



DONALD AND BARBARA
ZUCKER SCHOOL of MEDICINE
AT HOFSTRA/NORTHWELL®

StandPoint—Survey Strategic Recommendations Report

STAFF RETENTION, CAREER ADVANCEMENT, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The StandPoint—Working Group has identified critical challenges in staff retention, career advancement, and professional development based on comprehensive survey feedback and extensive working group discussions. Our analysis reveals that employees feel overworked, undercompensated, and lack clear pathways for growth. This report presents five strategic recommendations designed to transform the Zucker School of Medicine into an employer of choice in academic medicine:

1. **Implement Transparent Compensation and Benefits Strategy** - Address cost-of-living concerns through salary audits and enhanced transparency
2. **Establish a Clear and Transparent Career Advancement Framework** - Create visible promotion pathways with defined criteria and timelines
3. **Launch Comprehensive Professional Development Program** - Invest in staff growth through dedicated funding and training opportunities
4. **Optimize Workload Management and Staffing** - Conduct departmental audits to ensure appropriate staffing levels
5. **Build a Culture of Recognition and Appreciation** - Develop multi-tiered recognition programs beyond annual awards

These recommendations focus on creating sustainable change through a phased implementation approach, prioritizing quick wins while building toward comprehensive transformation of our workplace culture.

II. BACKGROUND & PROBLEM STATEMENT

The AAMC StandPoint—Survey revealed significant dissatisfaction among the 77% of ZSOM administrators, faculty and staff who participated in the survey regarding workplace conditions and culture. Key findings indicate:

- **38%** are actively considering leaving within the next two years
- **45%** of staff report inadequate compensation relative to Long Island's cost of living
- **52%** of employees feel stuck in their roles without clear advancement opportunities
- **Over 60%** report excessive workload and burnout symptoms

Qualitative feedback consistently highlighted themes of:

- Salary not keeping pace with inflation
- Doing the work of 2-3 staff members
- Lack of transparency in promotion processes
- Limited professional development resources
- Insufficient recognition for contributions

These challenges directly impact our ability to deliver excellence in medical education, maintain operational continuity and build a dynamic community. Without immediate action, we risk losing institutional knowledge and compromising our mission.

III. KEY FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

Root Causes Identified:

1. **Compensation Disparities:** Salaries have not been benchmarked against peer institutions or adjusted for regional cost of living, creating retention challenges.
 2. **Opaque Advancement Processes:** Lack of written promotion criteria and inconsistent application of advancement opportunities create perceived favoritism.
 3. **Workload Imbalances:** No systematic assessment of departmental staffing needs relative to actual workload, leading to burnout.
 4. **Limited Investment in Growth:** Minimal budget allocation for professional development signals a lack of commitment to staff advancement.
 5. **Cultural Gaps:** Absence of regular recognition and appreciation mechanisms beyond annual awards diminishes morale.
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IV. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement Transparent Compensation and Benefits Strategy

Rationale: Staff cannot afford to live where they work, with raises consistently below inflation rates. Multiple survey respondents cited "rising cost of living on Long Island when raises are not keeping up with inflation."

Proposed Action Steps:

- Conduct a comprehensive salary audit comparing ZSOM positions to regional medical schools
- Establish minimum annual cost-of-living adjustments tied to regional CPI
- Create publicly accessible salary ranges for all position titles
- Encourage staff members to review health insurance options and work with Hofstra University Human Resources, and related partners, to optimize coverage that fits their needs.

Stakeholders: Hofstra Human Resources, Office of Financial Affairs, SOM HR

Estimated Resources Needed:

- HR analyst time for ongoing monitoring
- Budget reallocation for salary adjustments

2. Establish a Clear and Transparent Career Advancement Framework

Rationale: Employees lack visibility into promotion opportunities and requirements for advancement. Staff report feeling "stagnant and unsupported" with "no clear pathways for career advancement."

Proposed Action Steps:

- Develop written career ladders for all position families
- Create a promotion criteria matrix with specific competencies and achievements
- Establish a "Career Coaching" network for junior staff members, creating a mentorship system and an informal "coaching" relationship
- Institute career planning meetings between supervisors and staff as part of the semi-annual and annual review processes
- Explore if there is an opportunity for off-cycle promotions beyond the annual cycle
 - Communicate a clear, transparent promotion process and timeline of when promotions occur. Explain that outliers to the typical promotion timeline can occur because of opportunities and organizational changes.

Stakeholders: Supervisors, SOM HR, Learning & Organizational Development Specialist

Estimated Resources Needed:

- Staff time for framework development
- Training resources for career coaching
- Potential budget flexibility for promotions
- ZSOM Connect

3. Launch Comprehensive Professional Development Program

Rationale: Current offerings are insufficient to support staff growth and skill development. Staff request "more opportunities and funding to attend professional development and networking events."

Proposed Action Steps:

- Allocate a dedicated annual professional development fund per employee
- Create an internal "Lunch & Learn" series leveraging staff expertise, supported by the Community Engagement Planning Committee
- Survey the ZSOM community to learn what professional development topics are of interest
- Continue offering professional development sessions, either new or evergreen (ones we have already hosted but are of continuing relevance), to

faculty and staff, supported by the Community Engagement Planning Committee

- Launch a comprehensive Leadership Academy or professional development series for leadership and career development
- Provide access to online learning platforms (LinkedIn Learning/Coursera) or leverage off any offerings already provided by Hofstra University and Northwell Health

Stakeholders: Community Engagement Planning Committee, Learning & Organizational Development Specialist, Department of Financial Affairs

Estimated Resources Needed:

- New budget allocation for professional development
- Online platform subscription
- Program coordination support

4. Optimize Workload Management and Staffing

Rationale: Chronic understaffing leads to burnout and turnover. Multiple staff report "doing the work of 2-3 people" with "insufficient staffing causing burnout."

Proposed Action Steps:

- Encourage/Require departments to conduct departmental workload audits using a standardized assessment tool
- Provide options for a project management system to increase organization and work distribution
- Have departmental establish "no meeting" blocks for focused work time
- Create a business case template for additional staffing requests

Stakeholders: Department Supervisors, Operations, Office of Financial Affairs

Estimated Resources Needed:

- Workload assessment tools/software
- Potential additional staffing based on audit findings
- Manager training time

5. Build a Culture of Recognition and Appreciation

Rationale: Current recognition is limited to annual awards, missing daily contributions. Staff desire "appreciation and more value placed on lower/mid-level employees."

Proposed Action Steps:

- Launch a monthly peer recognition program with tangible rewards
- Create "Recognition Corner" in Med School Minute newsletter

- Establish departmental celebration budgets
- Implement "Growth Champion" awards for professional development achievements
- Have monthly supervisor meetings, to allow all departments to feel heard, voice their concerns and share their wins, decentralizing communication and increasing overall satisfaction

Stakeholders: Office of Communications, SOM HR, Supervisors

Estimated Resources Needed:

- Recognition program budget
- Administrative support for program management

V. IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

Prioritization Framework

We recommend prioritizing initiatives based on:

1. **Quick wins** that require minimal resources but high visibility
2. **Foundation building** that enables other initiatives
3. **High-impact changes** that address the most critical pain points

Recommended Priority Sequence:

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES (Months 1-3: January - March 2026) *Low resource requirement, high visibility*

- Launch a monthly recognition program
- Establish "no meeting" time blocks
- Begin career planning conversations with staff as part of the Mid-Year Review Process
- Communicate commitment to addressing survey concerns

SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES (Months 4-6: April - June 2026) *Foundation building for larger initiatives*

- Develop career ladder documentation
- Conduct a salary benchmarking study
- Design a professional development program structure
- Initiate departmental workload assessments

MEDIUM-TERM PRIORITIES (Months 7-9: July - September 2026) *Resource-intensive but high-impact*

- Implement salary adjustments based on audit findings
- Launch professional development funding
- Roll out Leadership Academy or professional development series pilot

LONG- TERM PRIORITIES (Months 10 - 12: October - December 2026) *Sustaining and optimizing*

- Evaluate and refine all programs
- Expand successful initiatives
- Plan for Year 2 enhancements
- Establish ongoing monitoring systems

Key Dependencies:

- Budget approval for new initiatives
 - Leadership commitment and communication
 - Staff engagement and feedback
 - Systems and infrastructure development
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VI. METRICS FOR SUCCESS

Quantitative Measures:

- Employee retention rate: $\geq 15\%$ improvement within 18 months
- Professional development participation: 80 % of eligible staff
- Voluntary turnover: $< 10\%$ annually

Qualitative Indicators:

- Improved satisfaction scores in the next StandPoint—Survey, or a similar follow-up survey
- Positive feedback in stay interviews
- Increased internal applications for open positions, tracked by SOM HR
- Enhanced collaboration across departments via a follow-up survey
- Stronger sense of community and belonging via a follow-up survey

Reporting Cadence:

- Quarterly All- Hands Meetings with faculty and staff
- Annual comprehensive review by SOM HR

VII. CONCLUSION

With support from leadership and following the actionable recommendations suggested by the Staff Retention, Career Advancement and Professional Development Working Group, the ZSOM has significant potential for continuous growth and development in its community. With employees who want to stay, thrive and be part of the school's journey, who also feel valued and supported, the ZSOM will be able to continue to grow, thrive and best fulfill its mission.

Questions? Please contact the co-chairs and somstrategy@hofstra.edu. Thank you!