

Program Information for Human Subject Study/IRB Compliance

Dates of Employee Survey: March 2 – March 27, 2026

Dates of Institution Questionnaire: February 9 (at the latest) – March 27, 2026

Program Cost

There is no cost to participate in this program.

Program Purpose

The project is designed to recognize institutions that have built great workplaces and to compile detailed benchmarking data about trends in compensation, benefits, and other employment issues.

Program Process

The project will consist of two online surveys: one completed by a single human resources representative at an institution (or a team), and one by a random sample of Faculty members, Administrators, Exempt and Non-exempt staff on a campus. (Adjunct Faculty are included in the survey sample at Associate Colleges.) More about the survey logistics, including a detailed [FAQ](#), can be found at GreatCollegesProgram.com.

Employee Survey Audience

Depending on the total number of employees at your institution, a random sample of your full-time Faculty, Administrators, Exempt and Non-exempt Staff will take the survey. Part-time Staff and Adjunct Faculty at four-year institutions who do not meet those criteria should not be included in the sample.

Total Number of Employees within the Five Job Categories*	Employees to be Surveyed
Up to 500	Four-year Schools: ALL Administrators, Faculty and Exempt Professional Staff. An average of 15% of your sample will be allotted to Non-exempts (percentage varies by sample and school size). Two-year Schools: ALL Administrators, Faculty and Exempt Professional Staff. An average of 8% and 19% of your sample will be allotted to Non-exempts and Adjuncts, respectively (percentages vary by sample and school size).
501-1,000	Four-year Schools: Up to 400 randomly selected employees among the four eligible job categories. An average of 15% of your sample will be allotted to Non-

	exempts (percentage varies by sample and school size). Two-year Schools: Up to 400 randomly selected employees among the five eligible job categories. An average of 8% and 19% of your sample will be allotted to Non-exempts and Adjuncts, respectively (percentages vary by sample and school size).
1,001+	Four-year Schools: Up to 600 randomly selected employees among the four eligible job categories. An average of 15% of your sample will be allotted to Non-exempts (percentage varies by sample and school size). Two-year Schools: Up to 600 randomly selected employees among the five eligible job categories. An average of 8% and 19% of your sample will be allotted to Non-exempts and Adjuncts, respectively (percentages vary by sample and school size).

**The five job categories referenced include Administrators, Faculty, Adjunct Faculty, Exempt Professional Staff and Non-exempt Staff.*

Survey Data

Survey data requested will not include employees' names, addresses or social security numbers. The survey includes a demographics section which will ask for the information below. Responses to the demographics questions are optional.

1. Years at Institution
2. Remote Work
3. College/School or Division/Department
4. Gender Identity
5. Age
6. Race/Ethnicity
7. Academic Role
8. Tenure Status

The survey is collected anonymously and confidentially. The data will be tabulated as an unidentified aggregate – and will not be connected to individual respondents. The demographic information requested will be used for aggregate tabular reporting.

IRB Exemption

Each higher education institution has its own IRB procedure. In our experience, the faculty and staff survey is exempt from IRB requirements pursuant to Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Public Welfare, Section 46, Protection of Human Subjects because it is a confidential survey. Specifically, exemption number two of 45 CFR 46.101(b) provides in relevant part:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

During the ModernThink Higher Education Insight Survey[®] process, data is collected in an anonymous and confidential manner and then tabulated and reported in the aggregate. Responses are never tied back to an identifiable individual. In addition, the demographic information is requested on a strictly volunteer basis.

Because of this exemption, no review is required for many institutions. However at some institutions, even exempt studies need to be reviewed. If that is the case at your institution, the survey should be eligible for expedited review. Pursuant to 45 CFR 46.110, the Department of Health and Human Services has established and published as a Notice in the FEDERAL REGISTER, a list of categories of research that may be reviewed by the IRB through an expedited review procedure. Included among those categories is the following:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

The ModernThink Higher Education Insight Survey[®] fits squarely within this category.

GREAT COLLEGES TO WORK FOR

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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

ModernThink LLC respects your privacy and actively protects the confidentiality of the data collected at both the institutional and individual level.

Institutional Data

Through the survey and research process, ModernThink will be collecting, analyzing, and evaluating institution data and other sensitive information. ModernThink has certified that it adheres to the Privacy Shield Principles of notice, choice, onward transfer, security, data integrity, access, and enforcement. To learn more about the Privacy Shield program, and to view ModernThink's certification, please visit <http://www.privacyshield.gov/>. ModernThink has also received the Better Business Bureau's Online Reliability Seal.

ModernThink protects your institutional data in a variety of ways:

1. Data is collected and maintained on a secure server.
2. Data will not be released, sold or traded to any unauthorized third party.
3. Data is shared internally with employees and/or contractors only on a need to know basis.
4. Vendors, contractors and/or other agents who work with and/or process any parts of the data are advised of the importance of maintaining confidentiality and are required to sign Non-Disclosure Agreements.
5. College-specific employee survey scores will not be released without your permission; data from your institution may be combined with data from other colleges and then reported back in aggregate form.
6. Information regarding whether a college participated will not be released, unless it is already public information (e.g., publication of the recognized institutions). ModernThink may, however, release the registration list in any given year to other authorized media partners and/or list sponsors. If doing so, they will ensure that any recipient of the registration list signs a Non-Disclosure Agreement expressly limiting use of that list to authorized activities in connection with the "Great Colleges to Work For" program.
7. Notwithstanding the above, your college's data will be added to ModernThink's national database of statistics and best practices to further ModernThink's research of employee/employer relationships and workplace dynamics. Some institution-specific information (such as best practices) may be published or otherwise used by Modern Think to cite workplace excellence. Any such information used in a public forum will be favorable in nature and will only reflect positively on your college.

Individual Data

Several measures are in place to protect individual survey responses and any personal data that is collected.

1. Self-identifying demographic questions at the end of the survey are strictly voluntary. If a survey taker chooses to provide that information for any reason, ModernThink accepts that act as explicit consent to use the information in the ways described in this Statement of Confidentiality or as described at the point where they so choose to disclose.
2. Employers are never given access to individual survey records.
3. Survey results within any demographic group are not reported back unless there are at least five completed surveys received in that particular demographic group.
4. At the end of the survey, employees are given an opportunity to respond to open-ended questions in their own words. They are advised at that time that their employer may request and receive a verbatim transcript of all comments. They are further advised that if they wish to remain anonymous, they should refrain from writing their name and/or any other identifying characteristics in their comments.