

Summary of KU Retirees 2021 Survey

This summary provides the highlights that one sees in the raw data from the survey. It would be useful to share this summary and the raw data from the 111 respondents with HR and Chris Brown in the Provost's Office.

Question 1: What year did you retire from KU?

We limited the survey to those who had retired from KU since 2019, but two retirees from 2014 also snuck into the data.

Question 2: On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the best) how would you rate your experience of retiring in terms of the following areas?

There was broad approval from those surveyed in each area. The percentages of those that answered in each area with a "4" or "5" on the five-point scale were as follows:

Farewell by unit: 60%

Experience with HR during process: 89%

Transition to health insurance: 71%

Continuing relationships with friends and associates: 80%

Obviously, some of these responses would have been flavored by the pandemic, especially the first area for those who retired after February 2020.

Question 3: Which parts of the retirement process that could be improved?

The pandemic was a major factor in this question, causing difficulty in arranging meetings and in other parts of the retirement process. Common complaints included: faculty or staff being informed too late of the process, which made it seem overwhelming; the stress of dealing with changes in health insurance; and broken promises about travel funds and computers. Many commented on HR's excellence in helping retirees deal with the process.

Question 4: On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the best) how would you rate the following KU retirement benefits?

Responses to the ten areas in this question demonstrate a wide variety of familiarity with and/or opinion of these various areas. Between these responses and the comments offered about benefits in Question 5, perhaps KU could do a better job of informing retirees about these benefits. The continuation of KU email for retirees is far and away the most popular of these benefits. The percentages of those that answered in each area with a "4" or "5" on the five-point scale were as follows:

Parking permits: 30%

KU retiree ID card: 29%

KU email: 88%

Endacott Society: 11%

KU meal plans: 1%

Bus service: 13%

KU library privileges: 50%
IT consultations: 48%
Recreation facilities: 18%
University Theatre complementary tickets: 23%

Question 5: Is there anything that you would like to tell us about your experiences with KU's retirement benefits?

Several retirees stated that they had never seen the list of benefits presented in Question 4 and there is some frustration that most of them are only available on a regular basis to those who live in Lawrence. Others said that they have not received a KU retiree ID card. The pandemic has stopped many from using some of these benefits since March 2020. Comments related to this question went beyond the areas identified in Question 4, including complaints about unequal treatment around the university in retaining an office after retirement and losing access to university-sponsored Microsoft software while still actively pursuing research, among other areas.

Question 6: What information do you wish you would have known about before you retired - for example, about additional investments (besides the mandatory KBOR or KPERS retirement funds), benefits, sick and vacation payout leave balances upon retirement, etc.?

A few respondents stated that the KPERS 457 Deferred Compensation plan, which allows a KU employee to put more money aside for retirement, is not adequately publicized. Other issues raised included: the need to be better informed about various aspects of retiring, especially changes in health insurance; the problem of losing access to Microsoft and Adobe software and support; and confusion about reimbursement for unused sick leave and how unused sick leave can be donated for the use of other employees.

Question 7: On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the best) how would you rate the way that KU helped you with your financial planning for retirement?

Only 36% of respondents answered this question with a "4" or "5" on the five-point scale. Some comments in the survey stated that retirees were more likely to turn to an organization like TIAA or an independent financial advisor for such assistance.

Question 8: What else might KU offer to help prepare employees for retirement?

This question prompted numerous suggestions that should be consulted in the raw data. Major themes that emerge from the responses included: more one-on-one appointments with HR staff; providing information about retirement earlier in the process, especially about health insurance; and more access to seminars and meetings about the process. Respondents recognized that the pandemic had complicated the process since March 2020.

Question 9: What activities do you participate in?

Although numerous respondents pointed out that they were engaging in fewer activities now because of the pandemic, they named numerous activities that they wish to pursue, the full nature of which can be appreciated by skimming the raw data. This seems to be one of the less useful questions in the survey in terms of what it tells the university about its retirees, their experience in the process of retiring, and feelings about benefits.

Question 10: Do you volunteer in the community?

49% of respondents state that they do; 51% responded negatively. The pandemic has obviously affected the results in this area. This is another question that might not be needed in future uses of this survey.

Question 11: Are there other issues that you would like to see our committee address?

The full range of responses, which was very broad in terms of themes, can be seen by consulting the raw data. The negativity about KU in some of the responses was notable, with some unfortunate situations described in detail. Recurring themes included: improving communication about the retirement process and benefits, the problem of losing IT benefits in retirement, and inequalities in the treatment of retirees by various units in the university. Here and in other questions that asked for comments one finds frequent praise for the efforts of the HR staff in helping retirees negotiate the process, with mention of Madi Vannaman and others by name. An interesting suggestion that emerged was a possible program that would foster contact between retirees and KU students.

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