

2026 CONSULTING GUIDE

Get the most out of your results!

Since the founding of the Great Colleges to Work For Program in 2008, ModernThink has partnered with colleges and universities to better understand the employee experience and support institutional effectiveness through data-informed action. Over nearly two decades, we have worked with institutions of every type and size as they navigate periods of growth, transformation, financial pressure, leadership transition, and evolving workforce expectations.

Today's higher education environment requires institutions to balance competing priorities while continuing to support faculty and staff engagement, communication, and organizational resilience. Survey results provide an important opportunity not only to better understand employee perspectives, but also to identify practical areas for focus, alignment, and action.

Our consulting team combines deep higher education expertise, organizational development experience, and access to one of the largest workplace benchmarking databases in higher education. Because our consultants work closely with institutions across the country each year, we bring both a national perspective and context to every engagement.

Whether your institution is looking for support interpreting results, identifying key themes across employee groups, facilitating leadership discussions, prioritizing next steps, or developing action plans, our consulting offerings are designed to help institutions move from data to meaningful action in ways that align with their culture, goals, and current realities.

Organizing for Action Consultation (Virtual)

The Organizing for Action session is designed as a practical working session to help institutional leaders and project teams better understand what their survey results are showing and begin thinking about how to move forward. During the session, our consultants will help participants interpret key findings, identify institutional strengths and opportunities, and provide a high-level framework for using the results to support future communication and action planning efforts.

This consultation will provide:

- A clearer understanding of their survey results and key themes,
- A summary of institutional strengths and opportunities for improvement, and
- A practical framework for moving forward with action planning discussions.

Findings Presentation (Virtual or Onsite)

ModernThink's Findings Presentations are designed to help institutional leaders move beyond reviewing survey data to developing a deeper understanding of what the results mean for their campus community, culture, and strategic priorities.

In addition to overall survey findings, we analyze demographic and subgroup patterns to help institutions better understand how experiences and perceptions may vary across employee populations. For institutions with prior survey participation, presentations may also incorporate high-level longitudinal observations to provide additional context around evolving perceptions and institutional trends.

Findings Presentations are designed to provide both perspective and practical context, helping leaders better understand how their results compare with peer institutions and where opportunities may exist to strengthen the employee experience. The presentation deck can also serve as a valuable resource for additional internal communications and stakeholder presentations.

ModernThink consultants regularly support clients through both virtual and onsite presentations for a variety of audiences, including senior leadership teams, Faculty Senates, Staff Councils, Boards of Trustees, committees and other key stakeholder groups. We can also support broader campus engagement efforts through facilitated open forums, town halls, and related discussions designed to foster meaningful dialogue across the campus community.



One-on-One Development

Sometimes senior leaders can benefit from a more personalized approach. In some cases this takes the form of a one-time, personalized Office Hour, in others a more traditional approach to Executive Coaching is appropriate.

Office Hours. These virtual sixty-minute, one-on-one meetings support and prepare leaders to socialize their unit-specific data sets and prepare for action planning. Agenda items include orientation to survey best practices, unit-specific data analysis and interpretation.

Executive Coaching. At ModernThink, we believe that when leaders grow, their institutions grow with them. Our coaches work in close partnership with key leaders, using a disciplined and proven process to build the skills and competencies needed to excel in their current roles and prepare for greater responsibility. Coaching engagements are customized to address both individual and institutional goals — and are often enriched by incorporating data from the ModernThink Higher Education Insight Survey®.

Comments Analysis Report

The open-ended questions on the ModernThink Higher Education Insight Survey capture what faculty and staff value most about working at your institution — and where they see room for improvement. Our Comments Analysis Report maps the themes and patterns from those responses directly to the dimensions of your quantitative data, giving you a richer, more complete picture of the employee experience.

In lower-trust environments, having a third party conduct this analysis can be especially valuable, easing concerns about anonymity and confidentiality. The quantitative data tells you what people think. The Comments Analysis Report tells you why.

To schedule a conversation with a member of our consulting team, please email consulting@modernthink.com

Executive Summary

The Executive Summary is designed to provide easy to follow, high-level findings for senior leaders. It combines graphical data compilations with narrative descriptions to illuminate key findings, potential risks, and relevant context for the results. This stand-alone summary is readily accessible, easily digestible, and ultimately, actionable. While it cannot replicate the benefits of a real-time, interactive Findings Presentation with a ModernThink consultant, the Executive Summary can be an efficient option when senior leaders or a board require a condensed summary of the patterns and themes from the survey data.

Focus Groups

Surveys tell you what faculty and staff are thinking and feeling. Focus groups tell you why. Our consultants design and facilitate sessions that put participants at ease, drawing out the candid feedback needed to move from data to understanding. The final Focus Group Report summarizes key themes and actionable recommendations. We recommend doing sessions in person but can also deliver them virtually.

SMART GOALS
The SMART Goal format, and the process a group uses to develop them, are designed to foster a specific and shared understanding of the desired results identified through action planning.

Overview

- Specific** Clarifies what actions will be taken and who will take them
- Measurable** Identifies data that will measure the goal (How much? How well?)
- Attainable** Describes how the goal is challenging, but not impossible
- Relevant** Aligns the goal with larger purpose and context, and describes why we should care
- Time-Bound and Trackable** Delivers completion timelines, milestones, and updates

Insider Tips: As with any tool, the process is as important as the final product. Taking the time to have the conversations necessary to reach agreement on the content of the SMART Goal will lead to a smoother end.

BRAINSTORMII
Steps for Brainstorming:
Rules for Brainstorming:
Why?

RESPONSIBILITY CHARTING
What is it?
Responsibility Charting is a process used to make clear agreement about levels of responsibility, and clearly expectations related to check-ins and other communication. Responsibility Charting can be used as a project management tool to manage the day-to-day workflow.

| A | R | C | I |
|---|--|---|--|
| ACCOUNTABLE | RESPONSIBLE | CONSULTED | INFORMED |
| Approves or vetoes a decision or selects from options developed by the "R" role. Holds ultimate accountability. | Takes initiative, develops alternatives, analyzes the situation, involves necessary people, makes recommendations, and consults anyone, but must consult with "C". | Has the option to offer input before decisions are made, when they are consulted, those with "C" must be. | Must be notified after decisions are made, but before it's announced, needs to know outcome but not involved in making decision. |

Why?
Responsibility Charting improves accountability for taking action. The process makes the patterns of work and delegation become more visible. It includes important shared conversations and language about authority and responsibility. Responsibility Charting clarifies roles among individuals, units, departments, or divisions and can increase decision-making and participation opportunities for more people. Taken together these can support important culture change goals.

Action Planning Support

Surveys have the potential to positively impact an institution's culture if action is taken based on the results. Taking no action can erode trust and lead to feelings of cynicism and mistrust. We support action planning with both strategic and tactical offerings.

Overview for Executive Leaders

This session equips executive teams, senior leaders, senior academic leaders, VPs, and Deans—along with key individuals supporting implementation—with the knowledge and tools to drive effective action planning. Grounded in an action planning roadmap, the session provides an in-depth review of the process, clarifies leadership roles in strategy, prioritization, resource allocation, and accountability, and identifies key success factors and potential barriers. Participants will also gain a preview of the ModernThink Action Planning Guide[®], ensuring they are prepared to lead and support meaningful institutional improvement efforts.

Overview for Internal Champions

Administering a survey is only the beginning, it is what happens next that matters. Leaders are most effective in using survey results to drive organizational change and improve performance when they are supported by well-prepared internal champions.

These two 90-minute virtual sessions include a deep dive into the ModernThink Higher Education Insight Survey and address topics such as influence and collaboration, sources of resistance, approaches to data sharing as well as templates for action planning, goal setting, project management, measurement, and ownership. Sessions are customizable including in-person options.

Action Planning Workshop

This full-day, on-site session gives unit leaders and their teams a road-tested process for developing and implementing an action plan. Using the ModernThink Action Planning Guide, participants work through rigorous data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and disciplined planning and evaluation. The workshop provides all the processes, tools, and templates teams need — and they leave ready to take effective, data-informed action.

2026 ModernThink Consulting Options designed for Great Colleges Participants:

- Organizing for Action Consultation (Virtual)
- Findings Presentations (Virtual or Onsite)
- Office Hours and Executive Coaching
- Comments Analysis Report
- Executive Summary
- Focus Groups
- Action Planning Support



DATA - INSIGHT - ACTION

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