list**. ModernThink generally requires a minimum of 4–5 institutions to establish a reliable benchmark. However, due to data limitations following the 2021 ModernThink survey update, neither list independently included enough participating institutions. After reviewing both lists, we determined that a combined peer benchmark could be developed using institutions from both groups. As a result, we created a custom peer benchmark using a combined total of four institutions from both lists provided. In accordance with ModernThink policy, the names of institutions included in a peer benchmark are only disclosed if they were recognized in the Great Colleges Program. Of the four institutions, only one—Saginaw Valley State University—was recognized in the 2024 Great Colleges to Work For program.