IOWA | Human Resources

2026 YEAR IN REVIEW

UI Strategic Plan: Staff Success SPARC (Strategic Plan Action and Resource Committee)

Our goal is to support people throughout their time at the university by attracting and retaining talented faculty and staff and making it easier to hire, engage, and retain them – advancing Iowa's academic, clinical, and research missions.

- **Modernized the university's retirement plans** by simplifying investment options, lowering participant fees, and introducing customized target-date portfolios and new investment features. The initiative transitioned more than 44,000 accounts, enhanced the retirement experience for participants, earned first-place recognition at the 2026 Pensions & Investments Eddy Awards, and generated an estimated $5.3 million in annual participant fee savings.
- Enhanced the **employee onboarding experience** by launching a Supervisor Toolbox with hiring and onboarding guides and expanding onboarding resources for new hires. Since July 1, the onboarding website has received more than 8,500 visits, helping new employees access key resources and better understand expectations from day one.
- Expanded employee recognition programs by launching Hawkeye High-Fives, new recognition for supervisors, and department recognition tools to foster a culture of appreciation. Since launch, **employees have submitted more than 1,600 digital High-Fives,** recognition resources have received more than 6,000 webpage views, and more than 2,000 recognition cards have been distributed. Additional enhancements included a new years-of-service recognition program and automated anniversary notifications for HR representatives.
- **Grew leadership and supervisor development** through peer mentoring, targeted supervisor training, and leadership coaching. The Peer Mentor Program engaged 91 participants, while the Leadership Coaching Cohort helped Merit supervisors build confidence in key leadership competencies, including conflict management, performance conversations, and resource management.
- Expanded career development by **enhancing Career Pathways resources** that help employees explore career options, set goals, and plan their development. More than 1,800 employees engaged with the resources through Employee Self-Service, over 1,600 accessed career maps, and the My Career at Iowa website received more than 3,700 visits.
- Expanded voluntary benefits by introducing employee-paid **short-term disability insurance** to provide additional income protection during temporary illness or injury. More than 1,000 employees enrolled in the new benefit, with voluntary pet insurance planned as an additional option.
- Advanced recruitment marketing by selecting Radancy and beginning implementation of a **new recruitment marketing platform** that will enhance the candidate experience through improved employer branding, personalized career content, customizable job pages, and advanced analytics. The platform is scheduled to launch in FY27.

"At UI Health Care, it's the best of all worlds. Endless opportunities for career growth and education, coupled with a quality of life that can't be beat."

ASHLEY PRICE, BSN, RN, PMH-BC

"Working at the University of Iowa, I've been able to keep my family the top priority."

NICK CARINO-MAREK

"What's brought me the most fulfillment is the work I've done outside Athletics, making connections with academia and other campus departments."

TONY SENIO

Recruitment and Retention

From 2022–25, annual turnover declined by 2 percentage points across all employee groups.

- Supervisor training offered during FY26 was informed by focus group feedback and focused on strengthening trust, understanding communication and work styles, as well as employee recognition in the workplace
- The Leadership Coaching Cohort concluded in June 2026 with 10 Merit supervisors from the pilot units completing the three-month coaching program
- Requisitions per recruiter increased from 24.7 (2019) to 31.3 (2025), demonstrating improved operational efficiency
- 41.8% response rate on exit survey in FY25; key themes include: retirement, career advancement, pay, work environment
- 91 peer mentor program participants (14 mentors, 65 mentees, and 12 supervisors)
- 36.2% response rate on new hire survey in FY26

live*WELL*

- 23,322 engagements (over 13,000 unique participants) impacted by live*WELL* services (UI Wellness, UI EAP, UI Work-Life)
- 2,615 counseling sessions, supporting 1,001 people, through the UI Employee Assistance Program
- 1,223 health coaching sessions and 110 group sessions supported 668 employees
- 263 people participated in YNAB (You Need a Budget) to help improve their financial well-being
- 617 employees completed RUOK? training across the institution to help recognize when a colleague may be struggling and 183 employees completed QPR suicide prevention training
- Through UI's partnership with Sleepio, 91% of participants reported improved sleep
- 71 people utilized financial well-being services through the Hills Bank partnership
- 254 ergonomics assessments and departmental projects completed
- First university in the United States to earn a Recovery Friendly Workplace certification, recognizing commitment to support employees with substance use disorders

Development and Recognition

Career transparency supports internal mobility, reduces advancement-related turnover, and strengthens workforce planning, reflecting priorities employees have identified through data-informed processes.

- Executive Leadership Academy: 28 participants with 136 direct reports; 5 Leadership Lab Challenges
- UI LEAD: 25 participants with 53 direct reports
- PASS (Practical Applications of Supervisory Skills): Administered two sessions in FY26 with 91 participants who have 1,185 direct reports
- 20 I.O.W.A. Award winners
- Mary Jo Small awarded $32,375 in professional development to 32 employees
- More than 100 expert consultations were completed or are in progress. Compared to FY25, consultation demand shifted toward team and organizational development topics, reflecting an increased focus on supporting teams through scalable, high-impact interventions.
- 750 employees participated in Discover Your University across 50 campus tours
- 1,659 unique submissions for Hawkeye High-Fives
- 317 tuition assistance awards totaling over $576,000 granted to employees across 26 orgs

Operations

- 95,225 transactions processed by Workforce Operations, including leaves of absence, changes to employment status, special compensation, and more
- 5,000+ participants used HealthEquity FSA (Flexible Spending Account) cards for immediate payment in Q1 2026. FSA claim processing reduced from three weeks to two days.
- 42,826 W-2s processed in CY25
- 1,939 workers' compensation claims reviewed and processed
- 5,847 flexible pay awards processed
- Processed 1,704 FMLA requests from 1,196 individuals
- Processed 335 ADA requests from 264 individuals
- HR service delivery work includes: HR hub and spoke for administrative units and microtransactions
- 15,200 open enrollment elections processed by UI Benefits
- 15,500 calls answered by UI Benefits from retirees, employees, and students
- 650 employees assisted as they retired