

# 105 TACTICS

## to Improve Employee Engagement

Tactic numbers highlighted in teal signal EAB's recommendations of ideas to consider first.

Higher education institutions are confronting high rates of employee turnover and disengagement. To help leaders understand a range of options to improve morale, **this infographic provides 105 different tactics to increase employee engagement.** Each tactic is rated on how many employees it may impact and how resource-intensive it is. Impact is measured on a four-point scale and resource intensity is measured on a three-point scale. Leaders can use this resource to explore the full range of engagement strategies and decide the subset that is right for their campus.

### Not Sure Where to Start? Ask Your Employees

Soliciting employee feedback is an important exercise in a normal operating environment. It is even more critical in moments of low morale and engagement. To help leaders prioritize where to invest, consider different methods of gathering employee feedback. Use **surveys, focus groups, stay interviews, exit interviews, one-off conversations,** and other venues to gather intel on the biggest pain points employees feel and the tactics they would value.

Ultimately, EAB recommends institutions pursue a mix of quick wins (e.g., half-day Fridays for the summer months) and systemic changes (e.g., greater employee control over flexible work arrangements).

Compensation-Centered Recognition		Scale of Impact	Resource Intensity
1	Grant one-time bonus to all staff for specific purpose (e.g., home office setup grant)	4	1
2	Implement spot bonuses to staff exhibiting specific behaviors (e.g., when they achieve specific performance metric)	4	1
3	Allocate stipends to salaried employees working extra hours (e.g., supporting software implementation)	4	1
4	Redistribute annual bonus allocation so that high-performing employees get larger share	4	1
5	Offer retention bonuses to retain key staff	4	1
6	Provide stipend (or PTO/flex time) for employees dedicating substantial time to campus activities (e.g., serving on committee, leading employee resource group)	4	1
7	Provide cost-of-living salary adjustment	4	1
Flexible Work Arrangements		Scale of Impact	Resource Intensity
8	Establish reduced hours during off-peak periods (e.g., half-day Fridays in spring/summer)	4	1
9	Sanction work-from-home days for entire unit or campus	4	1
10	Enable staff to select working hours within contracted hours	4	1
11	Lower requirements for staff to apply for remote employment (e.g., reduce radius from campus for employees to be considered remote)	4	1
12	Allow staff to write personalized flexible work agreements to account for individual differences in schedules	4	1
13	Condense work week into four 10-hour days for certain roles, teams, or departments	4	1
PTO Policies		Scale of Impact	Resource Intensity
14	Increase amount of PTO that employees can roll over to next year	4	1
15	Allow staff to take sick leave on an hourly basis to cover appointments, including physical therapy or mental health therapy	4	1
16	Establish unit-wide mental health days so staff take a free PTO day at the same time, particularly to extend long weekends (e.g., Memorial Day weekend)	4	1
17	Encourage staff to use PTO via automatic email reminders and by coaching managers to check in on PTO utilization plans	4	1
18	Grant degree-seeking staff time off on class or exam days	4	1
19	Create PTO donation program where employees donate earned, unused PTO to central "bank" of days	4	1
20	Supplement additional days for bereavement	4	1
21	Buy back unused PTO at end of fiscal year	4	1
22	Authorize employees to apply for a sabbatical after achieving certain time in seat (e.g., five years)	4	1
23	Partner with international studies programs to offer staff low-cost vacations	4	1
24	Permit use of sick leave to serve as caregiver to another person	4	1
25	Allow staff to participate in volunteer and campus activities (e.g., staff senate) during working hours	4	1
26	Offer additional PTO days (e.g., up to three additional PTO days) based on number of volunteer/service hours performed	4	1
27	Permit up to 5 hours per month of flex time for staff to address physical, mental, and/or emotional wellness activities	4	1
28	Supplement federal/bank holidays (or replace 1-2 federal/bank holidays) with floating holidays to provide employees more flexibility to observe holidays of their choice	4	1
Professional Development for Employees		Scale of Impact	Resource Intensity
29	Establish a mentorship program, either role/identity-based or institution-wide, and offer it on annual basis	4	1
30	Develop personalized professional development pathways and plans	4	1
31	Set aside work hours so all employees can work on individualized professional development activities	4	1
32	Develop shadowing programs targeted toward early-career employees and student-workers	4	1
33	Create cross-training opportunities for employees to get hands-on experience in new areas	4	1
34	Facilitate creation of staff communities of practice for employees with shared professional interests (e.g., web development)	4	1
35	Facilitate creation of staff affinity-based resource groups (e.g., groups for BIPOC, LGBTQ+ staff) by providing space to host groups and setting aside funding for food and speakers	4	1
36	Invest in internal fellowships and rotation-based programs for staff to explore alternative roles	4	1
37	Pay for or reimburse staff to attain industry certifications and/or attend professional development opportunities	4	1
38	Create internal marketplace to match staff with temporary upskilling "gig" opportunities	4	1
39	Create a self-service resource hub where staff can explore skills and roles to inform their own career pathing	4	1
Manager Training and Upskilling		Scale of Impact	Resource Intensity
40	Require managers to take "Management 101" session upon promotion to management position	4	1
41	Train managers to be more supportive of direct reports' well-being (e.g., checking in more frequently, permitting time off for mental health breaks)	4	1
42	Host a manager book club to encourage reflection on what constitutes strong leadership through discussion of literature	4	1
43	Help managers apply for leadership development institutes and cover tuition and associated costs	4	1
44	Sponsor high-performing managers to participate in one-on-one executive coaching	4	1
45	Develop department-specific management training that reflects employee needs in that division and require managers to attend	4	1
46	Create leadership development programs for specific employee groups (e.g., women in leadership, early-career managers, BIPOC leaders)	4	1
47	Encourage managers to hold recurring stand-up meetings to build and reinforce connections with direct reports	4	1
Performance Reviews		Scale of Impact	Resource Intensity
48	Ensure supervisors engage in regular (at least annual) professional development conversations with staff	4	1
49	Ensure that performance reviews are based on specific, measurable competencies with a direct tie to compensation increases	4	1
50	Incorporate peer and direct report feedback in performance reviews for a more holistic assessment of performance	4	1
51	Train and require managers to use inclusive language in performance reviews	4	1
Welcoming Working Culture		Scale of Impact	Resource Intensity
52	Conduct exit interviews when staff leave to diagnose opportunities for future improvement and engagement strategies	4	1
53	Block or limit work communications during a determined time frame (e.g., after contract hours)	4	1
54	Conduct regular "stay" interviews to individualize career counseling and develop an engagement plan	4	1
55	Provide online/anonymous forms for staff at all levels to comment on proposed institutional policies	4	1
56	Empower staff and adjunct/part-time faculty to participate in research opportunities on and off campus	4	1
57	Celebrate staff accomplishments and create public displays of staff successes (e.g., weekly emails, break room posters)	4	1
58	Assess and refresh staff technology on a more regular basis	4	1
59	Create an employee recognition program that rewards staff accomplishments with gift cards, meals, bonuses, special events, etc.	4	1
60	Bring virtual employees to campus at regular intervals to connect with staff, campus, and community	4	1
61	Create a template for meeting agenda and structure to ensure time is used productively and meeting is inclusive (e.g., give everyone a chance to speak, assign a note-taker rather than asking for volunteer)	4	1
62	Sponsor monthly department breakfasts or lunches or dinner for second/third shift staff	4	1
63	Deploy regular employee engagement surveys and focus groups through multiple channels and report back on trends and next steps on an ongoing basis	4	1
64	Ensure staff outreach, including institution announcements and engagement surveys, are offered in multiple languages and formats (e.g., paper form for employees without regular computer access)	4	1
65	Introduce communication channels focused on non-work-related content (e.g., Slack pet photo channels)	4	1
66	Introduce regular (at least annual) meetings where executives communicate long-term vision and highlight workplace engagement efforts; provide recording for attendees who cannot attend live	4	1
67	Circulate a weekly department-wide newsletter for locally relevant updates like shadowing opportunities, upcoming trainings, and events	4	1
68	Embrace a casual dress code at work, either permanently or on specific days (e.g., Casual Fridays, School Pride days)	4	1
Employee Perks and Fringe Benefits		Scale of Impact	Resource Intensity
69	Allow employees to enroll in discounted on-campus meal plans	4	1
70	Partner with an employee rewards and discount program	4	1
71	Partner with financial institutions to provide financial wellness/planning education and training	4	1
72	Sponsor in-person and virtual wellness activities such as yoga or pilates	4	1
73	Partner with gyms to offer gym credit/memberships	4	1
74	Partner with insurance companies to offer subsidized or fully covered pet insurance	4	1
75	Offer or increase relocation benefit amounts	4	1
76	Engage with credit-monitoring services to offer identity theft protection	4	1
77	Provide housing/home loan assistance	4	1
78	Provide staff and eligible family members free or discounted tuition at institution and/or other institutions participating in tuition exchange program	4	1
79	Offer priority parking for 100% in-person staff	4	1
80	Develop program or partner with vendor to provide student loan repayment assistance and support	4	1
81	Partner with mental health providers to offer 24/7 access to virtual mental health/wellness resources	4	1
82	Award monthly wellness stipend to support investment in health and wellness activities	4	1
83	Grant emergency funds to support unexpected financial losses from accidents, deaths, or illness	4	1
84	Match staff charitable donations	4	1
85	Negotiate rates with mobile carriers to provide discounts on personal device plans	4	1
86	Reduce, cap, or eliminate parking fees	4	1
87	Offer gas stipends	4	1
88	Subsidize commuting costs via public transportation	4	1
Family-Centric Benefits		Scale of Impact	Resource Intensity
89	Develop "phase back to work" program for parents returning from leave (e.g., employee works 50% of work week for 100% of pay in the first week)	4	1
90	Provide access to predetermined amount of emergency backup care via service (e.g., Care.com)	4	1
91	Subsidize on- and off-campus childcare options	4	1
92	Supply family planning/fertility benefits	4	1
93	Expand paid parental leave for non-birthing parents	4	1
94	Grant adoption assistance	4	1
95	Offer drop-in childcare on days the institution is open but district schools are closed	4	1
96	Offer a stipend to cover costs of childcare, after-school programs, and summer camps	4	1
97	Extend length of paid parental leave	4	1
Health Benefits		Scale of Impact	Resource Intensity
98	Provide gender-affirming care for trans faculty and staff	4	1
99	Provide health benefits for part-time faculty and staff	4	1
100	Lower cost of life insurance and disability coverage	4	1
101	Lower employee contributions to healthcare	4	1
102	Reduce deductibles and copays	4	1
103	Decrease out-of-pocket maximum	4	1
104	Lower premiums for dependent/family coverage	4	1
105	Increase contributions to employer-sponsored retirement plans	4	1