

Successful Methods of Addressing Clinical Research Staff Turnover

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Background

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Miami issued a system-wide hiring freeze that prevented the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center (SCCC) Clinical Research Services (CRS) office from filling vacant positions between March and November 2020. As shown in Figure 1, turnover during this time resulted in a deficit of 24 employees.

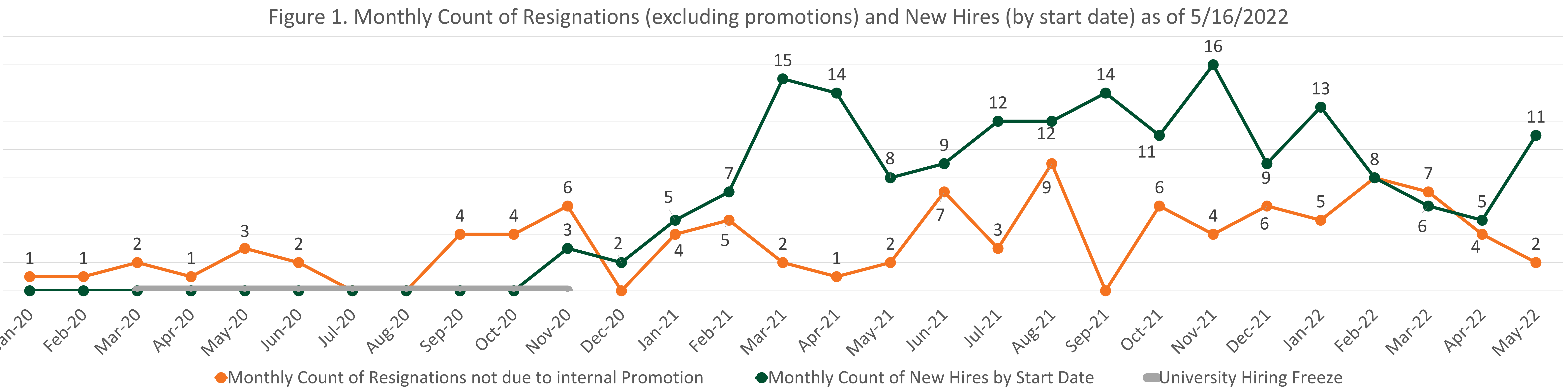
Goals

Due to the increasing number of resignations from August to November 2020, CRS leadership outlined several proactive measures to combat vacancies in the office. The goal was to quickly identify, recruit, and hire clinical research staff members.

Methods

To address this challenge, we developed innovative strategies to fill positions as quickly as possible including:

- Due to the impact of high turnover on clinical research operations, we instituted a 30% over-hire model, in which we opened additional positions for all functional areas of the CRS.
- Organized Hiring Huddles which met 3 times weekly with our Human Resources partners to monitor and discuss all open positions in clinical research.
- Created a Hiring Task Force team to quickly interview and evaluate candidates for high-priority positions and Site Disease Groups (SDGs) within 48 hours of application. Reviewed all existing and planned position levels.



Outcome

Staff turnover continued into 2022 for a total loss of 99 employees since the pandemic started. Our new hiring strategies facilitated the hiring of 180 staff members while recovering from a hiring freeze and working around multiple staff members being infected with the COVID-19 virus (Figure 1).

This method allowed us to provide coverage for staff that resign or are out of the office for extended periods of time without overburdening staff who would otherwise be required to carry the extra workload.

Through the Hiring Huddles, the team tracked data points throughout all stages of the hiring process and was able to identify the following trends:

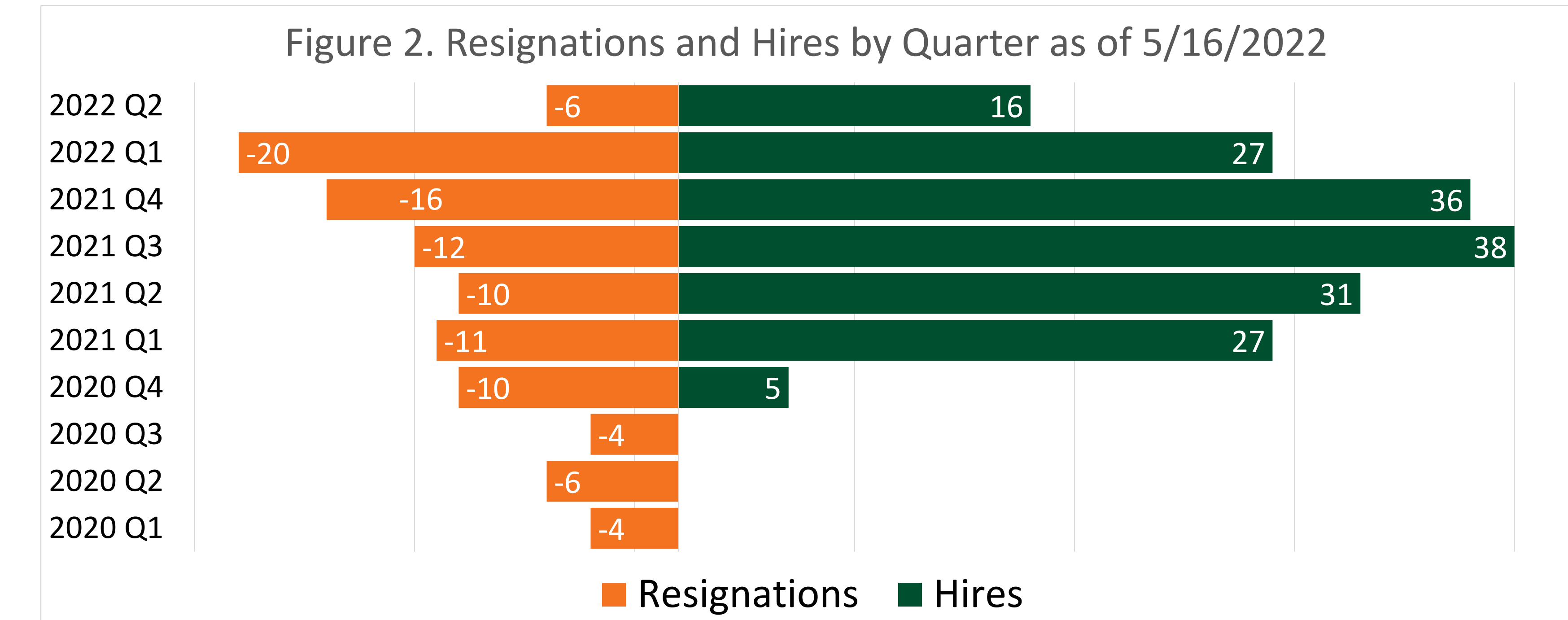
- Delays in offer approval timeline
- Delays in position request approval
- Delays in salary negotiation
- Lag in candidate communication

The Hiring Task Force scheduled all interviews with candidates for high-priority positions within 6 days and made offers within 1 week of initial interview.

We also documented that many of our staff members vacated SCCC positions for roles at our sponsor and CRO partners after being offered 40-100% salary increases, fully remote positions, and

additional benefits. In response, we created new position ladders to increase salaries for the following positions:

- Clinical Research Coordinators
- Clinical Research Managers
- Clinical Research Nurses
- Clinical Research Data Specialists
- Regulatory Staff



Future Plans

With the support of our clinical research leadership and Human Resources department, we will continue to restructure the CRS to streamline services, implement additional hybrid/remote work opportunities, and identify perks to offer employees, to ensure a robust Clinical Research Services office for the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center.

