

GWEN WATSON, MBA, SPHR, CPM



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategic and people-centered Chief Human Resources Officer with 20+ years of progressive leadership across healthcare, government, and higher education. Proven track record in organizational transformation, workforce strategy, crisis management, and building high-trust cultures. Known for aligning HR operations with mission, values, and measurable outcomes – while putting people over processes.

EDUCATION

University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Master of Business Administration, Bryan School of Business and Economics

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Bachelor of Arts in Industrial Relations

- Certified Public Manager
- Certified Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR)
- Certified Mediator
- Study Abroad Experience – Doing Business in Mannheim, Germany (Spring 2010): Attended classes at Mannheim University on the German and European economy, marketing, knowledge management and world finance; made company visits to BASF, Porsche, WOB, and Alstom.

CORE LEADERSHIP STRENGTHS

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ▪ HR Strategy & Transformation | ▪ Executive Advisory & Governance |
| ▪ Policy Development & Compliance | ▪ Classification & Compensation |
| ▪ Crisis & Change Management | ▪ Culture Building & Engagement |
| ▪ Employee Relations | ▪ Talent Acquisition & Retention |
| ▪ Data Analysis & Workforce Reporting | |

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR

March 2024 – Present

South Carolina Department of Mental Health/Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
Columbia, SC

- Direct and lead a Central HR Office of 40+ staff in the delivery of HR services including Payroll, Classification and Compensation, Employee Relations, Benefits, and Talent Services for an agency/office of approximately 3,500 employees.
- Serve as senior advisor to the Acting State Director/Office Director and executive leadership on state and federal HR policy, workforce strategy, and organizational risk.
- Develop and establish HR strategic goals and objectives that align with the agency's mission and vision.
- Develop and implement HR policies that align with state and federal rules and regulations.
- Ensure guidance and training is provided to HR representatives located in the regional community health centers and administrative assistants with HR responsibilities in the in-patient and central administration divisions.
- **Achievements**
 - Led HR's role in ensuring the agency's major organizational restructuring of the Division of Inpatient Services (DIS) was successfully communicated and implemented for impacted staff and departments.
 - Established agency-wide HR strategic goals (2024-2025) including recruitment, retention, operational efficiency, and HR centralization.
 - Designed and launched "tHRive", a culture framework grounded in trust, balance, inclusion, and engagement.
 - Developed HR Core Values emphasizing Competence, Compassion, Collaboration, and Commitment.
 - Restructured Central HR office in December 2024 for more effective management of services.
 - Successfully managed HR's role in the transition of the Stone Veterans Facility to the Department of Veterans Affairs, reassigning ~45 employees while maintaining continuity of care.
 - Developed a concept for centralizing Human Resources.
 - Improved our Separation process for employees voluntarily leaving the agency.
 - Updated and reestablished a new online Exit Survey.
 - Oversaw the implementation of the State's new Classification and Compensation System for the agency.

HR DEPUTY DIRECTOR

November 2019 – February 2024

South Carolina Judicial Branch, Human Resources
Columbia, SC

- Acted on behalf of the HR Director in her absence and partnered in the management of daily operations.
- Provided branch-wide oversight, responsibility and management of Employee Relations, its policies and best practices.
- Provided counsel and guidance to managers and senior leaders in a complex and challenging environment across the full range of employee matters, and best practices in employee relations, organizational development, workforce planning and performance management.
- Responsible for managing all HR policies, including the development of new policies, and keeping current policies updated.

- Partnered with the HR Director in crafting all branch-wide communications from HR and at times on behalf of the Chief Justice for the Supreme Court.
- Led a team of managers who provide services in the areas of Benefits and Retirement, FMLA/ADA/WC, Staff Training, and Records Management and Employee Business Services.
- Assisted and served on the branch-wide crisis management team to provide leadership during the COVID19 pandemic, managed infectious and exposure cases, created workplace safety guidelines and return to work plans, provided remote work guidance and other work accommodations.
- Responsible for the Emergency Action Plan and served as the Senior Emergency Coordinator for the Calhoun Building.
- COVID-19 Crisis Management Responsibilities:
 - Member of the Branch's Crisis Management Team
 - Collaborated with HR Director and the State Court Administrator in crafting numerous communication documents regarding remote work, return to work, workplace safety guidelines, and COVID-19 protocols and requirements.
 - Established process and procedures for managing COVID-19 cases and protocols for isolation and quarantine events.
 - Established process and procedures for managing COVID-19 vaccination status among employees.
 - Established process and procedures for managing the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and employee requests for work accommodations due to school closures.
 - Provided reports, data, and data analysis to the Chief Justice and other members of the Crisis Management Team.

DIRECTOR, HR BUSINESS PARTNERS & EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

April 2017 – Oct 2019

University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Human Resources
Greensboro, NC

- Provided key oversight, responsibility and management of the Employee Relations and HR Business Partners Office.
- Led the university's efforts to provide critical oversight and management of the employee relations programs, as well as served as Senior HR Business Partner in providing strategy, advice and guidance to senior leaders including Deans, Schools and Colleges, and central senior administrative leaders.
- Provided counsel to the most senior leaders in a complex and challenging environment across the full range of employee matters, and best practices in employee relations, organizational development, workforce planning and performance management
- Managed a team of two HR Business Partners and one Employee Relations Specialist.

Special Appointments:

- Modernizing Administrative Processes (MAP) project team. Appointed by the Provost, and Vice Chancellors for Information Technology and Business Affairs and charged with studying administrative tasks related to finance, human resources and information technology performed outside the central offices.

Projects & Implementations:

- Project Sponsor for the implementation of the PeopleAdmin performance management module

- Project Sponsor for the implementation of HR Acuity employee relations case management system.
- Rolled out the implementation of the new Performance Management Policy for staff employees; trained over 700 university supervisors and employees.

HR BUSINESS PARTNER

May 2015 – March 2017

University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Human Resources
Greensboro, NC

- Managed Classification/Compensation and Employee Relations services for classified and nonclassified administrative and support positions/employees for one-third of the campus.
- Provided professional consulting and analysis services for classification and compensation affecting personnel transactions, job design and organizational structure, including:
 - Conducting classification and equity studies primarily for EHRA (Exempt from Human Resources Act) Administrative and Professional positions as designated by UNC General Administration.
 - Completing independent analysis and documentation through research and identifying workforce trends.
 - Conducting salary assessments using current labor market data resources such as Colleges and University Professional Association for HR (CUPA HR) and UNC General Administration salary ranges.
 - Participating in and conducting salary surveys (IT, Executive Compensation, Public Safety Officer positions)
- Developed and conducted workshops on classification and compensation policies, procedures and processes.
- Generated reports for and responded to inquiries from General Administration, Office of State Human Resources, university administration and other constituents. Reports included the Quarterly Salary Increase Monitoring Report, Institutional Management Flexibility Plan, and HR Datamart reports.
- Managed the HR Advisory Board submission process for Senior Academic Administrative Officer positions.
- Managed the Board of Governors' Salary Request submission process for proposed salary increases requiring preapproval from the University System Office.
- Member of the Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs Director's Group.
- Member of the Associate Vice Chancellor for HR's senior leadership staff and actively engaged in the development and implementation of strategic goals and plans.
- Member of the UNC System Compensation Network.
- Member of the Employee Relations Cluster Team to review and address disciplinary and grievance actions.

COMPENSATION MANAGER

November 2012 – April 2015

University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Human Resources
Greensboro, NC

- Managed the Classification and Compensation unit for SHRA (Subject to Human Resources Act) and EHRA Non-faculty (Exempt from Human Resources Act) positions.

- Provided professional consulting and analysis services for classification and compensation affecting personnel transactions, job design and organizational structure, including:
 - Conducting classification and equity studies primarily for EHRA Administrative and Professional positions as designated by UNC General Administration.
 - Completing independent analysis and documentation through research and identifying workforce trends.
 - Conducting salary assessments using current labor market data resources such as CUPA and UNC General Administration salary ranges.
 - Participating in and conducting salary surveys (IT, Executive Compensation, Police)
- Developed and conducted workshops on classification and compensation policies, procedures and processes.
- Generated reports for and respond to inquiries from General Administration, Office of State Human Resources, university administration and other constituents. Reports include the Quarterly Salary Increase Monitoring Report, Institutional Management Flexibility Plan, and HR Datamart.
- Served as a member of the HR Banner Users Group, comprised of representatives from Information Technology, Academic Affairs, and Business Affairs to address updates and issues surrounding Banner, the university's enterprise resource program.
- Member of the Associate Vice Chancellor for HR's senior leadership staff and actively engaged in the development and implementation of strategic goals and plans.
- Member of the UNC Compensation Network.
- Served on the UNC General Administration's HR Advisory Board working teams for SHRA (Staff) positions to propose new competencies, job duties and salary ranges for jobs. The working team worked on the Law Enforcement and Public Safety job family, and the Information Technology job family.
- Member of the Employee Relations Cluster Team to review and address disciplinary and grievance actions.
- Member of the HR Advisory Group to engage and involve faculty, department heads, administrators, and staff in HR's planning processes, policies, programs, and initiatives.

Special Appointments:

- *Emergency Planning and Response Team (EPART)* – appointed to represent and execute emergency plans in the event of a major campus threat or disaster.

Interim Assignments:

- Assisted the Benefits team with the reconciliation of monthly retirement contributions until a Benefits Manager was hired.

HR CLASSIFICATION & COMPENSATION ANALYST

April 2010 – November 2012

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Human Resources
Greensboro, NC

- Provided professional consulting and analysis services for classification and compensation affecting personnel transactions, job design and organizational structure, including:

- Conducting classification and equity studies for positions Exempt from the Human Resources Act (EHRA) and Subject Human Resources Act (SHRA) as designated by the Office of State Human Resources and UNC General Administration.
 - Completing independent analysis and documentation through research and identifying workforce trends.
 - Conducting salary assessments using current labor market data resources such as College University Professional Association for HR (CUPA-HR), Job Categories (JCATs), and UNC General Administration salary ranges.
 - Participating in and conducting salary surveys.
- Facilitated workshops on classification, position development and re-design, salary administration, and the Career Banding compensation system.
- Generated reports for and respond to inquiries from General Administration, Office of State Personnel, university administration and other constituents. Reports include the Quarterly Salary Increase Monitoring Report.
- Served as a member of the Banner HR/Payroll team which oversees the monthly processing of the university's payroll. Attended and participated in monthly meetings and conference calls with Shared Services and members of the UNC FIT team.
- Participated in the Vice Chancellor for HR's leadership meetings and actively engaged in the development and implementation of strategic goals and plans.
- Attended UNC Compensation Network meetings.
- Participated in the IT Focus Group.

Special Appointments:

- *Emergency Management Development Team 2010* – appointed to implement and execute emergency plans in the event of a major campus threat or disaster.
- *Presidential Advisory Committee on Efficiency and Effectiveness 2010* – appointed with advisory responsibilities to increase efficiency, effectiveness and implement best practices throughout the University.

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT/ INTERIM BUDGET MANAGER

August 2002 – March 2010

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, University Advancement
Greensboro, NC

- Managed the Office of the Vice Chancellor by staffing and supervising clerical staff; managed the vice chancellor's calendar and corresponded and communicated to various constituents on his behalf.
- Facilitated and coordinated the hiring of administrative support staff by screening applications, interviewing candidates and making recommendations for employment offers.
- Managed the recruitment of executive level positions in the division; collaborated with hiring supervisors and the vice chancellor to review position needs; corresponded with applicants, maintained all applicant materials, arranged interviews, and completed the offer and hiring process.

- Promoted organizational development and cohesiveness by serving as Chair of the Quarterly Division Committee. Led a team of unit representatives to plan and execute effective and worthwhile quarterly division meetings, as well as the annual retreat.
- Facilitated and served as coordinator of the Strategic Planning Committee, which developed a comprehensive five-year plan for the division to include vision, mission, and values statements, SWOT analysis, strategic directions, and goals.
- Managed the division's financial accounts on an interim basis by conducting monthly reconciliation and regular revenue and expense reports.
- Interpreted and implemented policies and procedures from Budget and Human Resources.

Special Appointments:

- *Staff Senator* – elected by peers to represent and advocate the rights and concerns of employees with regard to human resource issues on state and institutional levels.
- *Grievance Committee* – appointed by the Chancellor to serve on a peer committee to hear and make recommendations with regard to employee grievances.
- *SACS Task Group Committee* – appointed by the Vice Chancellor to serve on the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools task group to meet and fulfill accreditation requirements for the university.

POSITION AND COMPENSATION MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR

July 1998 – August 2001

UNC Health Care System, Human Resources

Chapel Hill, NC

- Managed the hospital's more than 5,000 positions.
- Conducted salary surveys, compensation studies, and researched job histories.
- Developed and presented quarterly and annual reports to the Director of Human Resources.
- Conducted workshops for departments, teaching proper application for position action requests, job descriptions, and organizational charts.

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

October 2001 – 2002

Baby's World Daycare

Greensboro, NC

- Performed general accounting functions such as accounts receivable, accounts payable, bank reconciliation, and data entry for payroll.

ACCOUNTING TECHNICIAN

July 2001 – August 2002 *Health*

Serve Ministry/Moses Cone Health System

Greensboro, NC

- Performed general accounting duties for a non-profit organization that raised funds for HealthServe Medical Center, to provide healthcare for the poor and underinsured.

- Prepared bank deposits, monthly bank reconciliation, accounts payable and supported fundraising by attending events and facilitating donations.
- Prepared and presented monthly financial reports to the Board of Directors.

CERTIFICATIONS, MEMBERSHIPS, BOARDS & COMMITTEES

- **Senior Professional in Human Resources**
HR Certification Institute (HCI)
- **SHRM Columbia**
- **Certified Mediator**
- **SHRM-SCP** July 2015 (expired)
- **Certified Public Manager**
- **CPM Advisory Board 2025**

COMPUTER SKILLS

- Microsoft Office Suite – Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher
- PeopleAdmin talent suite (recruitment, position, performance modules)
- Ellucian Banner ERP System
- HR Acuity case management system
- South Carolina Enterprise Information System (SCEIS)
- OnBase

PERSONAL INTERESTS

- Book Author
- Music
- Sports