

## A message from Dr. Janet Morrison



### Your Feedback; Our Future

October 8, 2020

Next month will mark four years since I joined the Sheridan learning community. On the one hand, it feels like this has been my academic home forever; on the other, my time as a leader in both the roles of Provost and President has flown by. In large measure, I think this is a reflection of 'fit'. Simply: the first principles and enablers we collectively espouse and 'live' resonate with my personal orientation.

This is particularly true in relation to the value Sheridan places on human talent and the commitment we codified in our Strategic Plan to enabling a flourishing workforce. At its core, this is about creating environments that foster wellness, creativity and fulfillment – both personal and professional. Given the challenges that are manifest as the global health crisis, economic downturn and social awakening converge, I'm not sure that this has ever been a more important or complex aspiration.

In that context, I'm going to focus today on the following updates:

- COVID-focused employee survey: Results and Actions
- Comparison to 2018 data
- October 14 Employee Town Hall event

### COVID-focused employee survey

Between May and June this year, 1,150 of you participated in Sheridan's COVID-focused employee survey, which was designed to better understand your lived experiences in the midst of living and working through a pandemic. Specifically, the goal was to learn more about your perceptions of our pandemic response, the issues you continue to face, and how Sheridan can better support employees in the face of unprecedented and very challenging circumstances.

Here is what we gleaned from the results:

**The transition to remote work appears to have been a fairly positive experience for most employees.** A strong majority of respondents indicated that they have the resources they need to work effectively from home. They also reported having support from their manager for flexible work arrangements and responded positively about their ability to collaborate with coworkers. This is important to the issue of relationships. It was noteworthy that academic staff scored lower on most elements assessed in this area, particularly the ability to work effectively. I know this was, in part, a reflection of the incredible challenges our colleagues faced in transitioning to emergency remote delivery over (literally) the period of one week.

**Engagement indicators are quite positive.** Research has shown that a sense of 'meaning' is important to flourishing. Almost 9 in 10 respondents said they understand expectations and feel their work remains valuable. These results are more impressive in light of the fact that 60% indicated the focus of their role has changed since we moved to remote delivery in March, 2020.

**Approximately 75% of employees are happy with communication efforts and the overall transition.** Almost 70% indicate leadership is providing a clear direction for the future. I'm particularly pleased with this outcome because the Employee Engagement survey we completed in 2018 identified the lack of a shared vision as a significant obstacle to moving Sheridan forward.

**Many employees (61%) feel more work-related stress now vs. before COVID, but most say it is manageable.** I'm really empathetic to this particular finding. As I've underscored in previous communications, the personal and professional demands of working in the age of COVID-19 are significant ... and exhausting! In line with your feedback, we've undertaken a number of measures:

- Issuing \$250 to full time employees to support remote work
- Striving to keep the lines of communication open and provide a continuous flow of information through weekly updates, dedicated portal pages and microsites
- Being clear about our commitment to preserving as many jobs as possible, for as long as possible
- Ensuring that our business planning processes continue to drive forward Sheridan's strategic plan and provide a clear path to our future
- Deferring the introduction of the activities-based budget model for one year, to reduce the amount of change being managed by our community
- Featuring a mental health expert as our keynote speaker
- Providing a one-year subscription to the Headspace app for every full-time employee

### Comparison to 2018 data

The May/June pulse survey also repeated five core questions that were used in Sheridan's inaugural employee engagement survey in 2018, to measure any change against the initial baseline data. While interpreting the differences requires caution (as a number of factors are at play), several positive shifts are evident:

- 25% increase in agreement that people are inspired or motivated to do their best work every day
- 32% increase in agreement that senior leaders are open and transparent in their communications
- 11% increase in agreement that work-related stress is manageable
- 27% increase in agreement that I have the resources I need to do my job well
- 25% increase in agreement that senior leaders have provided a clear direction for the future

### October 14 Town Hall

To continue this conversation, I hope that you'll join me next Wednesday, October 14 at 11am for our next virtual Town Hall. In that forum, I'll provide another update about our fall enrolment and state of financial health, as well as a progress report on our commitments to fight anti-Black racism.

Following my short presentation and a question period, we'll break-out into one of seven concurrent sessions focused on initiatives that are underway to secure Sheridan's future, all rooted in our Strategic Plan and/or pivotal to our pandemic recovery.

You can [register now](#) for the main Town Hall session, as well as the individual concurrent sessions:

- [Brand Refresh](#)
- [Community Give Back Strategy](#)
- [Rethinking Technology](#)
- [Campus Wellness Strategy](#)
- [Campus Master Plan](#)
- [Student Recruitment in a Virtual Landscape](#)
- [Virtual Student Supports](#)

The entire event will be recorded and uploaded to Sheridan Central for future viewing so if you're not able to tune-in live ... you can come back to it later.

As my family prepares to celebrate a Thanksgiving like no other in my lifetime, I'll be consciously reflecting on how grateful I am to work with you in service to our learners. Together, our shared commitment to trailblazing education makes us an unstoppable force for good.

Warmly,

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