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## Letter from the Chair



One of the best aspects of living in the Midwest is experiencing the changing seasons. The cold, snow, and darkness of winter eventually give way to spring flowers, warmth, and hope. There is a beauty in seasonal change that brings hope.

Throughout my three-decade career, I have faced numerous crises. Early on, I dealt with student tragedies and intense campus interactions. I have witnessed destructive floods and tornadoes that left my campus submerged in muddy waters and torn apart by fierce winds. I have led through the financial crisis and, more recently, the pandemic.

Each of you has your own stories and leadership experiences through times of disruption. We have navigated some of the most challenging times in higher education.

As the landscape continues to evolve, we must remain innovative, flexible, and agile. We need to stay people-focused, lead through rapid changes, and pivot at a moment's notice. During the day, I focus on managing our campus response and contributing to solutions. But at night, when it's quiet, I reflect deeply.

As CHROs at AAU institutions, we lead some of the largest and most complex research universities in the U.S. and Canada. Each of us has taken a unique leadership journey, navigating disruptions throughout decades of work in higher education and HR. Now, more than ever, it's crucial to stay connected and share best practices. We have a tremendous opportunity to drive meaningful change on our campuses and learn from one another.

This year, our focus revolves around four key goals:

- **Future Visioning and Succession Planning:** Conduct visioning exercises and succession planning for ARU-HRI's future, supported by a comprehensive analysis and a detailed financial review to align with long-term objectives.
- **Strengthen Partnerships:** Enhance relationships with key stakeholder groups. Collaborate with the AAU to identify strategies that enhance our partnership and explore joint initiatives focused on the value proposition of higher education and workforce challenges.
- **Enhance Member Engagement:** Strengthen connections with members by continuing key initiatives, including:
- **CHRO Academy:** Implement a cohort engagement initiative for the 2023 and 2024 CHRO Academy graduates. Assess the feasibility of a 2025 CHRO academy.

Leadership is like the natural cycle of the seasons – it involves growth, transformation, and renewal. Just as the seasons change, leaders must navigate challenges to become stronger and more resilient.

On behalf of the ARU-HRI Board of Directors, we are committed to providing meaningful programs and sharing best practices. We value your partnership, friendship, support, and guidance as we navigate 2025 together.

**Cheryl Reardon, Chair**  
University of Iowa

### Inside this issue:

- 2 From the President
- 2 ARU-HRI CHRO Survey
- 3 Transitions
- 3 2025 Annual Conference
- 4 RTO Policy Benchmark

## From the President



Hello Members:

In the life of a CHRO, 2025 has been like no other. Your conversations with each other have demonstrated the significance of community. Whether it's been creative

ideas, effective interpretations of regulations and expectations, the search for clarity, compassion and courage, or self care in the midst of conflict, you are not alone! ARU-HRI members engage each other to chart the course forward and we have shifted priorities, activities and meetings to serve you with communication and resources.

Please be in touch with how we can be even more helpful in your commitment to be world class CHROs.

We are actively planning our annual conference for November 10-12, 2025 in Washington, DC. We appreciate the invitation to come to our nation's capital from Roxanne Murray, AAU. This is a critical time for our leaders to show up; I will see you there!

Laurita Thomas  
 President, ARU-HR Institute  
[president@aru-hrinstitute.org](mailto:president@aru-hrinstitute.org)  
 734-355-2404



## ARU-HRI CHRO SURVEY



### Org Structure and Service Delivery Model Survey

The Organizational Structure and Service Delivery Model Survey aimed to gather and share current information on HR service delivery structures. This effort seeks to help member institutions understand shared challenges and potentially inform future decisions in the evolving future of higher education HR landscape.

### ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE<sup>1</sup>

Reporting Structure Where university CHROs report		"In-Unit" HR Reporting Where HR professionals within academic and administrative units report	
52%	President, Chancellor or Equivalent	41%	Only to their department leadership
21%	EVP/C or VP/C for Finance	12%	Only to Central HR
17%	EVP/C or VP/C for Administration	23%	Dually, with primary to department leadership
10%	Elsewhere (e.g., General Counsel or Special Advisor to President)	6%	Dually, with primary to Central HR
		18%	Other (varies by unit)

Level of Centralization*			
16%	16%	32%	32%
Fully Centralized	Mostly Centralized	Partially Centralized	Mostly Decentralized

\*4% of respondents reported "other"

Academic Personnel Needs Which department handles needs of academic personnel	
72%	HR and another office on campus (not HR) share responsibility
17%	Only another office on campus (not HR) has responsibility
11%	Only HR has responsibility for academic personnel's needs

Hospital/Healthcare HR How universities with a hospital, healthcare system, or medical campus structure HR	
8%	Campus and hospital have shared HR
38%	Campus and hospital have separate HR
54%	Have some coordination and/or collaboration between the HR teams (e.g., matrixed reporting)

### TOP CHALLENGES FOR HR

- Employee Retention & Development**  
Retaining talent and developing employees, especially in the context of heavy workloads and evolving work standards
- Implementation and Transition to New Technologies**  
Transitioning to new HR systems, including the cultural and paradigm shifts associated with implementing new tech
- Budget and Resource Constraints**  
Managing shrinking budgets and limited resources while trying to meet the varying needs of the university.

### TOP PRIORITIES FOR HR

- Talent Management and Planning**  
Preparing for workforce changes, including succession planning and evolving the hybrid/remote work journey
- Adapting to Tech Advancements**  
Leveraging AI and technology to enhance HR practices and optimize process to boost efficiency and effectiveness
- Enhancing Compensation & Benefits Structures**  
Developing market-informed, competitive, and equitable compensation and rewards structures to attract and retain top talent

<sup>1</sup>Figures reported are reflective of 18 survey responses

## *Transitions*

**You will be missed, thank you for your service in ARU-HRI. Best wishes in your next venture.**

**Daniel Chanen** has left the University of Wisconsin. **Kelly Cook** will serve as Interim Associate Vice President for Human Resources, [kelly.cook@wisconsin.edu](mailto:kelly.cook@wisconsin.edu).

**Christina Brogdon** is no longer with Michigan State University. **Donna Donovan** will serve as Interim Associate Vice President for Human Resources, at [ddonovan@hr.msu.edu](mailto:ddonovan@hr.msu.edu), or to the Office of the Executive Vice President for Administration at [EVPA@msu.edu](mailto:EVPA@msu.edu).

**Kim Ryan** has retired from her position as Vice President for Human Resources at Tufts University. She is still with the university but in a different part time role. **Bill Murphy** ([William\\_J.Murphy@tufts.edu](mailto:William_J.Murphy@tufts.edu)) is the new Vice President of Human Resources.

Rice University has a new CHRO:  
**Sandee Cheynet**  
[sc328@rice.edu](mailto:sc328@rice.edu)  
(713) 348-4070

**Roger Cude** will no longer be in his role at The University of Texas at Austin. We have an Interim AVP of Human Resources, **Tony Hunt** at [tony.hunt@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:tony.hunt@austin.utexas.edu).

**Keith Sonderling**, EEOC Commissioner, has been invited to the National Conference and will present an exclusive, "inside the beltway" update on priorities and initiatives to expect in the coming year.



## 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

# SAVE THE DATE

# NOVEMBER 10-12

## Washington, D.C.



*The most valuable asset at a business conference is not the information shared, but the connections made and the new perspectives gained.*



# RTO POLICY BENCHMARK

(AS OF MARCH 8, 2025)

## **Michigan State University** – *Christina Brogdon, CHRO*

CURRENT RTO POLICY: [https://hr.msu.edu/remote\\_work/index.html](https://hr.msu.edu/remote_work/index.html)

CHANGE(S) IMPLEMENTED TO RTO POLICY: 2022

YEAR OF IMPLEMENTED CHANGE(S) TO RTO POLICY: 2022

CHANGE(S) CONSIDERED TO RTO POLICY: No

YEAR OF CONSIDERED CHANGE(S) TO RTO POLICY: N/A

## **Stony Brook University** – *Jennifer Donnelly, CHRO*

CURRENT RTO POLICY: General guideline is hybrid work at 50% per pay period where operationally feasible. For our nonunion employees at the manager level the practice varies by area.

CHANGE(S) IMPLEMENTED TO RTO POLICY: No changes have been made to our policy.

YEAR OF IMPLEMENTED CHANGE(S) TO RTO POLICY: N/A

CHANGE(S) CONSIDERED TO RTO POLICY: We are not considering changes, however our standard policy is largely governed by our collective bargaining agreements and decided at the state level.

YEAR OF CONSIDERED CHANGE(S) TO RTO POLICY: The current program expires in June 2025 but it is anticipated that it will be renewed by the state. Longer-term RTO policy will likely be a subject of union negotiations starting in spring 2026.

## **University of Texas at Austin** – *Roger Cude, CHRO*

CURRENT RTO POLICY: Y (via Presidential directive):

- Staff Work Arrangements
- Staff Work Arrangement Review and Approval Process
- Staff Work Arrangement Conditions
- Out of State and International Work
- Frequently Asked Questions – FWA
- Resources – FWA

YEAR OF IMPLEMENTED CHANGE(S) TO RTO POLICY: 2024 - New policy

CHANGE(S) CONSIDERED TO RTO POLICY: New policy / this guidance existed in pieces and there was no clear guidance in regards to eligibility for remote/hybrid work and 100% on-site expectations.

YEAR OF CONSIDERED CHANGE(S) TO RTO POLICY: 2024

## **Washington University in St Louis** – *Apryle Gladne, CHRO*

CURRENT RTO POLICY: Policy on return to office varies by department and function.  
<https://hr.wustl.edu/items/flexible-work-arrangement-policy/>

CHANGE(S) IMPLEMENTED TO RTO POLICY: Varies by area and function. Eg, clinical areas are on-site, many administrative functions remain remote or hybrid.

YEAR OF IMPLEMENTED CHANGE(S) TO RTO POLICY: 2021

CHANGE(S) CONSIDERED TO RTO POLICY: Policy under ongoing review

YEAR OF CONSIDERED CHANGE(S) TO RTO POLICY: TBD

