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powered by **MHR**

From strain to strategy:
Confronting the four workforce imperatives in higher ed

The science behind
a new world of work

Aging of tenure track faculty in higher ed

Source: CUPA-HR.org, PEW Research

Tenure-track faculty age 55+	37%
General US workforce age 55+	23%
Higher ed faculty age 65+	13%
General US workforce age 65+	6%

The campus workforce is in flux. Are you ready?

From aging faculty to seasonal surges in adjuncts, higher education HR leaders are under pressure from every direction. Tight budgets. Rising expectations. Shrinking teams. But with disruption comes an opportunity to reimagine how HR supports people, performance and purpose.

① Retain institutional knowledge before it disappears

The pressure: A wave of retirements is reshaping campus leadership. Faculty age is rising. So is turnover among administrators with years of specialized experience. Yet few institutions have succession planning structures in place to capture that knowledge before it walks out the door.

The imperative: HR teams need to build internal mobility frameworks, mentorship tracks and embedded learning pathways to future-proof leadership and keep top talent growing from within.

Where People First can help:

Built-in tools for check-ins, goal tracking and succession planning create clear development paths, while learning pathways and AI-driven recommendations empower faculty and staff to grow into future roles.

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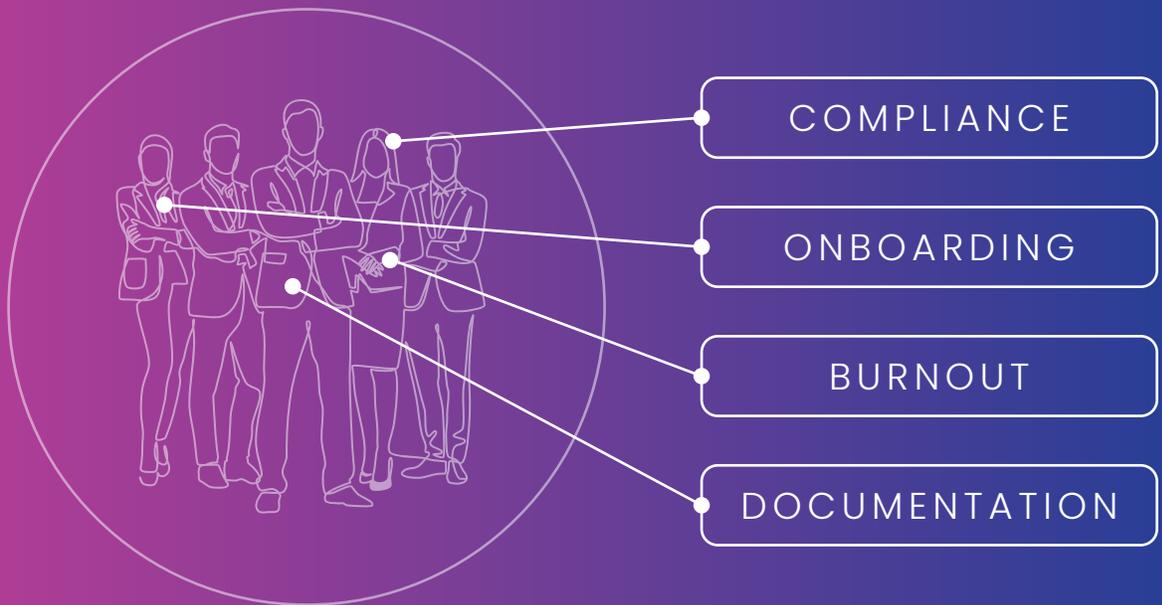
Where People First can help:

From automated onboarding workflows to sentiment analysis and check-ins, People First lightens administrative lift so HR teams can shift focus from survival to strategy.

② Give lean HR teams room to breathe

The pressure: Staff and adjunct roles remain hard to fill. Mental health strain, caregiving demands and post-pandemic burnout are driving early exits. HR teams are often too stretched to respond to workforce churn, let alone prevent it.

The imperative: HR leaders should focus on automating low-impact tasks with tools like pulse surveys, digital onboarding and workflow templates to free up bandwidth for strategic support.

Pressure points of a lean HR team

COMPLIANCE

ONBOARDING

BURNOUT

DOCUMENTATION

Where People First helps:

AI-driven recruitment features like resume parsing, blind screening and job match recommendations accelerate hiring while reducing bias — helping you secure top talent before someone else does.

③ Compete for emerging talent before the pipeline dries up

The pressure: Younger workers are rethinking academic careers. Application pools are smaller. Credentialing timelines are slow. And starting salaries often lag behind the private sector.

The imperative: Modernize your recruiting engine with faster hiring workflows, AI-powered job matching and DEI-friendly campaigns that speak to today's students and early-career candidates.

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Where People First helps:

With unified HR, payroll and compliance tools built for multi-campus, multi-role environments, People First replaces spreadsheets with clarity — and adapts to your institution's structure, not the other way around.

Structured recruitment processes significantly improve hiring outcomes

④ # Bring clarity to complex workforce structures

The pressure: Union contracts. Grant-funded roles. Multi-campus appointments. Most higher ed HR systems weren't built to handle this much complexity, and spreadsheets can't scale with changing regulations.

The imperative: Consolidate disparate HR systems to unify payroll, contracts, compliance and performance in one flexible interface.

What this means for higher ed HR leaders

You're expected to both navigate disruption and lead through it. The institutions that thrive will be the ones that simplify complexity, embrace new tools and lead with empathy and insight.

Where People First fits in

People First, powered by MHR, helps higher education HR teams modernize without losing what makes them human.

From streamlined hiring to automated compliance, the platform adapts to your workflows and scales with your needs — so your team can focus on supporting people, not pushing paper.

Ready to see how People First can transform campus HR operations?

Explore more ways to build resilience, streamline operations and future-proof your HR strategy.

Download the full eBook

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Reinventing HR

How top leaders are addressing disruption with human-centered strategies

The science behind a new world of work

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About MHR

MHR has been driving innovation across the HRIS space for over 40 years. We don't just meet the industry standard, we exceed it. Engineered by the latest SaaS technology, our product, People First enables increased employee productivity and organizational growth with a demonstratable return on investment.

People First is guided by what our customers and the market demand in a rapidly changing world.

info@mhrglobal.com | mhrglobal.com | +1 (470) 890 6170 (US) | +44 (0) 115 945 6000 (UK) | +353 (01) 541 3778 (IRE)