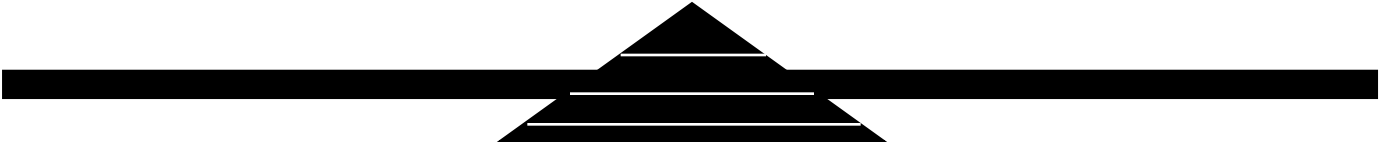


**SURVEY
OF
HUMAN RESOURCE
PRACTICES
IN
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

Human Resource Committee - PODC

1996



Preface

This study was an attempt to assess the extent of the benefits, human resource programs, and work arrangements available in the land-grant system.

Cooperative Extension Directors/Administrators were asked to have their human resource specialists complete the survey based on their experiences. There was a return rate of 80% (49 surveys were returned representing 59 of 74 land-grant institutions). Exhibit 1 indicates the percentage of institutions providing the opportunities for some or all of the Cooperative Extension employees to participate in the benefit, program, or work arrangement.

The responses to the various questions do not pretend to measure the quality or success of the benefits, programs, or work arrangements. It was hoped that as the human resource specialists completed the survey, questions would be raised in their minds about the quality, success, and the extent to which the benefits, programs, or work arrangements are offered in their institutions.

The intent of sharing the responses is not to infer that all programs should be available, but to provide an opportunity for organizations to reassess what is possible or appropriate in their institution. In some situations, the benefits, programs, and work arrangements are available but assistance is needed regarding how to utilize them more fully.

The results of this study are offered to encourage further thinking and discussion.

Work/Life Programs: In Support of Employees

Addressing work and family obligations can be very challenging. Juggling family demands, be they children, parents or extended family, can be more difficult when job pressures are present. Likewise, doing an effective job can be difficult when family pressures are present. All of us experience these pressures at one time or another and some of us at several stages of our lives. Sometimes we question if we can get through the day or week being successful at both.

Research shows that it isn't just single working women with children who are experiencing the pressures of juggling work/life. A recent study by Baruch College on the conflict of work/life (which surveyed a broad range of employees) indicated:

- nearly half of the survey respondents were experiencing some degree conflict;
- there were no gender differences;
- individuals holding a college degree and individuals with children regardless of marital status were experiencing greater levels of conflict;
- exempt employees reported significantly higher levels of conflict than non-exempt employees;
- most employees found work interfering with family more stressful than family interfering with work;
- and contrary to literature, the working women did not spend more time than men taking care of family.

Although it is the responsibility of employees to determine and adjust their priorities to help relieve or resolve the stress, employers can do much to help provide relief. In a study by Godwins Boone and Dickenson (1996) it was found that workers are most satisfied when the following needs were met in this order: 1) health care, 2) financial needs, 3) balancing work/life needs, and 4) career development needs.

The Baruch study findings indicated that levels of stress and job satisfaction were inversely related and work hours and promptness were major concerns of employees. Survey respondents reported spending an average of 51.8 hours a week working (managers averaged 58.4 hr.) and 37.2 hours a week taking care of family. Seventy-four percent (74%) believed the managers were supportive but only 37% believed their organization was supportive. Both levels of support lowered work/family life conflict, increased job satisfaction, and decreased turnover (with organizational support having a stronger impact than managerial support). So as you can see, employers can be very helpful in reducing work/life conflict. Flextime was by far most often identified as being helpful. Also mentioned were personal leave, telecommuting options, and sick leave.

Studies conducted by Towers Perrin (1995) found that work/life programs contribute significantly to: employee loyalty; employee perception that the organization is a good place to work; awareness and appreciation for the organization's programs; competitive recruiting; job satisfaction; employee productivity; and reducing absenteeism.

With these perspectives in mind, PODC set out to survey Cooperative Extension systems throughout the nation to see what is currently being offered in the work/life area and how Cooperative Extension compares with other employers. Forty-nine surveys (80%) representing 59 of the 74 land-grant colleges and universities were returned. A summary of the responses can be found in Exhibit 1. Also shown in Exhibit 1 is a comparison of other employers (large businesses) where data are available. On the whole, the land-grant colleges and universities have much to offer and are very competitive with the business world. As you review the responses, you could reflect on:

- where your college/university has made strides over the past few years;
- how your college/university compares with other land-grant colleges and universities; and
- where gains need to be made in your college/university.

This information will provide a basis for you to enlighten others in your college/university about significant trends. Note, for example, the responses on flextime. Eighty percent (80%) of the survey responses indicated that flextime options are available. Has flextime grown or does it need to be expanded in your college/university? If flextime is so key to job satisfaction what needs to be done to make it more widely accessible or used?

A recent issue of USA Today (1996) contained a graph displaying the findings of senior executives of automated workplaces. The survey revealed that more than 40% of the companies now have telecommuting (up from 27% in 1993). Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the companies expect to use it more this year. Are we utilizing telecommuting where and when it is appropriate? Can it be on an as needed basis rather than a regularized basis or on a regularized basis where appropriate? What technology, policies, and guidelines need to be in place to make telecommuting feasible?

As you review Exhibit 1, you may see other programs that will raise more questions than answers. For example, it appears that we have room to grow in the areas of flexible work schedules and employee assistance programs. How can we do more in these areas? As employers of choice, we should be raising these questions with ourselves and with others throughout the college/university. Are we participating in the right councils/committees to make a difference?

In the second part of the survey of Cooperative Extension systems, human resource professionals were asked to identify two programs/benefits/work arrangements that they thought best attracted, retained, and supported quality employees in their college or university (see Exhibit 2). This information is separately displayed for colleges/universities where 20% or more of the staff are culturally diverse (see Exhibit 3).

A review of the information summarized in the three exhibits clearly indicates the need for us to market the programs/benefits/work arrangements we so generously have available. When recruiting, we need to sell the status of being affiliated with a renowned college/university and make known the opportunities that are available through internships. We need to talk more about our flexible work/life policies. To retain quality employees, we need to discuss the educational opportunities available, our flexible work schedules, and our benefits that are extended to retirees. To best support quality employees, it is suggested that we continually keep them aware of and involved in developmental opportunities, mentoring programs, travel opportunities, team efforts, and leadership opportunities. Looking at phased retirement plans or

tapping retiree expertise can help both the individual and the organization make the transition into the employee's retirement. When we are recruiting individuals who are culturally diverse, it may serve us well to market our leadership as visionary, inclusive, and welcoming and to show how our programs and policies help support individual's needs and recognize team achievements. More importantly, our actions need to demonstrate commitment.

Making it easier for employees to be more satisfied and productive is a key part of our responsibilities. What can we, as administrators do to facilitate this? It is important for organizations and supervisors to be supportive. Many of the programs/benefits/work arrangements mentioned are ones we are already doing. It may be a matter of how we package and market these benefits. The challenge is before us. Good luck. Do keep using the HResource network to share your successes with others.

Recognition of support:

Our special thanks to Nancy Hicks (Cornell University) for her leadership of the study; to Thomas Dougherty and Mary Beth Marrs (University of Missouri) for the data summary; to Milan Rewerts (Colorado State University) and James Linquist (Kansas State University) for their review of the survey instrument; and to the members of the ECOP-PODC committee for their support and encouragement. And, last but not least, our many thanks to all of the college/university directors/administrator and staff who provided the data and the many ideas for recruiting, retaining, and support quality employees.

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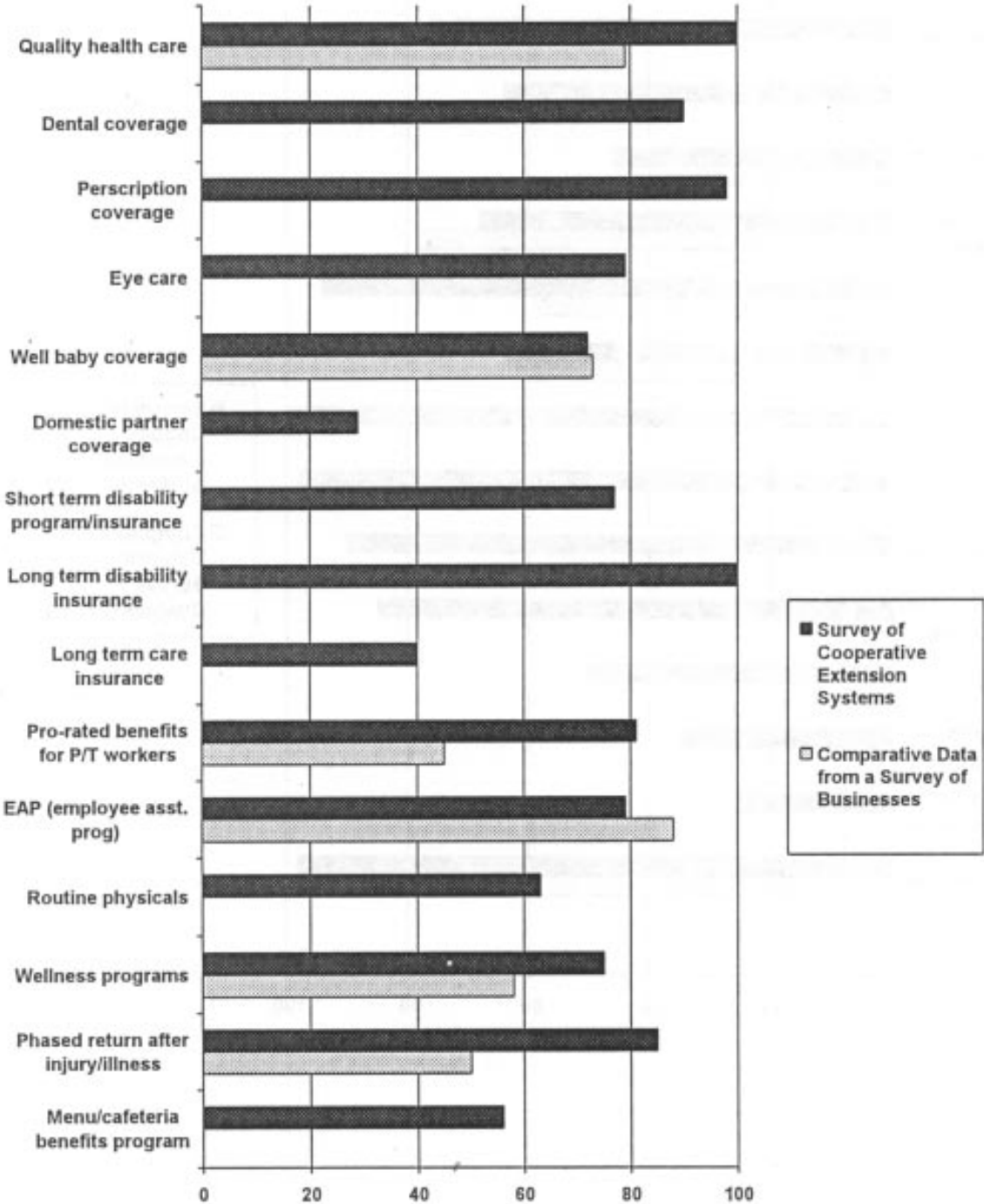
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SURVEY OF HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES IN COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Percentage of Colleges/Universities Offering Programs/Benefits/Work Arrangements to Extension Employees.

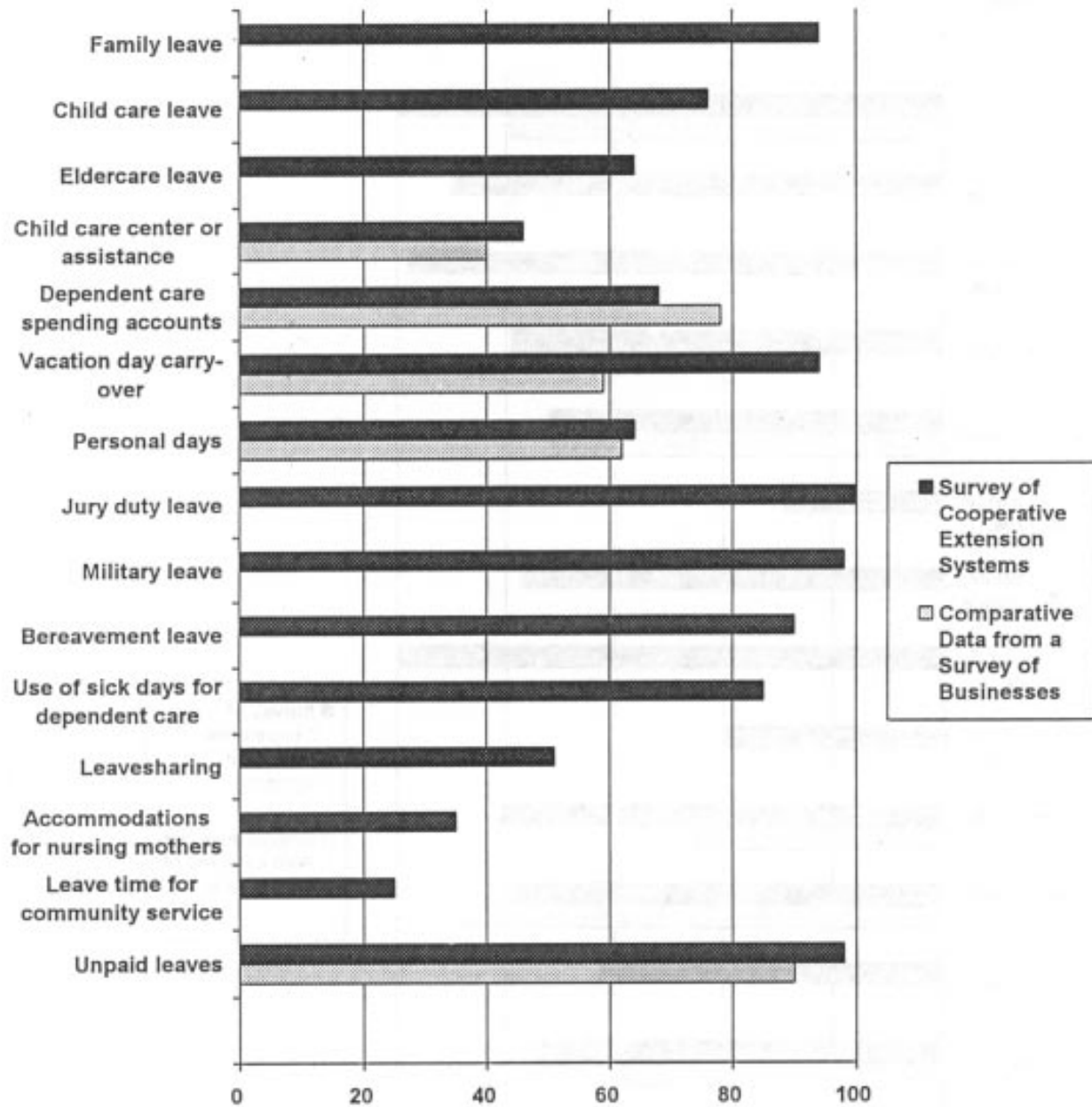
HEALTH CARE



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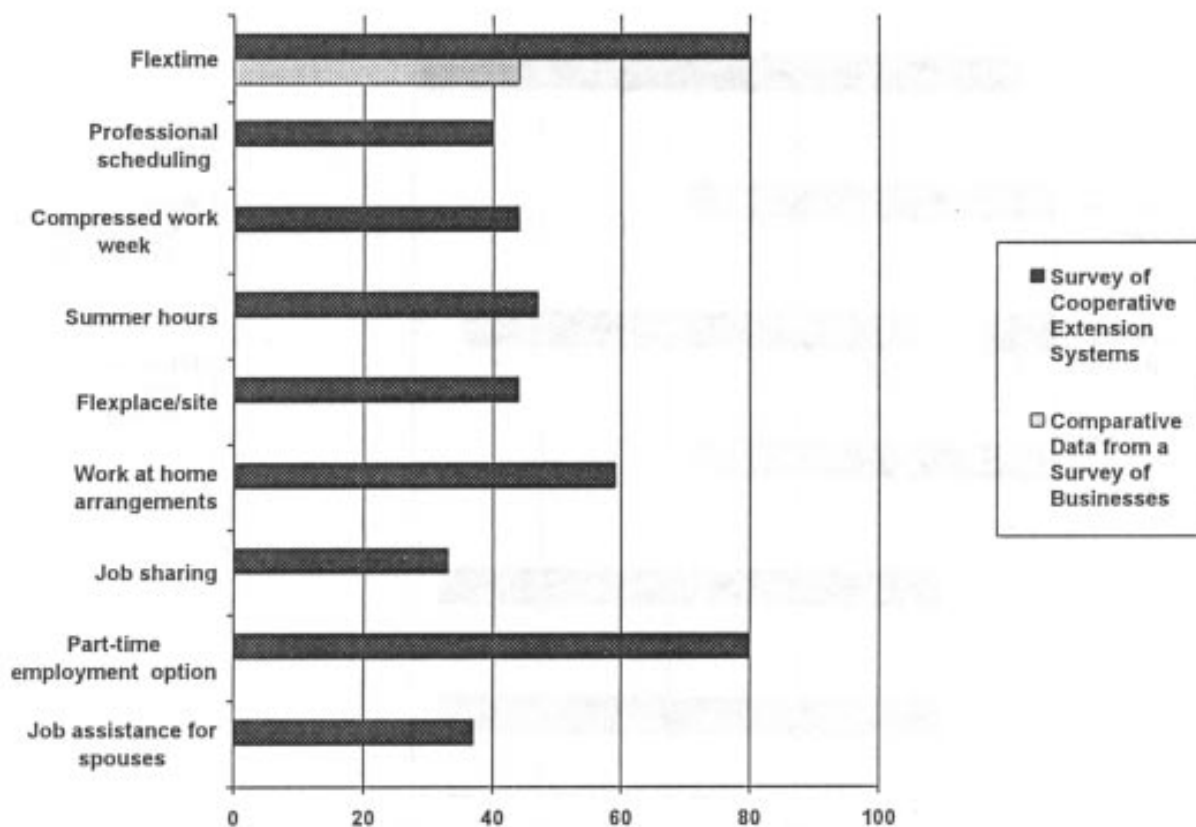
LEAVE TIME



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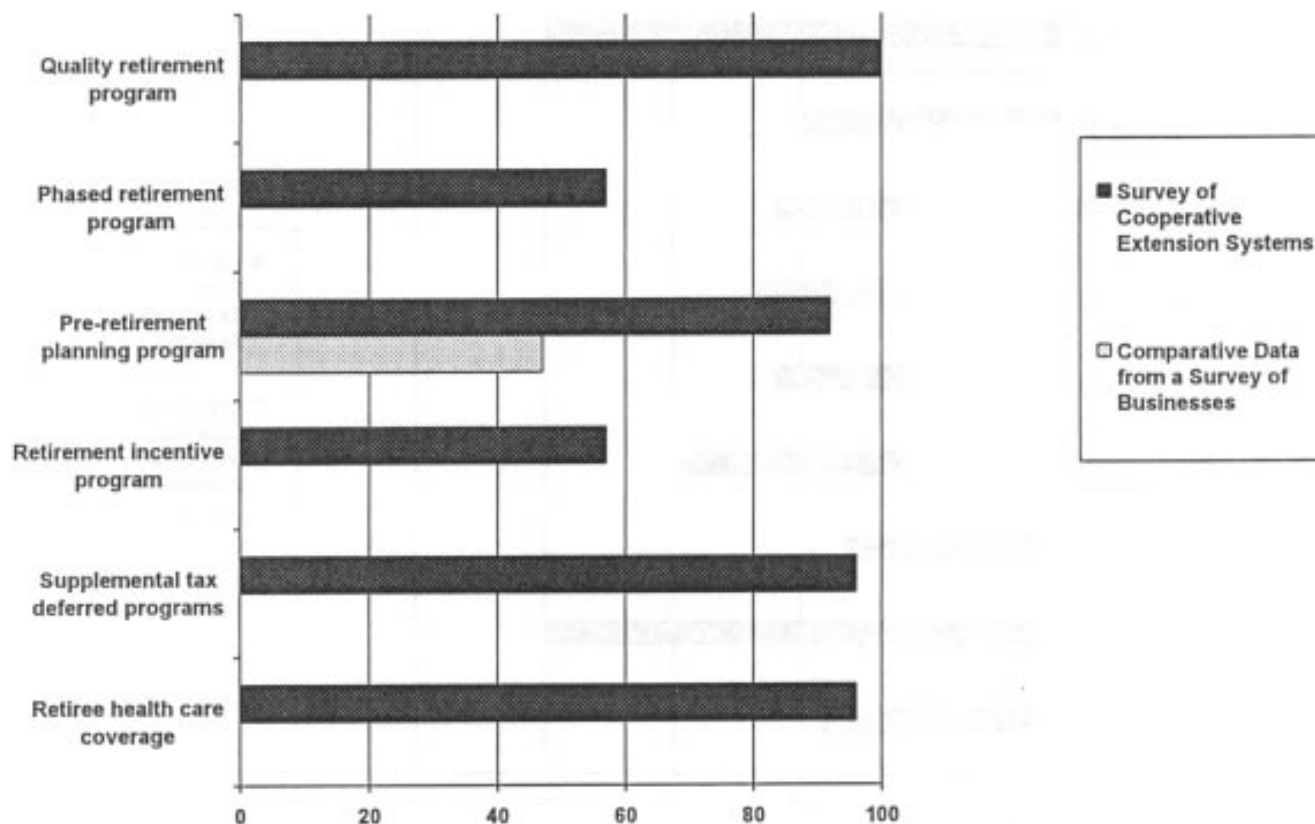
WORK SCHEDULE



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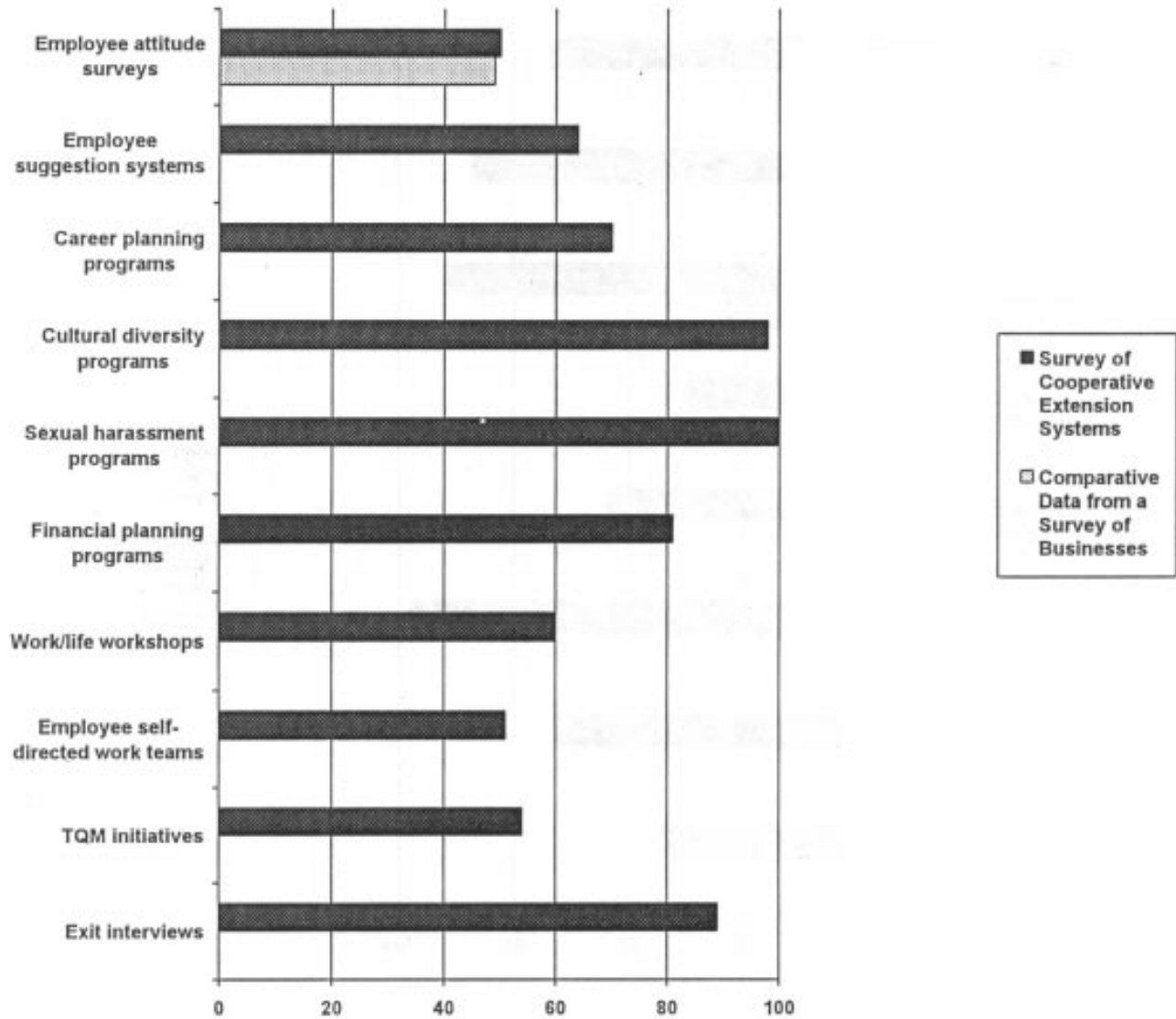
RETIREMENT



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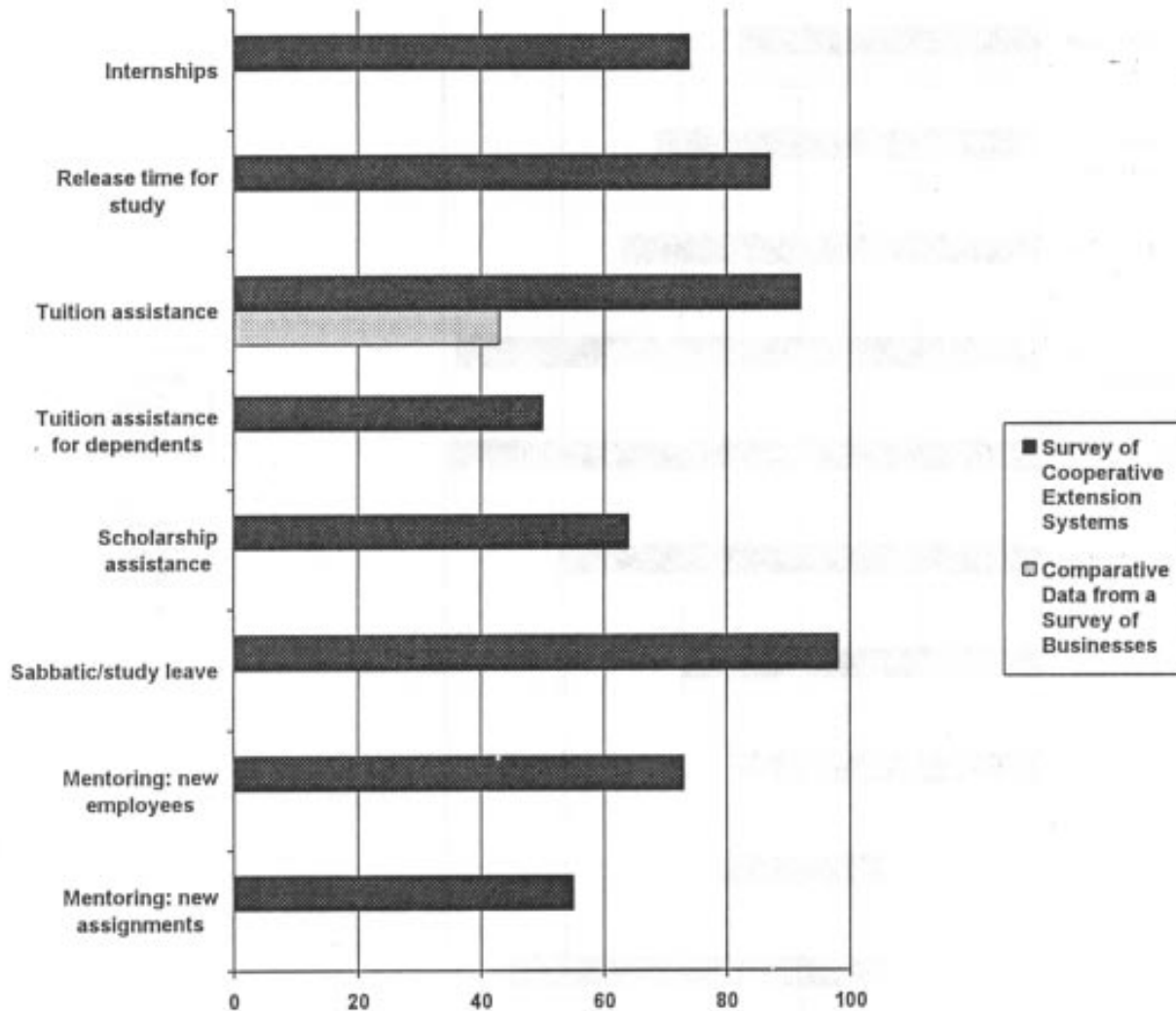
EMPLOYEE RELATIONS



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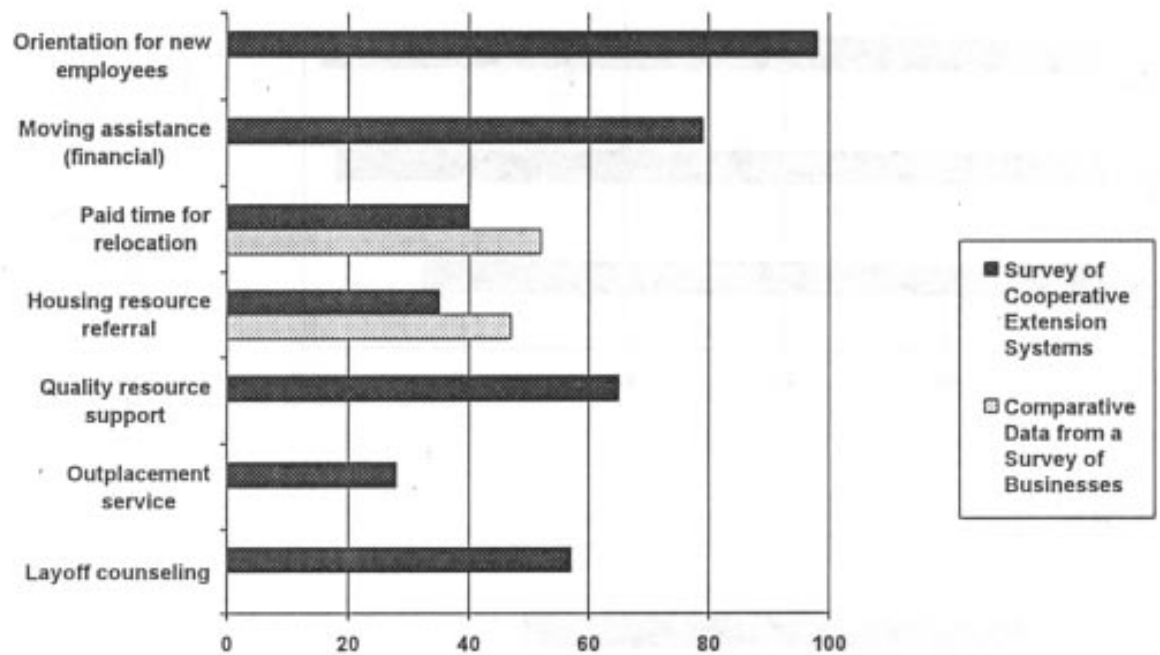
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS



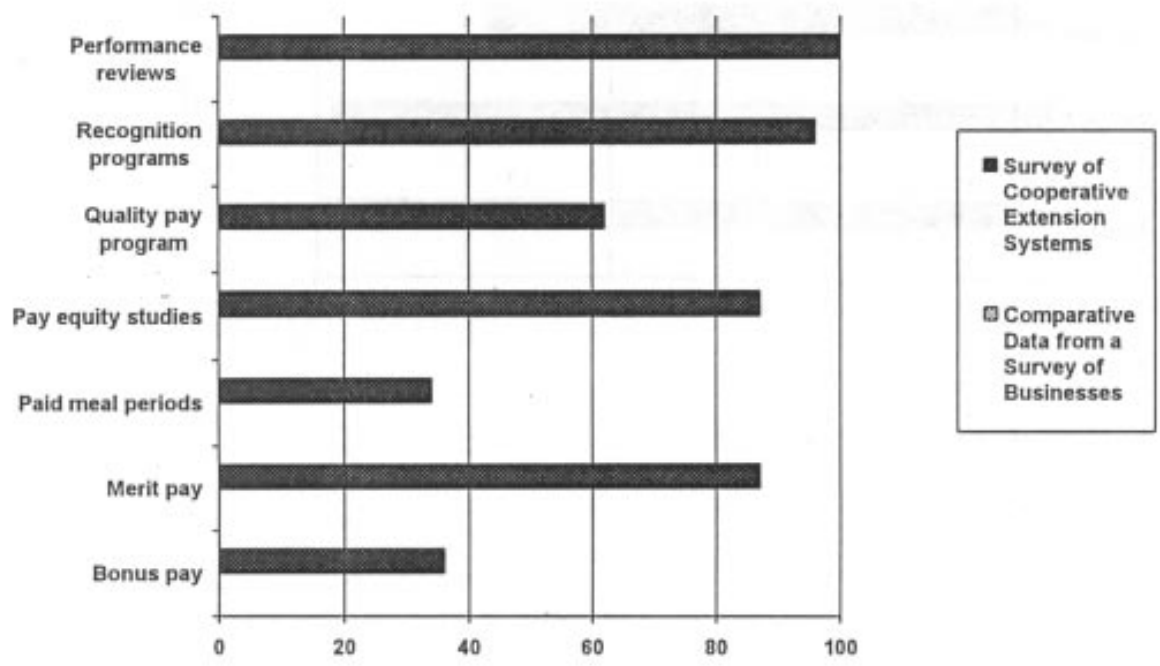
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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE



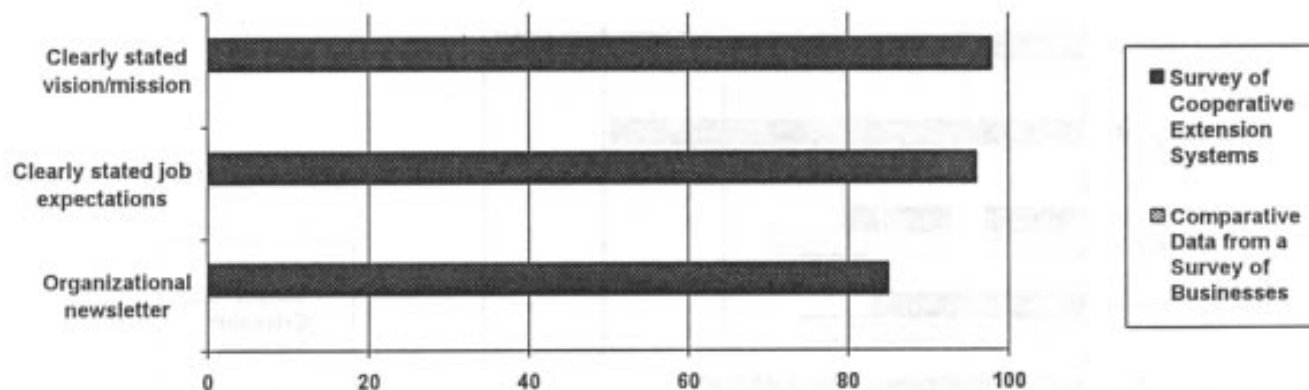
PAY PROGRAMS



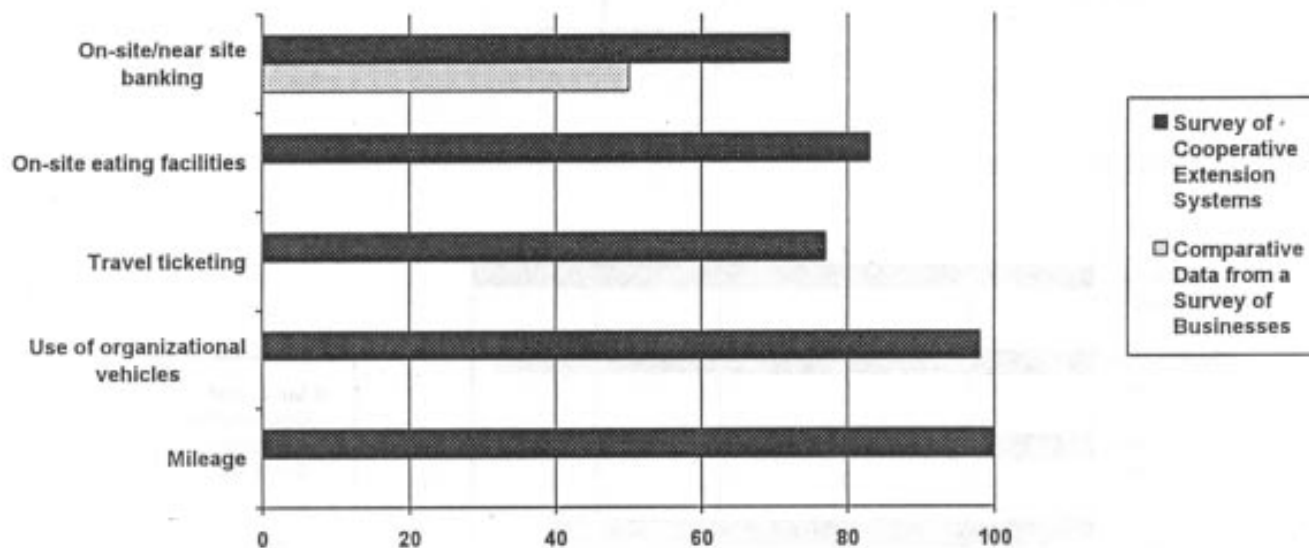
SURVEY OF HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES IN COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Percentage of Colleges/Universities Offering Programs/Benefits/Work Arrangements to Extension Employees.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



MISCELLANEOUS



**Most Successful Programs for
Attracting, Retaining, and Supporting
Quality Employees
in Colleges/Universities Where 20% or More of the
Staff are Culturally Diverse**

A list of the most successful programs/benefits/work arrangements in the Cooperative Extension system that best attract, retain, and support quality employees in their: early-career; mid-career; late-career. (Each College/University Human Resource Specialist was asked, based on their experience, to identify two for each matrix. The following are the most frequently identified programs.)

| | Early-Career | Mid-Career | Late-Career |
|---|---|---|---|
| ATTRACT quality extension employees | attractive fringe benefits (4) liberal leave benefits (3) competitive salaries (2) intern program (2) | salary and benefits (2) job security (2) fringe benefits (2) salary (2) liberal leave (2) | benefits (6) location (2) liberal leave (2) |
| RETAIN quality extension employees | educational opportunities (3) merit programs (2) benefits (2) tuition assistance (2) | benefits (6) tuition benefits (3) excellent programs (2) staff development opportunities (2) promotion system (2) competitive salaries (2) merit program (2) | retirement and other benefits (6) promotion/tenure system (2) |
| SUPPORT positive morale | training & development opportunities (3) admin open door policy (2) team effort (2) | inservice opportunities (3) admin open door policy (2) continued educational opportunities (2) study leave (2) merit program (2) recognition programs (2) | retirement and other benefits (3) admin open door policy (2) recognition programs (2) salary equity (2) |

*a visionary leader was also mentioned as an important asset across several of these areas.

N=18 (75%) of the Colleges/Universities where 20% or more of their staff are culturally diverse.

bold = where priority is consistent with the total systems identification.

italics = a program/benefit/work arrangement that was identified to a greater degree by the Colleges/Universities where 20% or more of the staff are culturally diverse.

**Most Successful Programs for Attracting, Retainin
, and Supporting Quality Employees**

A list of the most successful programs/benefits/work arrangements in the Cooperative Extension system that best attract, retain, and support quality employees in their: early-career; mid-career; late-career. (Each College/University Human Resource Specialist was asked, based on their experience, to identify two for each matrix. The following are the most frequently identified programs.)

| | Early-Career | Mid-Career | Late-Career |
|---|---|--|---|
| ATTRACT quality extension employees | attractive fringe benefits (16) competitive salaries (11) affiliation with university (6) liberal leave benefits (3) educational assistance (3) intern program (3) paid moving expenses (3) location (3) | fringe benefits (13) salary (6) salary and benefits (5) university reputation (3) faculty appointment/tenure (3) tuition assistance (3) liberal leave (3) study leave (3) | benefits (14) status as University employee (3) location (3) salary program (3) |
| RETAIN quality extension employees | education opportunities (8) benefits (7) flexible work schedule (4) orientation/core training (4) merit program (3) opportunity for advancement (3) mentoring system (3) tuition assistance (3) | benefits (10) staff development opportunities (8) promotion system (7) study/special projects leave (6) tuition benefits (6) flexible work schedules (5) merit program (5) competitive salaries (5) excellent programs (3) | retirement and other benefits (20) salary levels (4) recognition for accomplishments/expertise (3) professional development opportunities (3) promotion/tenure system (3) |
| SUPPORT positive morale | training & development opportunities (10) mentoring program (5) team effort (4) new staff orientation (4) tuition assistance (4) inservice opportunities (3) genuine concern for staff growth & dev (3) | continued educational opportunities (8) study leave (6) inservice opportunities (6) team concept (5) merit program (3) recognition (3) | retirement and other benefits (6) continued educational opportunities (4) relationships with other colleagues (3) travel opportunities (3) recognition programs (3) salary equity (3) retirement planning (3) |

N=49 (representing 59 institutions 80%)