

# THE EVOLUTION OF THE HR TALENT LANDSCAPE IN HIGHER EDUCATION (2019–2025)

Key Trends Shaping Academic Workforce  
Development Recently

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CUPA-HR New York Metro Chapter



# WHY THE LAST FIVE YEARS HAVE REDEFINED HR IN HIGHER EDUCATION



## ➤ Transformation of HR Roles

- HR shifted from administrative tasks to strategic, market-facing roles due to evolving workforce demands and challenges.

## ➤ Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

- The pandemic accelerated digital recruitment, remote work adoption, and employee-centered benefits in higher education.

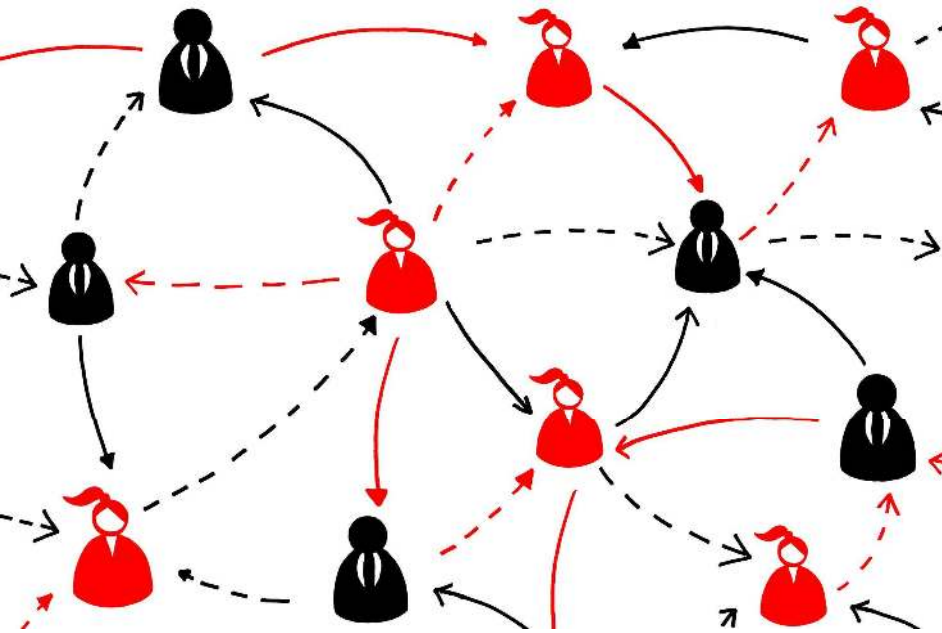
## ➤ Competitive Talent Market

- Higher education HR now competes in a transparent labor market with rising costs and stricter pay regulations influencing candidates.

## ➤ Need for Strategic Adaptation

- Structural shifts require rethinking recruitment, engagement, and retention strategies for sustainable talent management.

# KEY EXTERNAL FORCES DRIVING CHANGE SINCE 2019



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## ➤ Remote and Hybrid Work Impact

- Remote and hybrid work expanded competition geographically, affecting administrative and tech roles in higher education.

## ➤ Labor Shortages Challenges

- Labor shortages increased competition for specialized skills, making it difficult to fill critical IT and finance positions.

## ➤ Pay Transparency Effects

- Pay transparency laws changed compensation discussions and pressured institutions with limited salary flexibility.

## ➤ Evolving Employee Expectations

- Employees demand flexibility, career growth, wellbeing, and strong organizational culture, shifting workplace dynamics.

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# FROM PREDICTABLE PIPELINES TO COMPETITIVE HIRING MARKETS

## ➤ Shift to Competitive Hiring Markets

- Higher education faces longer time-to-fill and increased offer declines due to competition with private-sector employers.

## ➤ Impact of Remote Work

- Remote work removes geographic barriers, allowing candidates to consider jobs beyond their local market.

## ➤ Need for Proactive Recruitment

- HR teams must use proactive sourcing and streamline processes to attract and retain top talent.

## ➤ Candidate Expectations

- Top candidates expect timely responses, clear expectations, and compelling recruitment narratives.



# HOW PAY TRANSPARENCY AND MARKET FORCES ARE RESHAPING COMPENSATION

## ➤ Impact of Pay Transparency

- Pay transparency laws require salary disclosures, changing candidate expectations and internal equity discussions.

## ➤ Market Competition Effects

- Salary compression arises as new hires earn salaries comparable to long-tenured employees, challenging budget controls.

## ➤ Strategic HR Responses

- HR teams increase market benchmarking and emphasize total rewards including benefits and flexibility.

## ➤ Balancing Transparency and Trust

- Transparency exposes legacy pay inconsistencies that must be addressed to maintain employee trust.



# WHAT EMPLOYEES EXPECT FROM HIGHER EDUCATION EMPLOYERS TODAY



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## ➤ Flexibility as Baseline Expectation

- Flexibility has become essential, especially for remote and hybrid roles, shaping modern employee work preferences.

## ➤ Career Growth Opportunities

- Employees prioritize clear advancement paths, skill development, and opportunities for internal mobility within institutions.

## ➤ Work-Life Balance and Wellbeing

- Work-life balance and wellbeing are central; managing burnout and workload is key to engagement and retention.

## ➤ Transparency and Communication

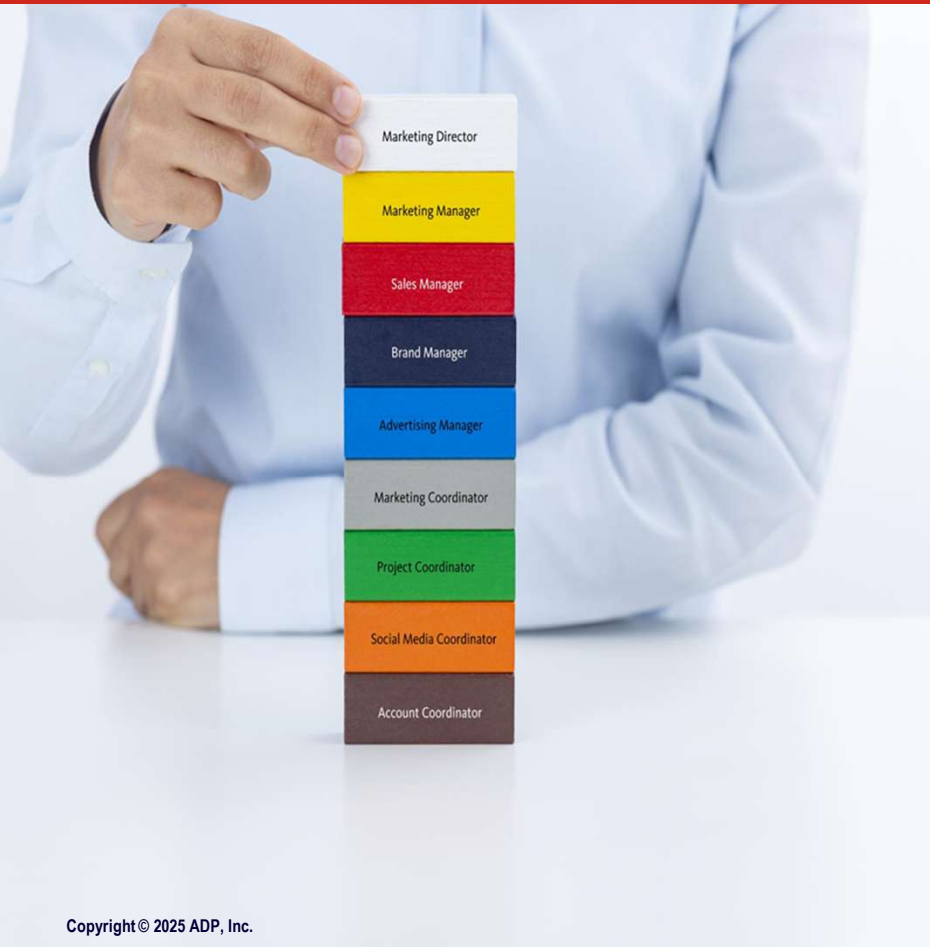
- Employees expect transparency, consistent communication, and alignment of values with daily institutional practices.

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# A MATURITY MODEL FOR TALENT STRATEGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION



## ➤ Reactive Talent Management

- Institutions relying on traditional processes face slower hiring, higher turnover, and staff strain due to limited data and rigid structures.

## ➤ Adapting Institutions

- These institutions implement hybrid work, market benchmarking, and track basic HR metrics for moderate talent improvements.

## ➤ Strategic Talent Management

- Proactive use of data, flexible roles, employer branding, and employee development optimize talent outcomes and HR alignment.

## ➤ Maturity Model Benefits

- Understanding maturity levels helps prioritize initiatives and better communicate change needs to leadership.

# WHY CANDIDATES CHOOSE ONE INSTITUTION OVER ANOTHER



## ➤ Key Candidate Decision Drivers

- Candidates prioritize hiring speed, career growth clarity, compensation transparency, and overall experience when selecting institutions.

## ➤ Importance of Employee Value Proposition

- Clear value propositions emphasizing impact, development, and support attract stronger candidates and improve recruitment outcomes.

## ➤ Recruitment as a Strategic Function

- Collaborative, adaptive recruitment strategies between HR and hiring managers enhance offer acceptance and talent pipelines.

# DESIGNING A CANDIDATE-CENTERED HIRING EXPERIENCE



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## ➤ Streamlined Recruitment Process

- Establish clear timelines, reduce interview rounds, and maintain consistent communication to enhance candidate experience.

## ➤ Candidate-Centric Approach

- Focus recruitment on external perception and employer brand, emphasizing every interaction's impact on candidates.

## ➤ Hiring Manager Training

- Train hiring managers as recruiters to improve interpersonal interactions crucial to candidate decisions.

## ➤ Data-Driven Improvements

- Use recruitment data to identify bottlenecks, drop-offs, and reasons for offer declines to optimize hiring.

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# BUILDING AN AUTHENTIC AND COMPELLING EMPLOYER BRAND



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## ➤ Focus on Employee Experience

- Careers pages should highlight growth opportunities, culture, and employee impact beyond marketing messages.

## ➤ Transparency Builds Trust

- Clear communication of salary, benefits, and work arrangements helps candidates self-select effectively.

## ➤ Authentic Employer Messaging

- Employer branding must align with internal realities to maintain credibility and attract committed candidates.

## ➤ Use of Employee Testimonials

- Sharing day-in-the-life stories and values makes the organization relatable and credible to job seekers.

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# HOW HIGHER EDUCATION IS ADAPTING TO REMOTE AND HYBRID WORK

## ➤ Flexible Work Models

- Institutions use various approaches including fully on-site, hybrid policies, and role-based flexibility to meet diverse needs.

## ➤ Clarity and Consistency

- Clear policies define on-campus presence, core hours, and performance expectations to build trust and equity.

## ➤ Support for Wellbeing

- Flexibility reduces commute stress and enhances mental health and work-life balance for staff and faculty.

## ➤ Tools and Training

- Investing in manager training, collaboration tools, and outcome-based management improves engagement and accountability.



# RESPONDING TO THE EXPECTATIONS OF EARLY-CAREER EMPLOYEES

## Gen Z Career Expectations

- Gen Z values rapid skill growth, frequent feedback, and transparent communication in their careers.



## Mismatch with Traditional Structures

- Slow promotion timelines and rigid hierarchies often clash with Gen Z's desire for visible progress and impact.



## Engagement Strategies

- Structured onboarding, mentorship, clear career pathways, and regular check-ins enhance early-career employee engagement.



# SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE WELLBEING THROUGH BENEFITS AND CULTURE

## ➤ Expanded Mental Health Benefits

- Institutions have enhanced mental health benefits with EAPs, wellness days, and virtual therapy for better support access.

## ➤ Preventative Strategies

- Leading organizations emphasize workload management, manager training, and open burnout conversations to prevent stress.

## ➤ Cultural Acceptance Challenges

- Awareness and utilization of benefits face barriers due to stigma and lack of managerial support for mental health.

## ➤ Holistic Wellbeing Approach

- Aligning benefits with culture and leadership modeling healthy behaviors sustains engagement and retention effectively.



# TOOLS FOR ENGAGEMENT, RETENTION, AND CAREER GROWTH

## ➤ Real-Time Engagement Insights

- Engagement platforms and pulse surveys provide immediate insights into employee sentiment and burnout risk for timely action.

## ➤ Retention Analytics

- HRIS platforms analyze turnover patterns and early-tenure risks to support proactive retention strategies.

## ➤ Learning and Career Development

- Learning management systems and career path tools enable continuous upskilling and internal mobility visibility.

## ➤ Succession Planning

- Succession planning tools prepare institutions for leadership transitions and knowledge preservation.



# WHAT HR LEADERS SHOULD PRIORITIZE MOVING FORWARD

## ➤ Strategic Talent Attraction

- Focus on recruitment, employer branding, and early-career engagement to attract top talent in a competitive labor market.

## ➤ Employee Retention Focus

- Prioritize wellbeing, career development, and internal mobility to retain and engage employees long-term.

## ➤ HR Technology Integration

- Leverage HR technology tools effectively through integration, adoption, and alignment with organizational culture.

## ➤ Focused High-Impact Changes

- Implement select high-impact initiatives aligned with goals and workforce needs rather than many scattered efforts.





# QUESTIONS?

THANK  
YOU.

