

# Office of Research Administration (ORA) Overview, Priorities, Annual Satisfaction Survey

Dr. Robert Nobles, Vice President for Research  
Administration

Special Thanks to Research Data Analytics and Emory's  
Research Administrators



# Research Administration's Priority Areas



## Recruiting and Developing a Strong and Supported Workforce

- **Workload and Staffing Analysis (matching staffing to growth)**
- Fostering a Positive and Supportive Environment
- Produce One-ORA Outcomes



## Pursuing and Reaching Operational Efficiency

- Enhance Operational Efficiency of RAS
- **Build strong collaborative partnership with Schools/Departments through shared accountability**
- External Program Reviews
- Quality improvement projects led by the ORA Dragon Team
- **Enhance Post Award Administration, Including Close Outs**



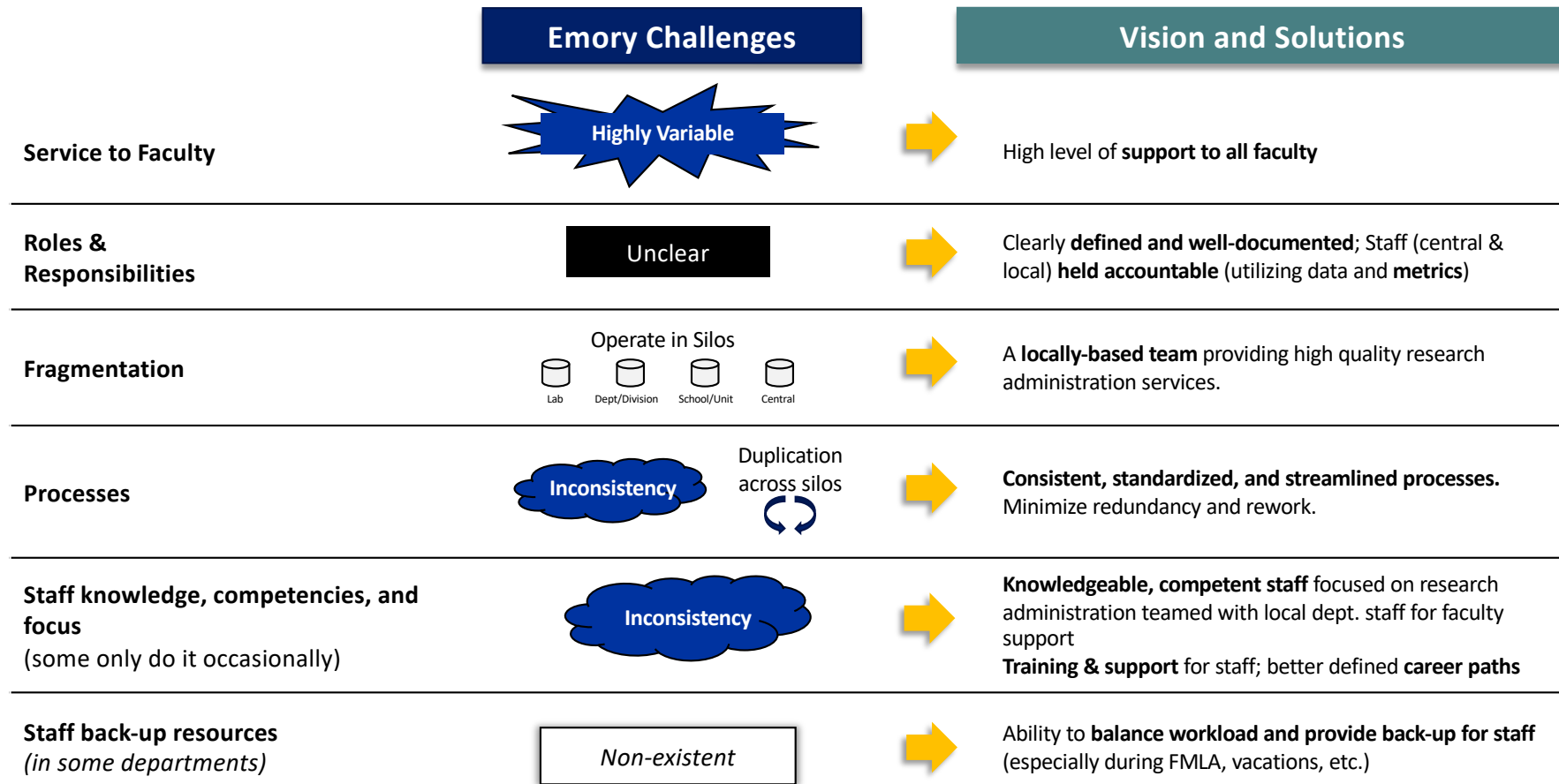
## Building a Robust and Resilient Infrastructure

- **Research IT Working Group – Comprehensive Assessment of our IT Systems**
- Expand our Grants and Contracts Support
- Establish the Strategic Operations & Training Unit

IMPROVE COLLABORATION, TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNICATION

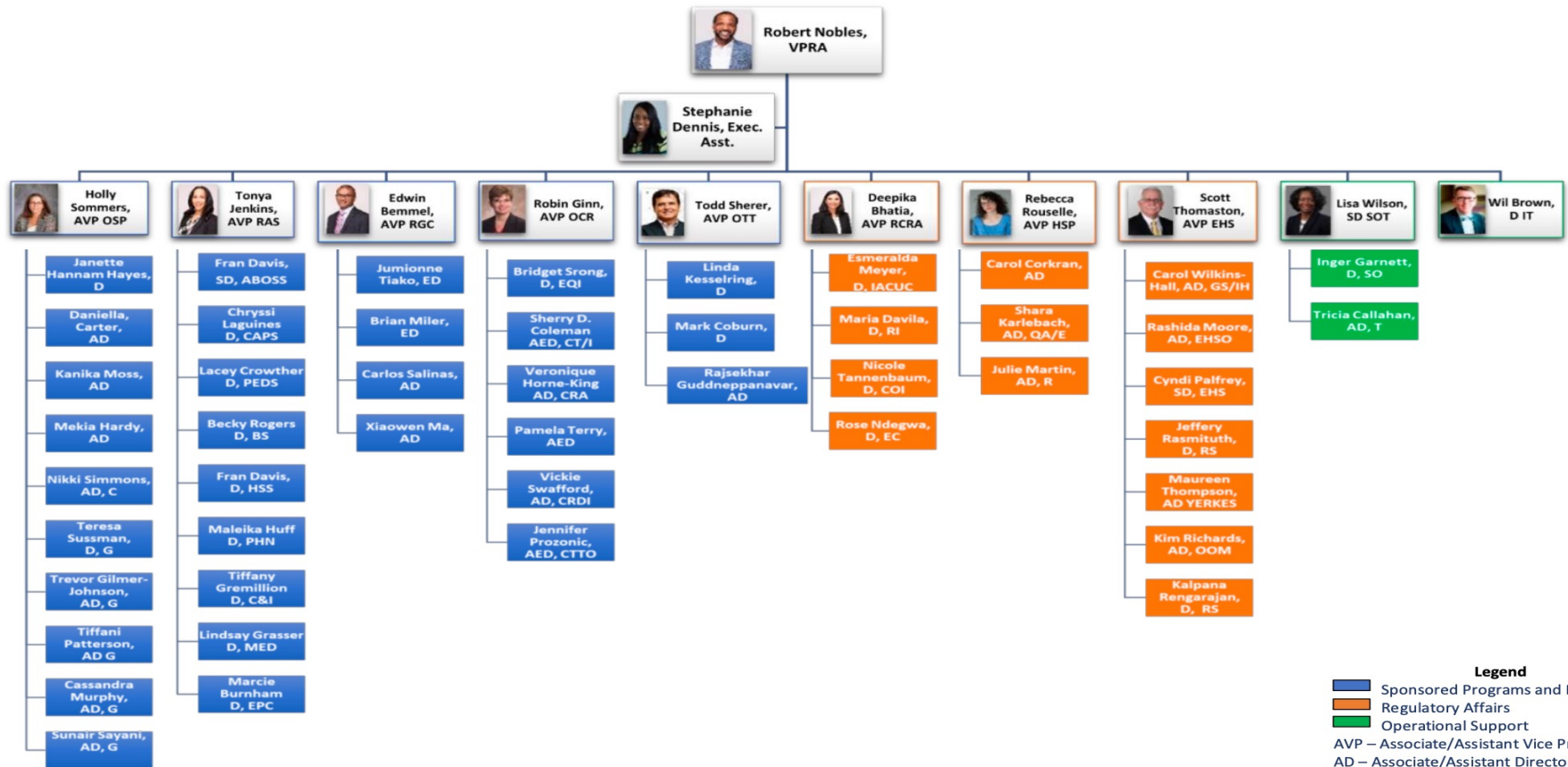


# Research Administration: The Past Decade



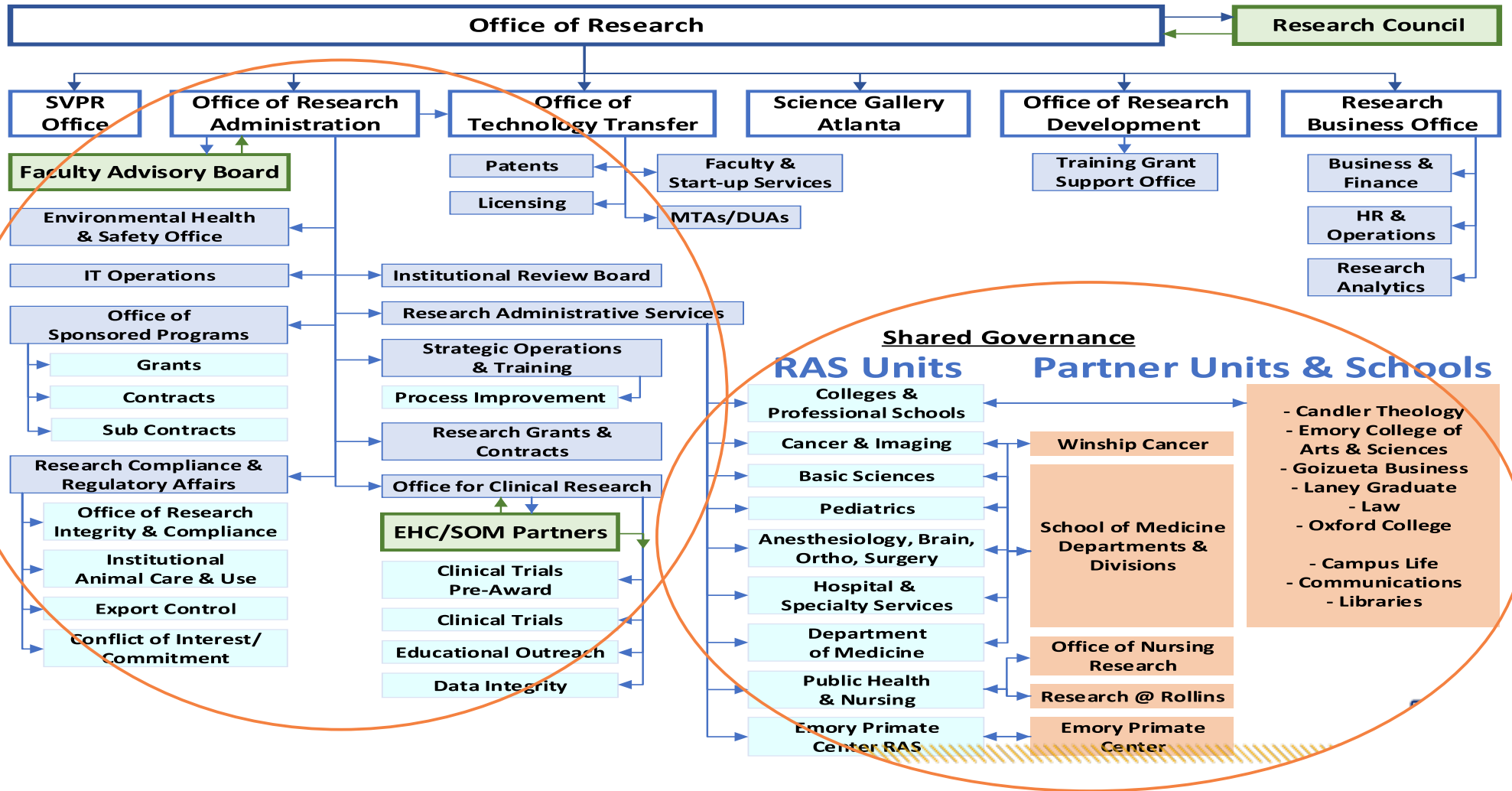
# The Structure of ORA

## Organizational Chart



- Legend**
- Sponsored Programs and Fiscal Support
  - Regulatory Affairs
  - Operational Support
- AVP – Associate/Assistant Vice President  
 AD – Associate/Assistant Director  
 AED – Associate Executive Director  
 D – Director  
 ED – Executive Director

# The Organization of Research Administration at Emory



## Vision:

A Unified Research Culture  
where shared Engagement & Accountability  
Drives Positive Change



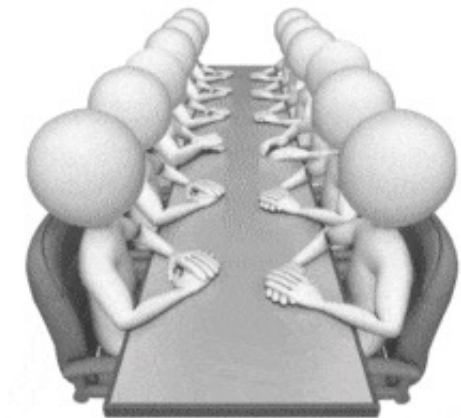
Improved Transparency and Aligned

Priority setting:

- Triannual Business Reviews
- Joint Unit level Feedback, Escalation Management & Problem Solving
- Alignment on ORA Process Improvement Initiatives

Joint  
Strategic and Operational  
Governance with  
Schools/Departments

Aligned Goals,  
Metrics and ongoing management  
of  
key  
HR actions &  
budgets



*Creating Unification is critical to a healthy Research Infrastructure and optimum **Faculty Support & Engagement***



# “Two Parent Household”



BI-DIRECTIONAL  
COMMUNICATION

SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

ABILITY TO EXECUTE ON OUR  
GOALS OF SHARED GOVERNANCE



+



=

- ✓ All team members are validated as an active participant
- ✓ Accountability and ownership at macro and micro levels of the processes
- ✓ Actionable outcomes from partnership and communication



# Optimization Through Quality Improvement

## Human Resources

- Led by Del King and Maria Mendez
- Collaborating with CBOs, HR Representatives, & RAS leadership
- Focused on streamlining recruitment, hiring, onboarding, tracking, and transparency
- Critical to success is improved retention and staff engagement

## Information Technology

- Led Wil Brown, Melanie Lawrence, and Marc Overcash
- Collaborating with ORA, ORA-IT, CBOs, Data Analytics, Enterprise Financial Systems,
- Focused on performing an assessment of utility, usability, integration, gaps, and potential solutions

## Quality Improvement

- Led by Inger Garnett
- Collaborating with ORA, CBOs, and research teams
- Focused on existing work streams (Award Closeout, Subrecipient Monitoring), continuity of service, increasing efficiency, listening to all stakeholders, and mobilizing action steps/processes

## Infrastructure Assessment

- Led by VPRA/Deans/CBOs
- Focused on thinking about alternative support mechanisms for RAS Directors, continuity when vacancies occur, expanded leadership opportunities and maximizing faculty support
- Jointly determining staffing levels

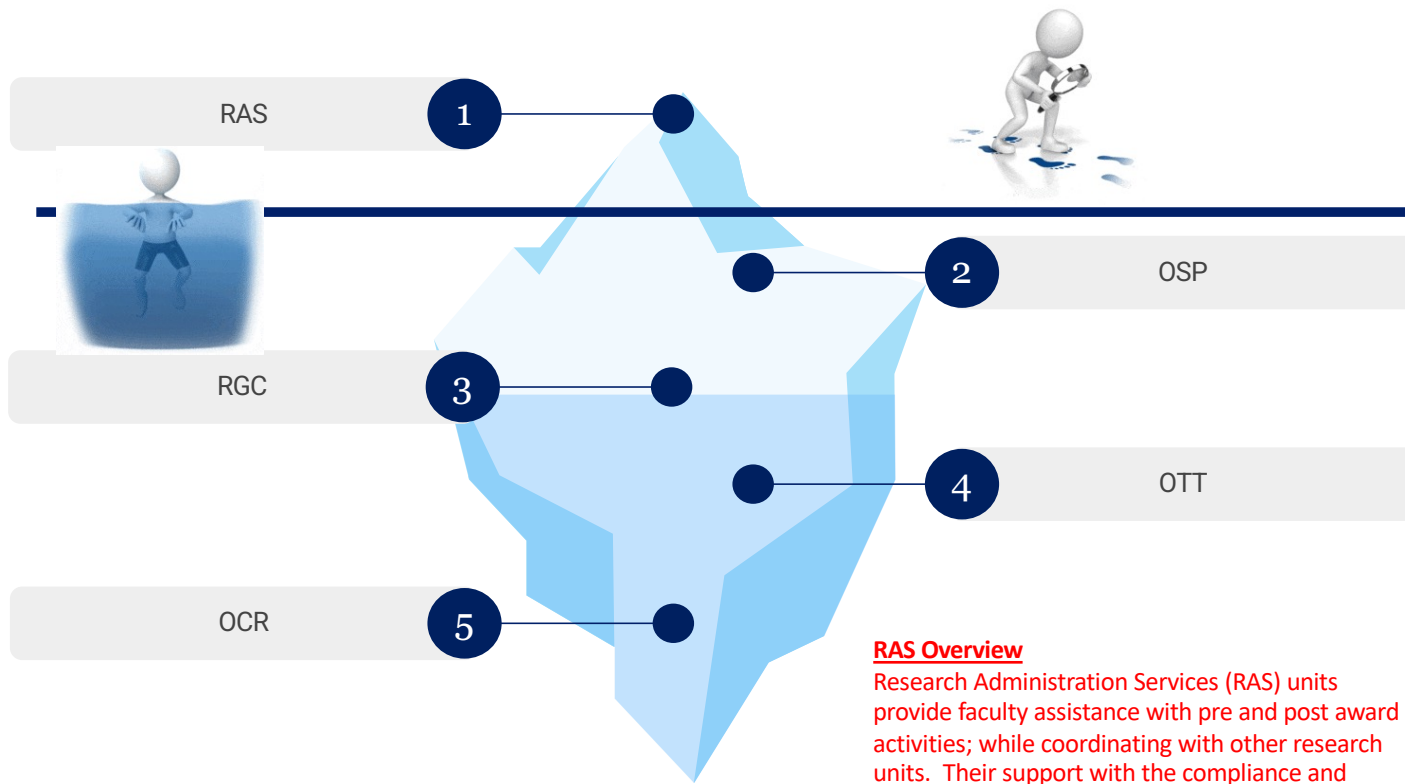
## Training

- Led by Lisa Wilson and Tonya Jenkins
- Collaborating with ORA Senior Leadership, RAS Leadership, and RAS team member
- Focused on conducting an inventory of existing trainings, training needs, training delivery, and next steps





# RAS is the Tip of the Iceberg



## RAS Overview

Research Administration Services (RAS) units provide faculty assistance with pre and post award activities; while coordinating with other research units. Their support with the compliance and administrative requirements of the grant life cycle allows researchers to concentrate on the science/study; while being excellent stewards of their sponsored funds and outcomes.

## Research Administrative Services

- The Face of Research Administration
- Facilitate Pre & Post Award

## Office of Sponsored Programs

- Pre-Award Grants, Contracts & Subawards

## Research Grants & Contracts

- Post-Award Financial Services and Compliance

## Office of Technology Transfer

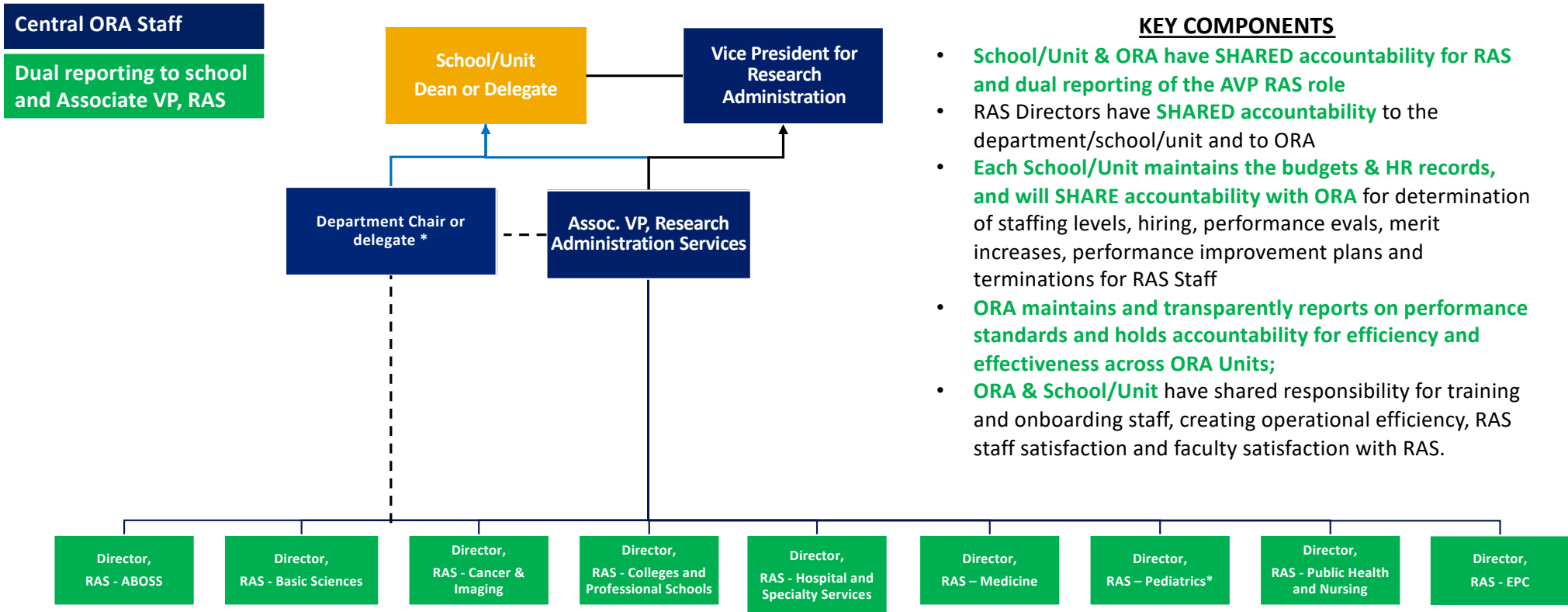
- MTA, DUA, Commercialization

## Office for Clinical Research

- Clinical Research Administration



# Research Administration Services (RAS): MATRIX Organizational Structure with Schools and Units



## KEY COMPONENTS

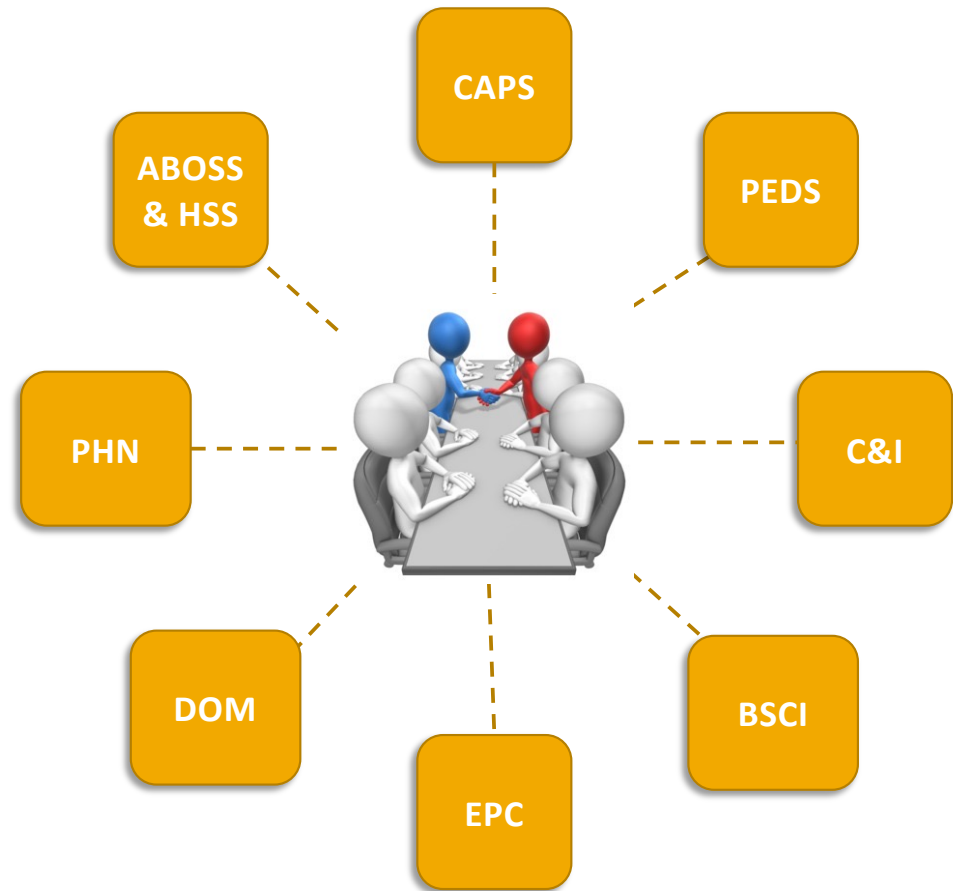
- **School/Unit & ORA have SHARED accountability for RAS and dual reporting of the AVP RAS role**
- RAS Directors have **SHARED accountability** to the department/school/unit and to ORA
- **Each School/Unit maintains the budgets & HR records, and will SHARE accountability with ORA** for determination of staffing levels, hiring, performance evals, merit increases, performance improvement plans and terminations for RAS Staff
- **ORA maintains and transparently reports on performance standards and holds accountability for efficiency and effectiveness across ORA Units;**
- **ORA & School/Unit** have shared responsibility for training and onboarding staff, creating operational efficiency, RAS staff satisfaction and faculty satisfaction with RAS.

\* Also to include faculty leadership as assigned by Chair/Dean



## Customized Shared Governance Implementations by RAS Unit due to:

- Multiple Departments within each unit, therefore different leadership engagement strategies are necessary (ie: DOM=1 dept, ABOSS/HSS=17 depts, Basic Science=7, CAPS = 11 schools)
- RAS Unit structures vary by school/unit (ie: EPC v. RSPH v. SOM)
- Unique challenge (ie: Pediatrics relationship with Children's, C&I relationship with Winship; ECAS relationship with non-HSC schools)
- Varying clinical trials infrastructures



# 2022 Annual Survey Overview

Survey went out to external stakeholders via multiple listservs (more than 6,000 unique persons).

The response rate was around 9%.

Survey was strictly anonymous

We did **NOT** include ORA staff responses in any summary data or analysis.

We again received more responses than last year\*:

Total responses are up 13% (from 458 to 519).

Faculty responses are up 16% (from 305 to 353).

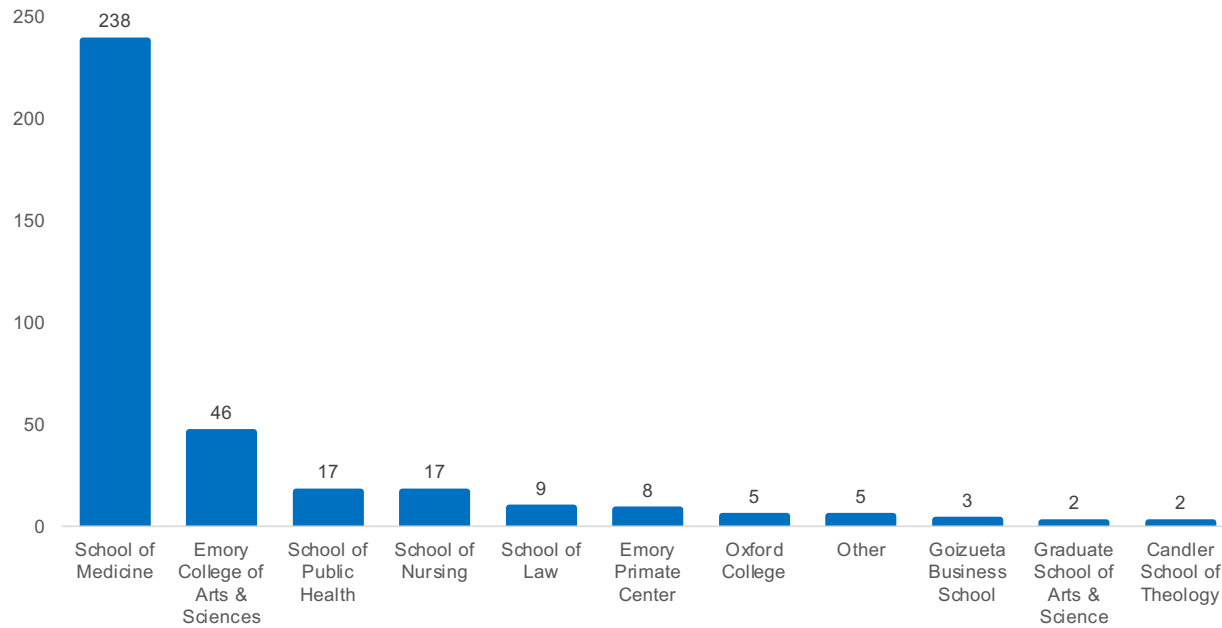
Staff responses are up 8% (from 153 to 166).



# Participating Units

Most responses came from faculty (68% or 353 out of 519 responses this year).

FY 2022 Number of Faculty Responses  
By School

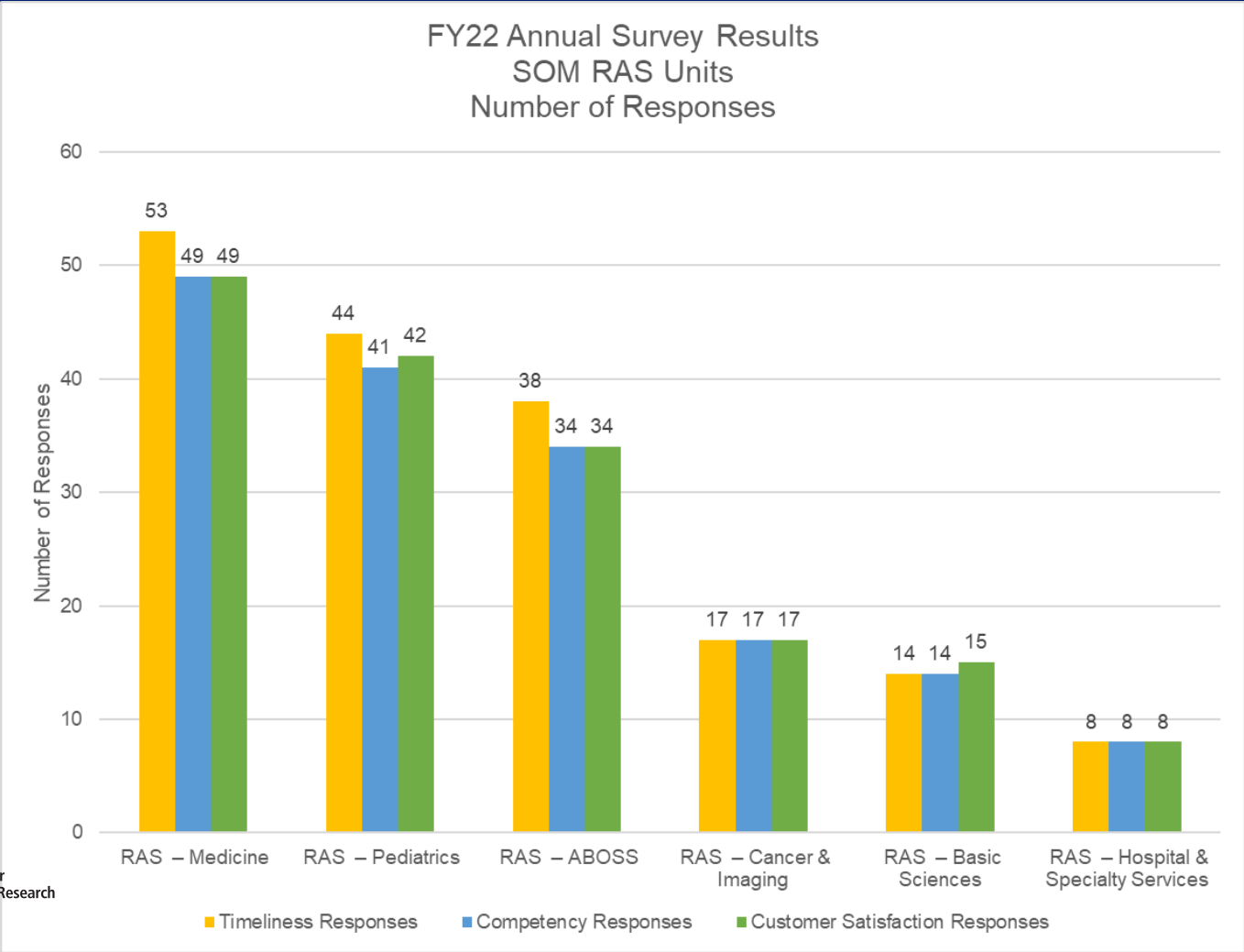


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Source: Qualtrics



# RAS Units: SOM Respondents Counts



Source: Qualtrics



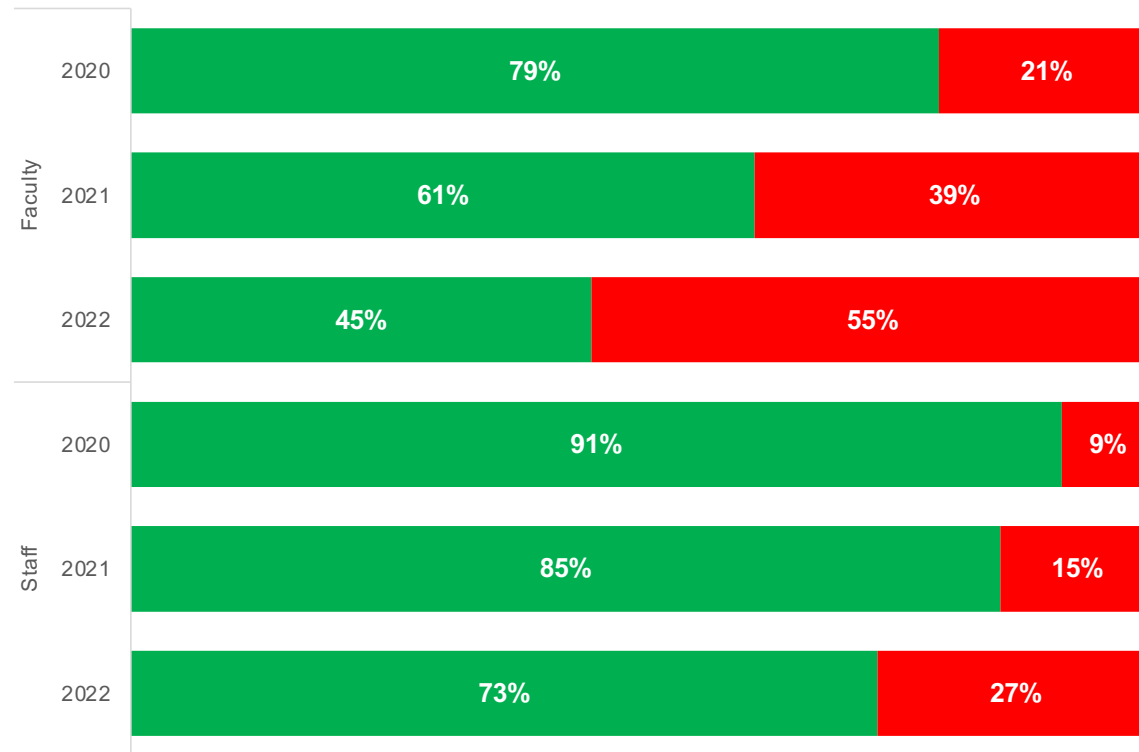
# Satisfaction with ORA Interactions

Overall, have you been satisfied with your interactions with Office of Research Administration over this past fiscal year?

Overall, 54% were satisfied.

Faculty satisfaction dropped from 61% to 45%.

Staff satisfaction dropped from 85% to 73%.



# Correlations: Workload, Departures, and Average Satisfaction

There are clear correlations between volume, departures, and average satisfaction scores for RAS Units:

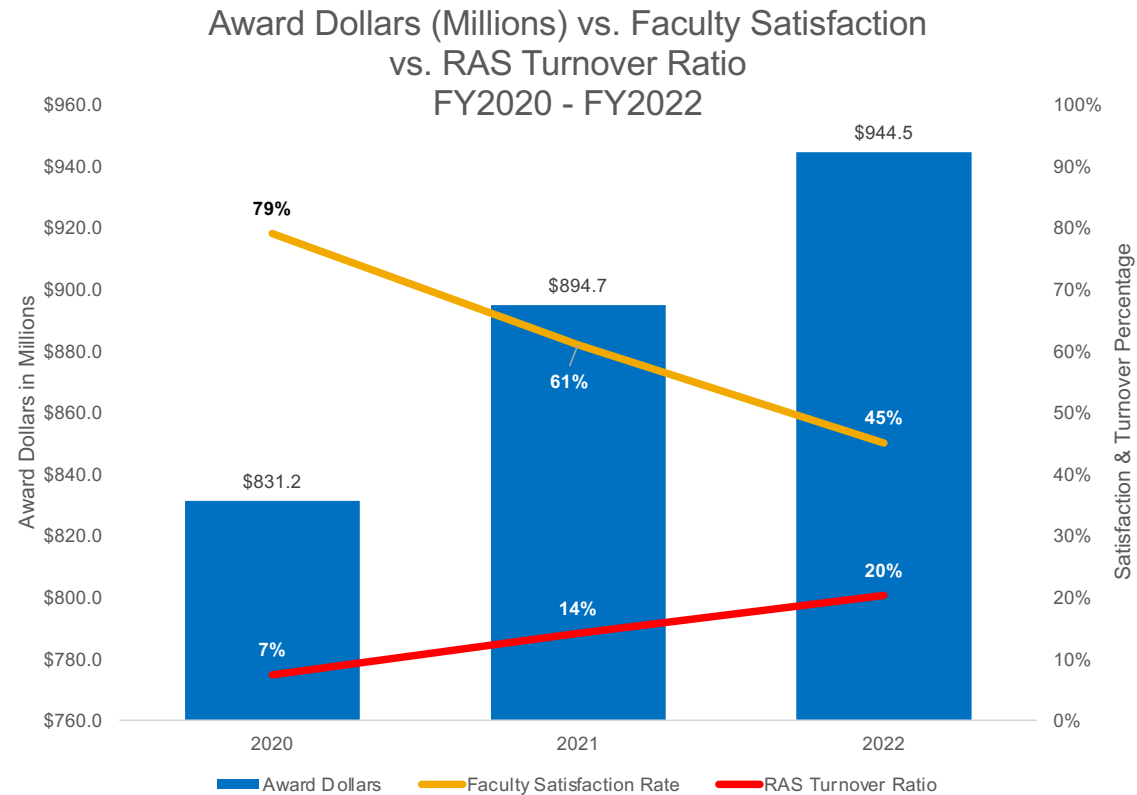
- The higher the workload (proposals, awards, vacancies) the more departures ( $r=.780^*$ ).
- The higher the workload for a unit, the lower the average satisfaction scores ( $r$  between  $-.698^*$  and  $-.730^*$ )
- The more departures the more survey responses ( $r$  between  $.823^{**}$  and  $.832^{**}$ )
- The more survey responses the lower the average satisfaction ( $r$  between  $-.866^{**}$  and  $-.956^{**}$ )





# Faculty Satisfaction Trends Driven by Turnover and Awards

- Record award dollars since FY2020
- Very strong positive correlation between award dollars and staff turnover
- Very strong negative correlation between staff turnover and overall faculty satisfaction
- 50% of staff changed since FY2020
- 25% staff vacancy across all of ORA in FY2022 alone



Source: Qualtrics, EBI, Central HR Turnover Dashboard



## FY22 Research Administration Positions Filled and Departures Overview

- 144 positions filled in Research Administration
  - 77 new hires (new to Research Administration and Emory)
  - 44 promotions open recruitment (internal Research Administration candidates)
  - 12 transfer-ins (from other Emory departments to Research Administration)
  - 11 rehires (prior Emory or Research Administration employment)
- 51 internal Research Administration promotions (promotions – job reclassifications)
- 85 total departures
  - 68 exits (left Research Administration and Emory completely)
  - 12 transfer-outs (from Research Administration to other Emory departments)
  - 5 retirees

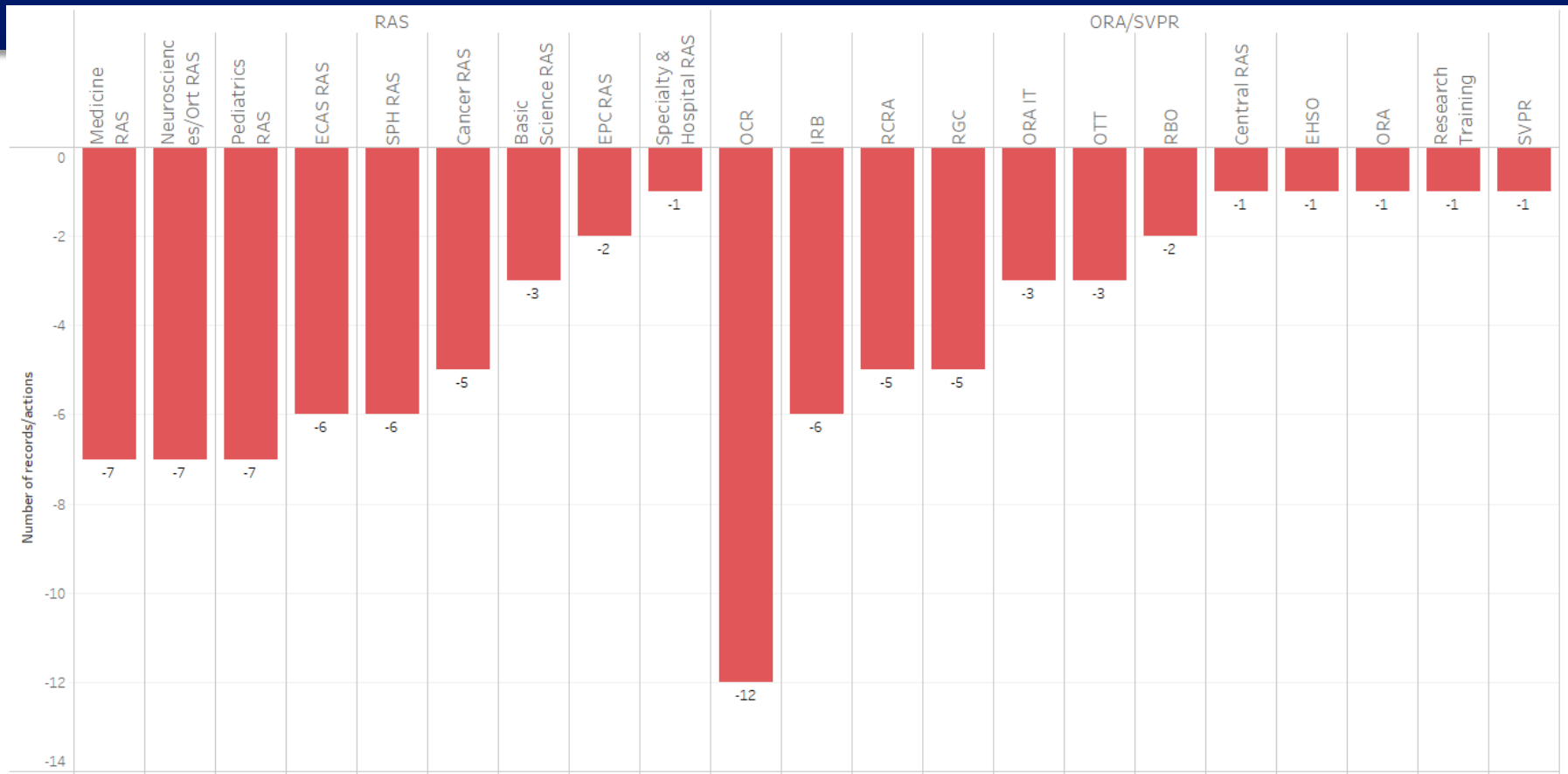
Counts are record/action counts, not necessarily unique employee headcounts

For example, employee might have been promoted more than once or employee might have joined and departed within FY22

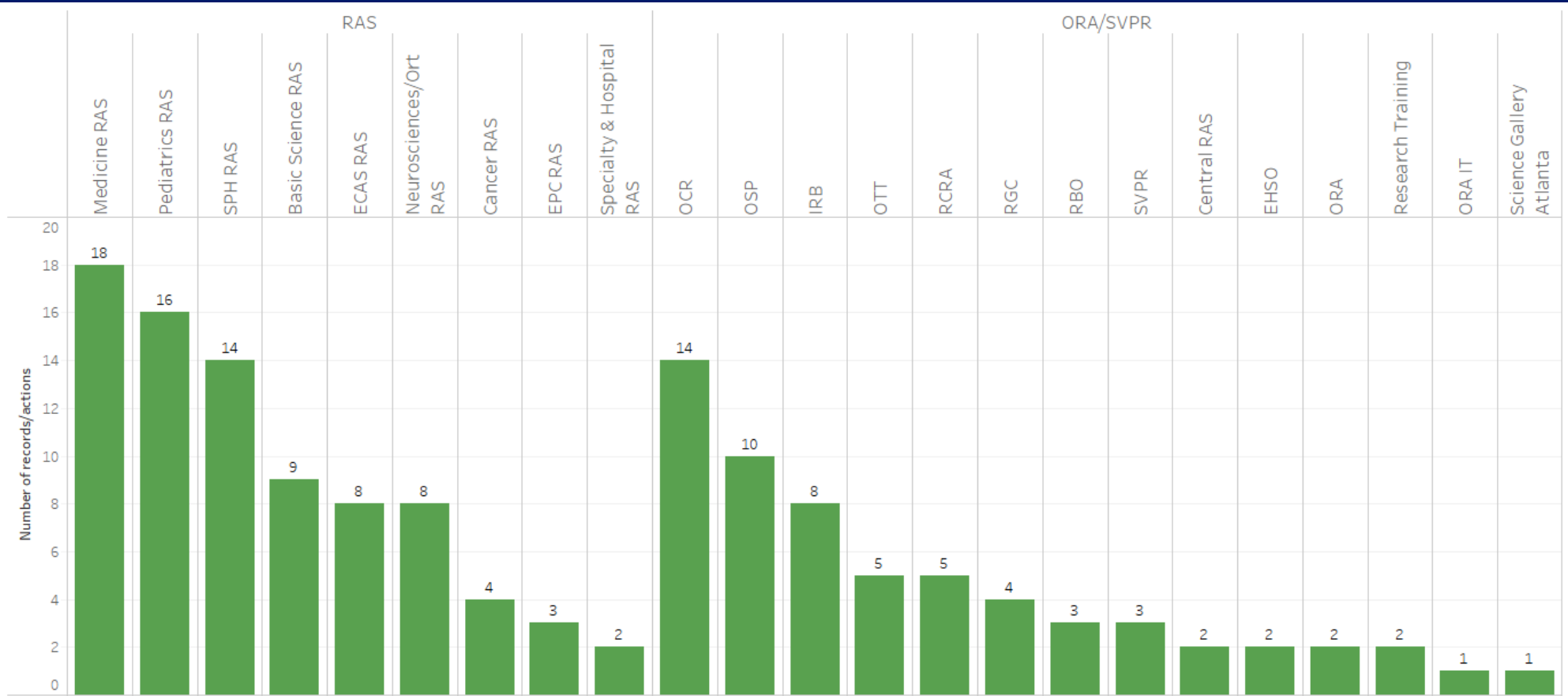
Source: HRWeb



# FY2022 Number of Departures by Department/Unit



# FY2022 Number of Positions Filled by Department/Unit

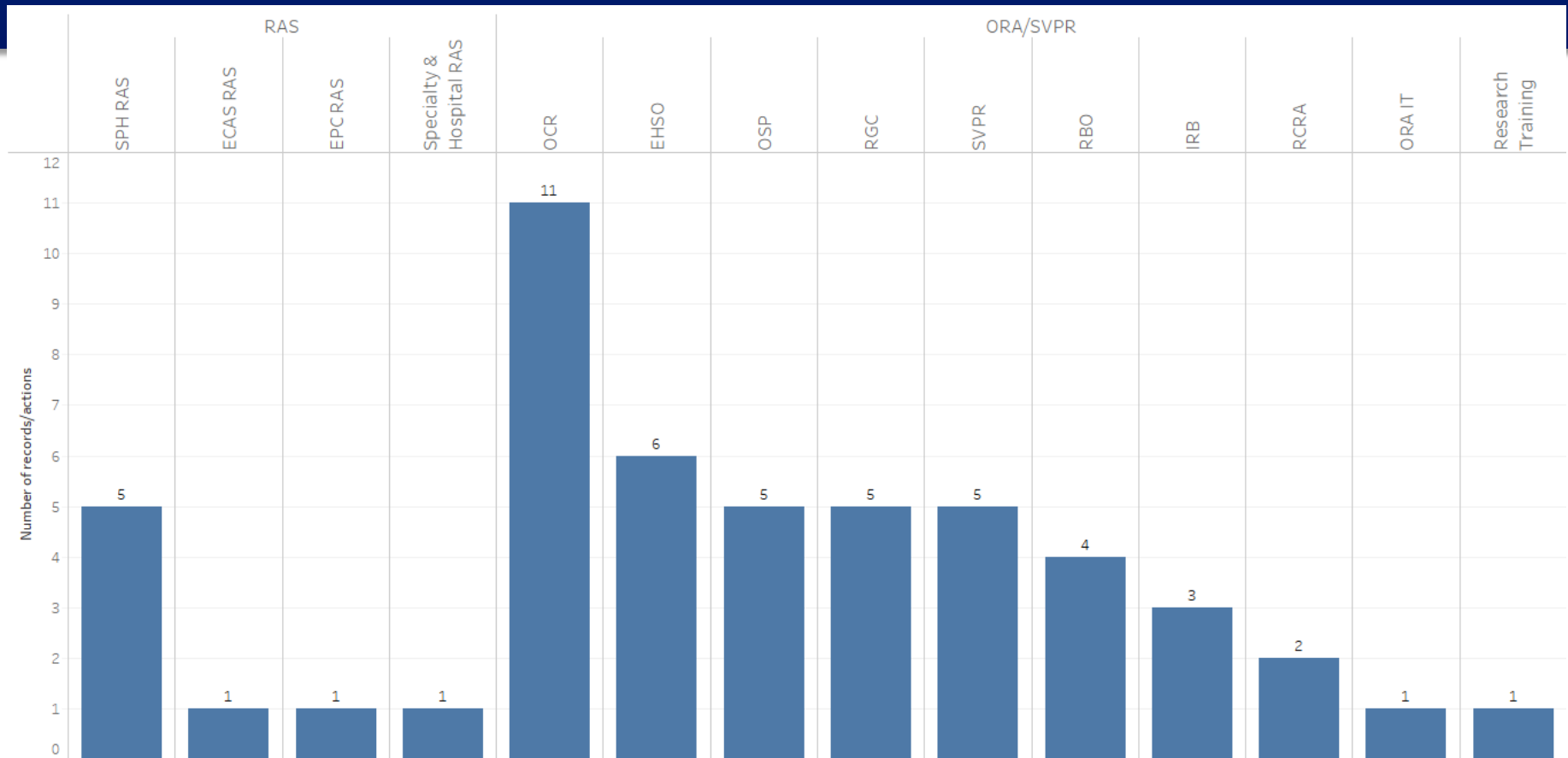


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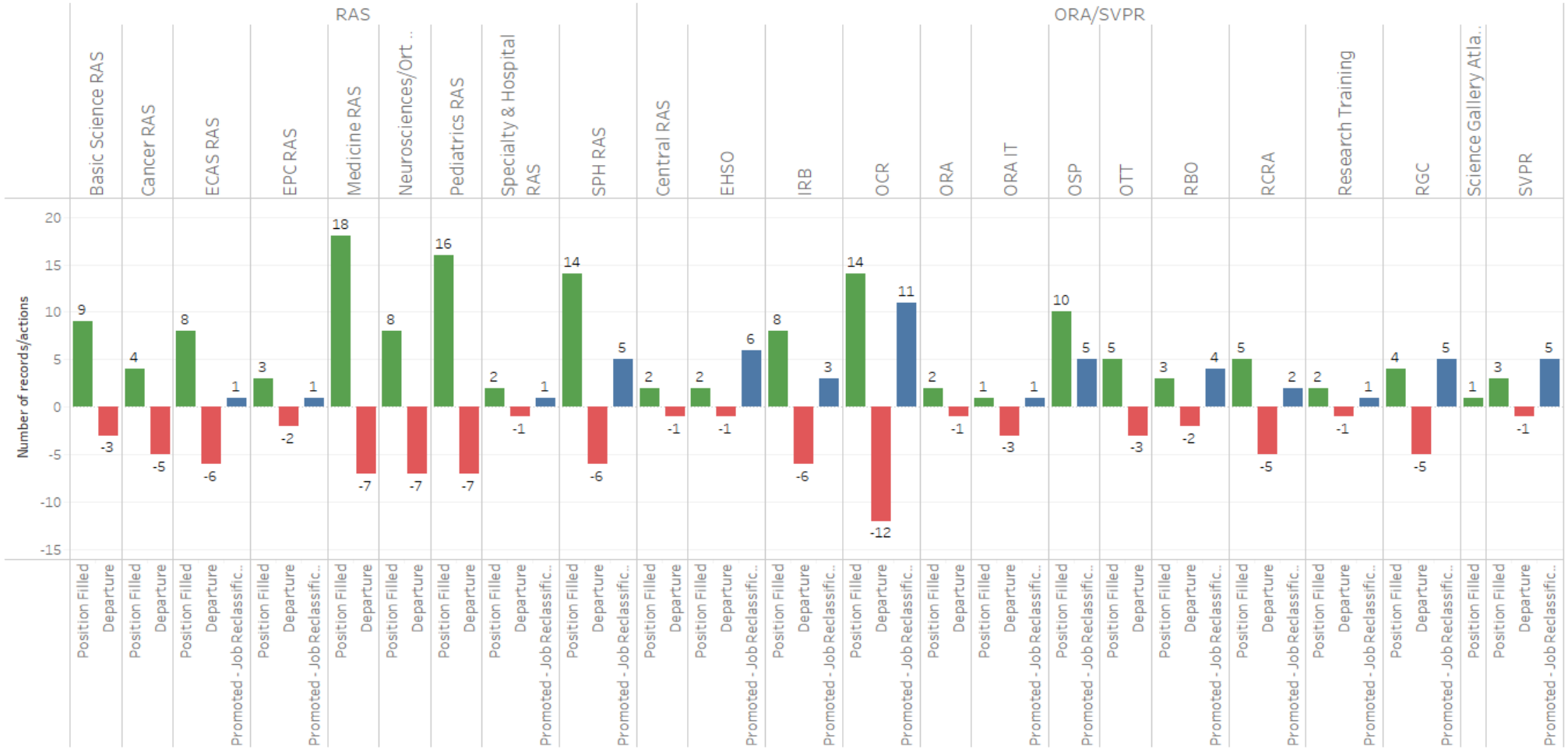
Source: HRWeb



# FY2022 Number of Promotions by Department/Unit



**FY22 ORA HR Action Report**  
**Positions Filled, Departures, and Promotions**  
**By Area and Department**  
**(144 Positions filled, 85 Departures, and 51 Promotions)**



## FYTD23 Research Administration Positions Filled and Departures Overview

- 103 positions filled in Research Administration
  - 57 new hires (new to Research Administration and Emory)
  - 24 promotions open recruitment (internal Research Administration candidates)
  - 8 transfer-ins (from other Emory departments to Research Administration)
  - 13 rehires (prior Emory or Research Administration employment)
  - 1 lateral transfer (from one research administration department to another)
- 6 internal Research Administration promotions (promotions – job reclassifications)
- 33 total departures
  - 28 exits (left Research Administration and Emory completely)
  - 4 transfer-out (from Research Administration to other Emory departments)
  - 1 retiree

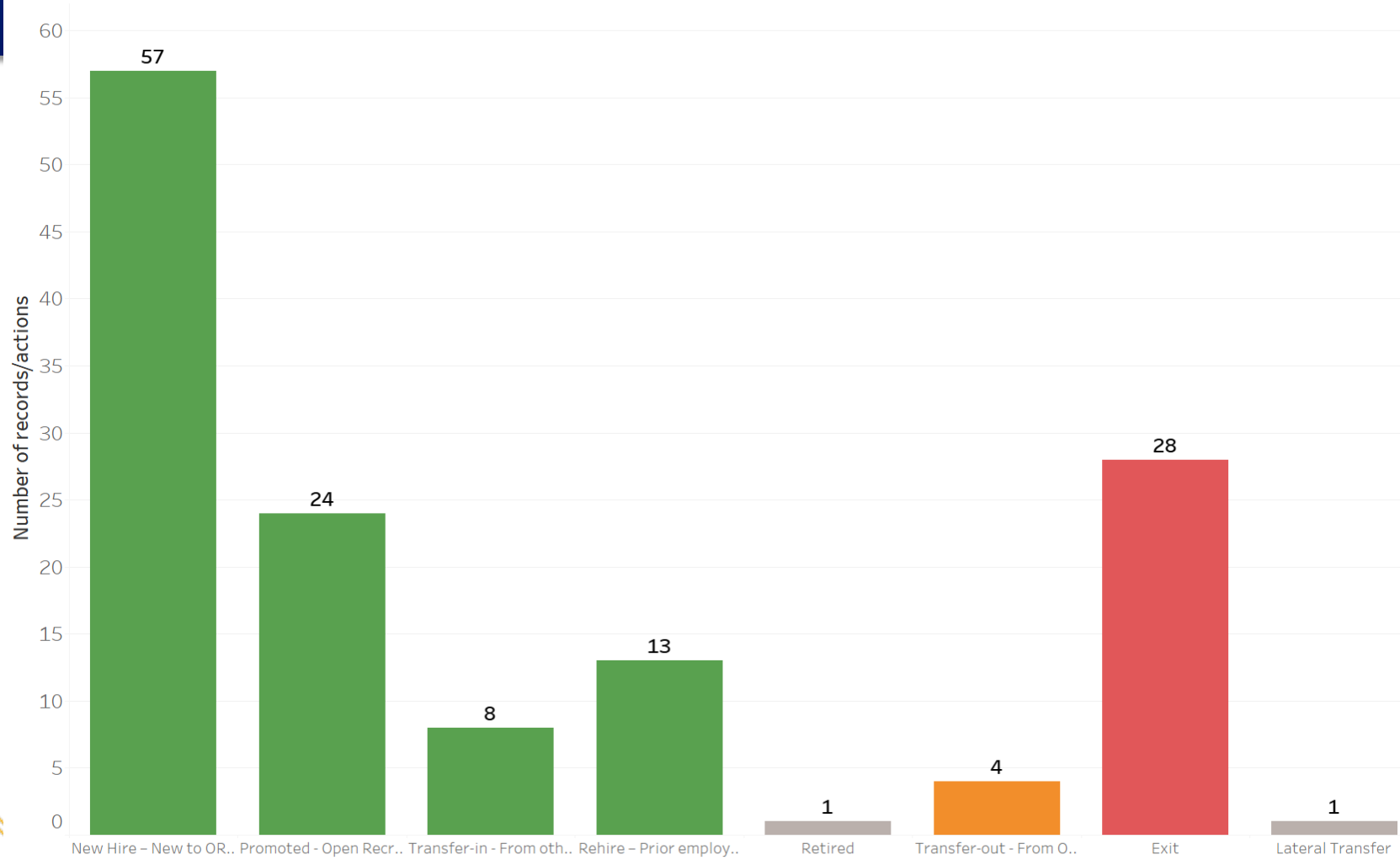
Counts are record/action counts, not necessarily unique employee headcounts

For example, employee might have been promoted more than once or employee might have joined and departed within FYTD23

Source: HRWeb



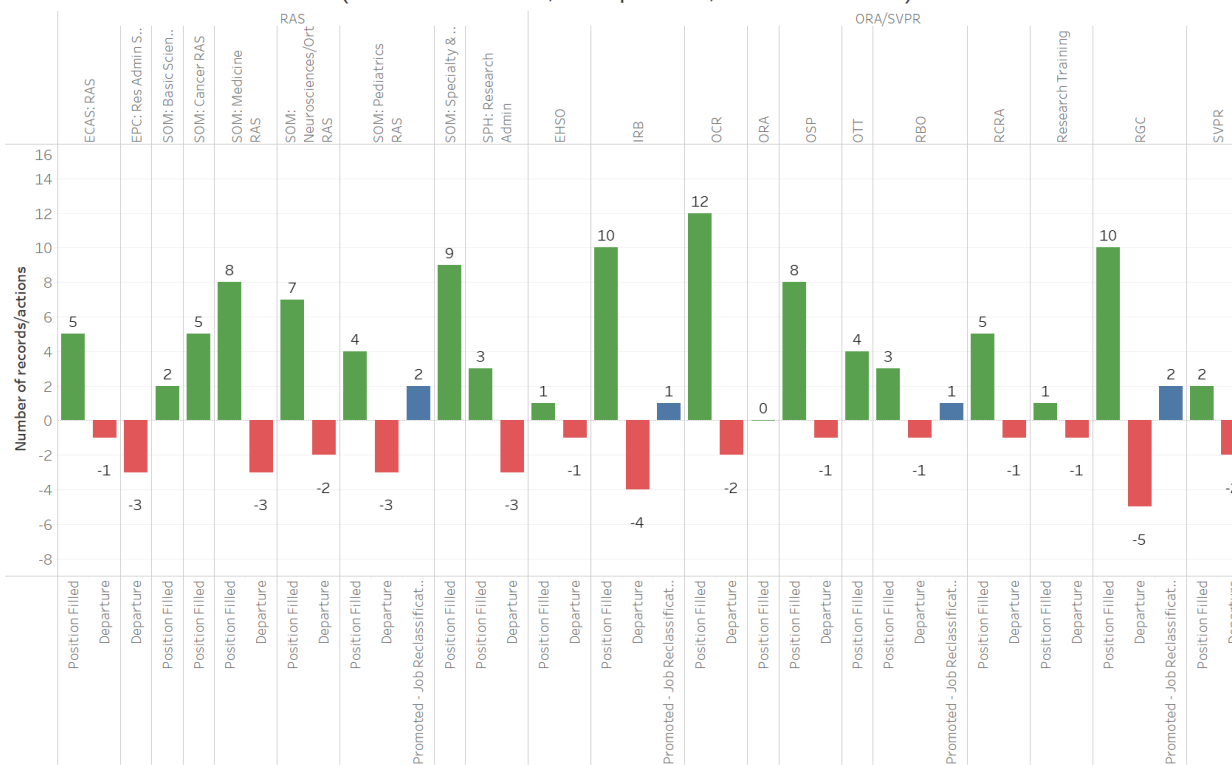
FYTD23 Q1 and Q2 ORA HR Action Report  
By Positions Filled and Departure Types  
(103 Positions filled and 33 Departures)





# FYTD23 Research Administration Positions Filled and Departures Overview

FYTD23 Q1 & Q2 ORA HR Action Report  
Positions Filled, Departures, and Promotions  
By Area and Department  
(103 Positions filled, 33 Departures, and 6 Promotions)

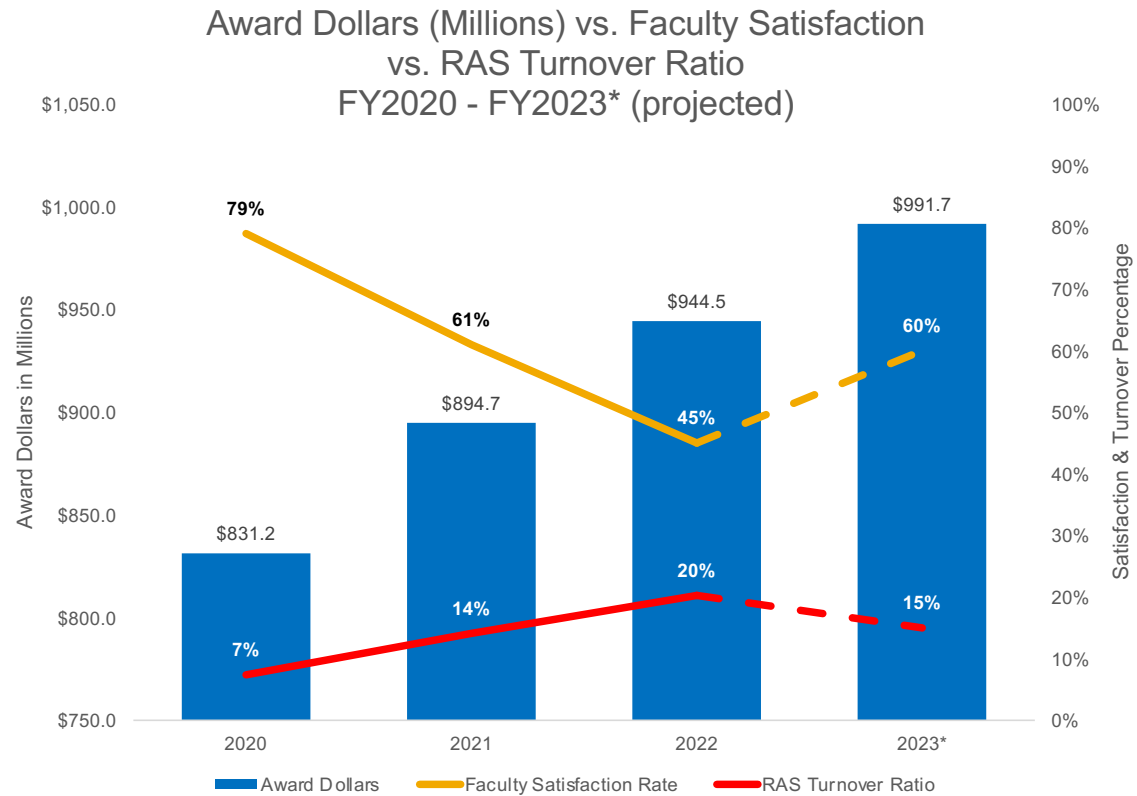


Source: HRWeb



# Faculty Satisfaction Trends Driven by Turnover and Awards

- Very strong positive correlation between award dollars or volume and staff turnover
- Very strong negative correlation between staff turnover and overall faculty satisfaction
- RAS Staff turnover FYTD23 is substantially down compared to FYTD22 (-40%)
- We expect faculty satisfaction to increase for FY2023



Source: Qualtrics, EBI, Central HR Turnover Dashboard

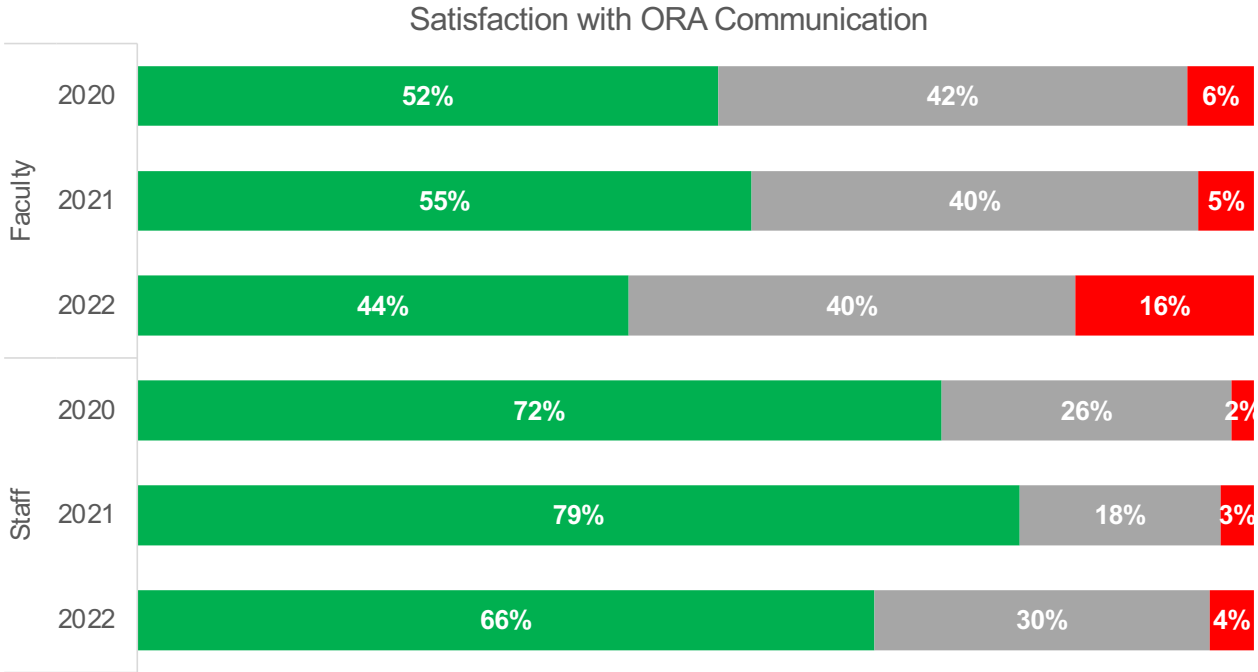


# Satisfaction with ORA Communication

In 2022:

84% of Faculty responses were positive or neutral

96% of Staff responses were positive or neutral

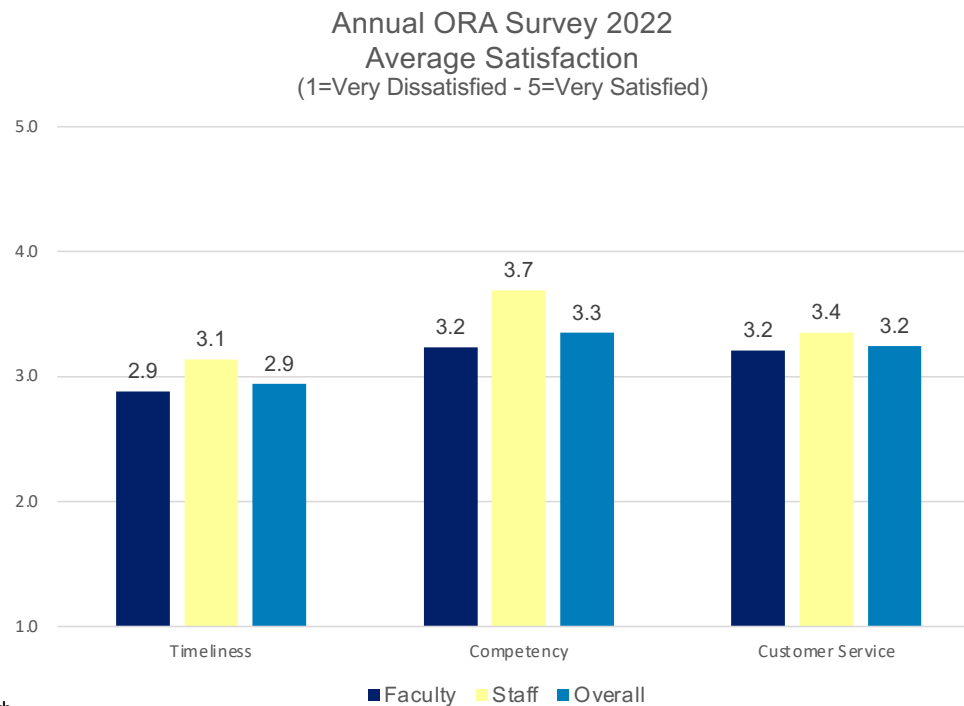


■ Positive ■ Neutral ■ Negative



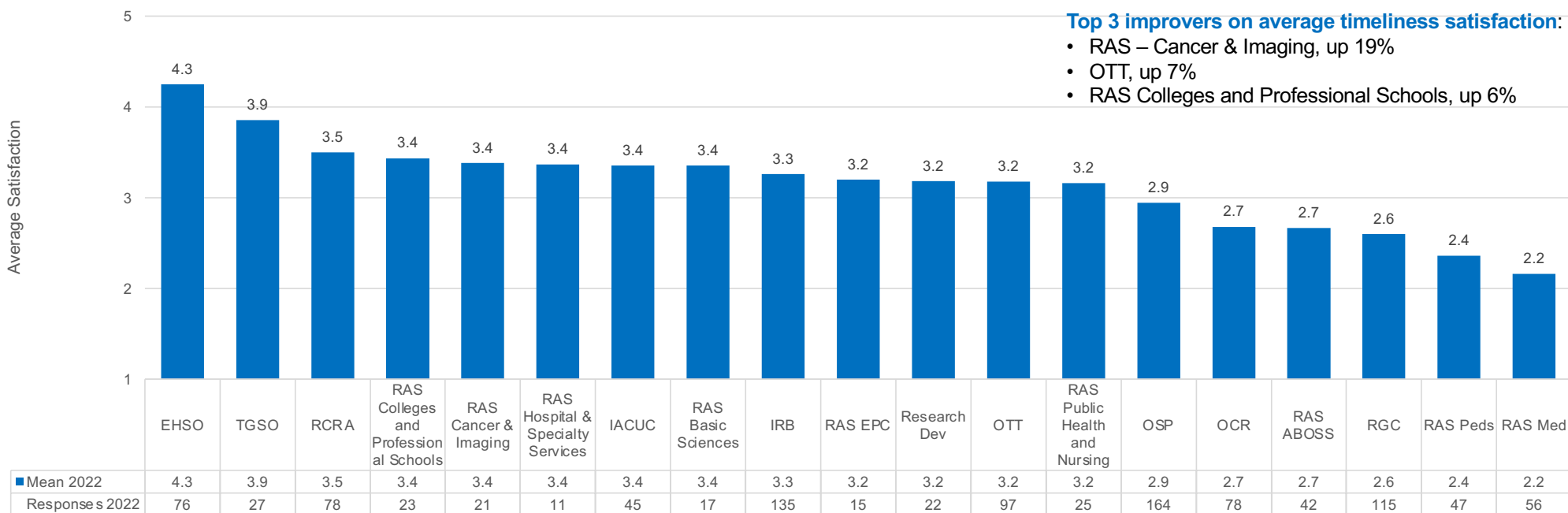
# Overall Satisfaction with Timeliness, Competence, & Customer Service

Average satisfaction is consistently higher for competence and customer service than for timeliness. This is the case for both faculty and staff respondents. Staff tends to be more satisfied than faculty.



# Average Satisfaction: Timeliness by Department/Unit

Average Timeliness Satisfaction 2022  
Faculty & Staff  
(1=Very Dissatisfied - 5=Very Satisfied)

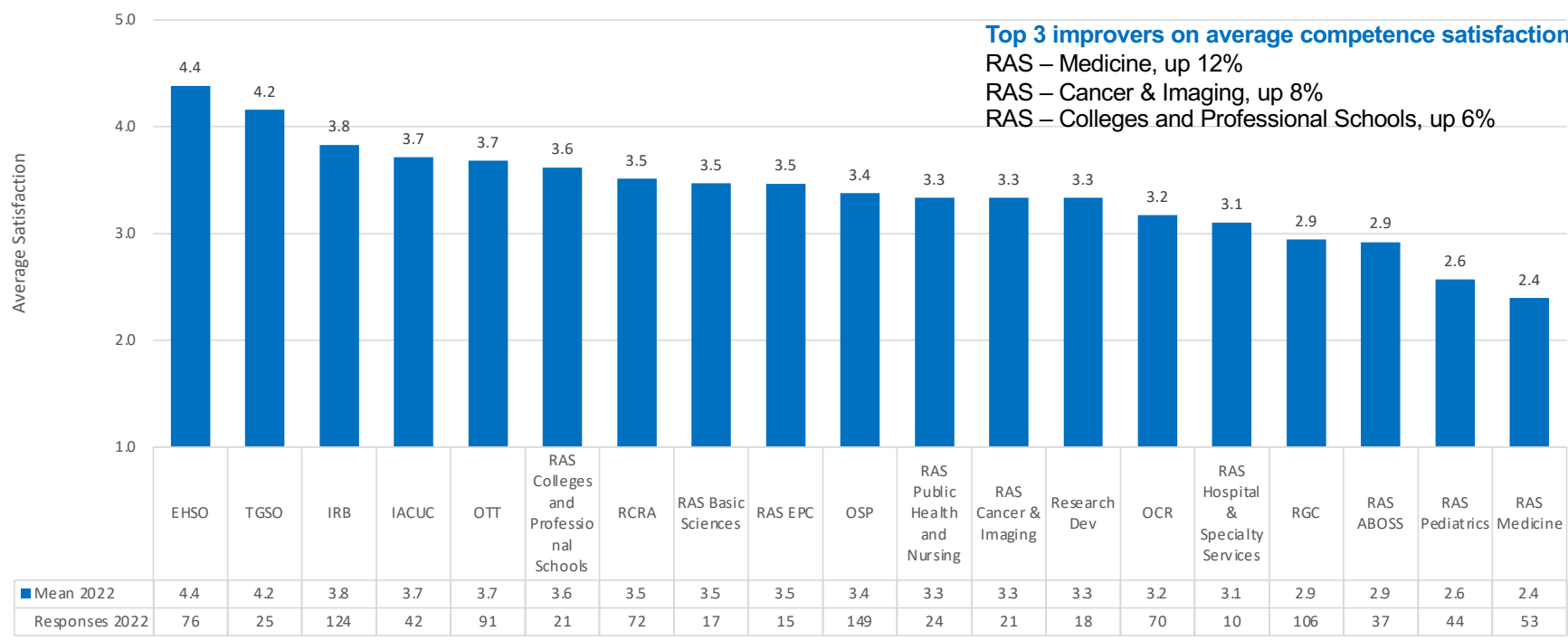


- Top 3 improvers on average timeliness satisfaction:**
- RAS – Cancer & Imaging, up 19%
  - OTT, up 7%
  - RAS Colleges and Professional Schools, up 6%



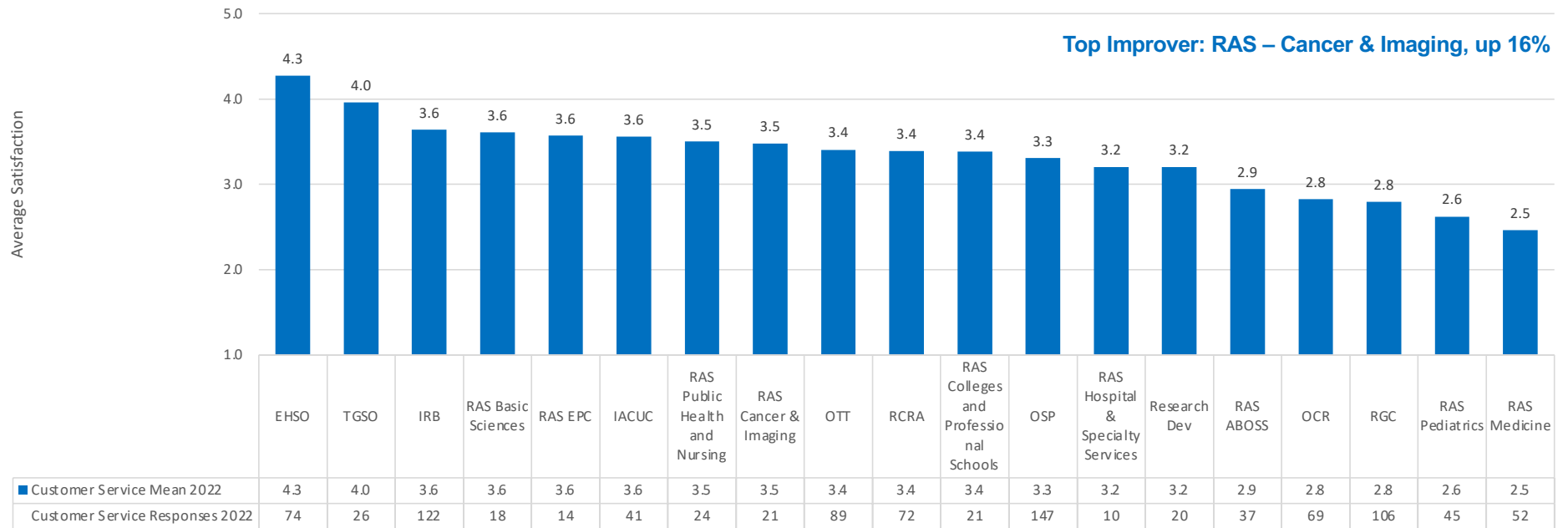
# Average Satisfaction: Competency by Department/Unit

Average Competency Satisfaction 2022  
Faculty and Staff  
(1=Very Dissatisfied - 5=Very Satisfied)



# Average Satisfaction: Customer Service by Department/Unit

Average Customer Service Satisfaction 2022  
Faculty & Staff  
(1=Very Dissatisfied - 5=Very Satisfied)



# RAS Correlations: Volume, Departures, and Average Satisfaction

There is a clear overall impact of work volume and average satisfaction scores:

- RAS units with average timeliness satisfactions of 3.2 or higher had an average volume of 769 proposals/awards
- RAS units with average timeliness satisfactions of 2.7 or lower had an average volume of 1,219 proposals/awards
- The same is the case for competence and customer satisfaction levels for scores above and below 3.0.



The RAS Unit is the level of analysis, n=9.

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).





## Quotes from Faculty

- “Responsiveness is the main issue. Even a message such as “I will do this in the next 48 hours” rather than complete silence as we are approaching deadlines that threaten our funding would be helpful.”
- “There's no clear instruction as to what everyone does. Most of the time, I'm lost. I need a concierge to walk me through everything I need.”
- “More communication and transparency in the pre award and post award processing”
- “Really need to prioritize fixing post-award management and getting faculty support for grants once funded. Pre-award grant submissions is going ok despite being noticeably understaffed. Pay these people more perhaps and maybe they will stay longer.”
- “Running lean is not running efficient. I understand we are in a budget crisis, but funding staff is an investment in our future eminence, and I encourage you to consider how we can prioritize more staff positions to help us run efficiently.”
- “A new functional system is needed. Emory has nearly \$1 billion in research funding each year but hasn't invested in the necessary infrastructure to support the research enterprise.”





# Questions and Discussion





## THANK YOU

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

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