The Impact of Mental and Physical Health on Productivity and Performance: An Analysis for UCCS Faculty and Staff

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PURPOSE

The CU system and UCCS strategic plans include campus community wellness directives to address well-being needs of students, staff and faculty. The UCCS Wellness Advisory Committee is leading efforts to meet strategic plan goals. This project is an initial step toward assessing UCCS employee needs and making recommendations to campus leadership.

Research Question: How does the perceived health of faculty and staff impact perceptions of work productivity and performance?

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Stress, physical health, mental health, and organizational commitment influence performance of employees in higher education (Jacobs et al., 2007).
- Anxiety is significantly associated with presenteeism among state employees (Laing & Jones, 2016).
- Poor sleep quality and duration contribute to reduced on-the-job productivity (Guertier et al., 2015).
- Positive coping skills are correlated with lower anxiety and higher job satisfaction among university employees (Mark & Smith, 2012).

METHODS

- The American College Health Association – National Staff and Faculty Health Assessment (ACHA-NFSHA) survey was distributed to UCCS faculty and staff.
- Descriptive statistical analysis was applied to data separated by employee type to determine which health issues have the greatest impact on productivity and performance for staff and faculty: anxiety, depression, sleep, headaches and illness/injury/surgery.
- Chi square test for independence was applied to determine the relationship between stress and health factors that negatively impact performance and productivity.

FINDINGS

- Anxiety and lack of quality sleep are the health issues most often experienced and having the greatest impact on productivity/performance by both faculty and staff.
- Staff reported headaches negatively impact productivity/performance more often than faculty.
- Staff and faculty report feeling overwhelmed and have difficulty coping with stress.
- COVID-19 has increased stress levels for UCCS staff and faculty.
- Chi square test for independence did not show a statistically significant relationship between employees’ experiences of stress and the health issues that negatively impact productivity/performance.

LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Study limitations:
  - One survey
  - Self-reported data / employee perceptions
  - COVID-19

- Opportunities for additional research:
  - Repeat survey and analysis
  - Objective measures of productivity/performance
  - Qualitative study

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase access to existing resources – Launch a campaign to promote the newly established mental health case manager position. Identify a sustainable funding source to support continued services which include:

❖ Individual consultations
❖ Campus outreach and education
❖ Guides to resources

Implement wellness breaks initiative – Provide structured breaks during the workday for all employees. Approved activities include evidence-based interventions for decreasing anxiety, increasing sleep quality and improving coping and resilience.

❖ Physical Activity: walking, Campus Recreation
❖ Mindfulness / Meditation: Mindful Movement Mondays, Calm app
❖ Self-care Appointments: counseling, massage therapy
❖ Mental Health Trainings: GRIT, How of Happiness

CONCLUSIONS

This capstone study:

- Provides a first step toward assessing the health and wellness needs of UCCS faculty and staff.
- Makes evidence-based, financially responsible, recommendations for UCCS leadership to meet CU and UCCS strategic plan goals and build a culture of well-being on campus.
- Adds to the current body of knowledge regarding work-place wellness on college campuses.

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