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Background

Data and Regulatory career ladder limitations:

- Limited early portfolio management experience and abrupt transitions to full portfolio responsibility made advancement more challenging for regulatory specialists.
- Fewer advancement opportunities into senior-level roles contributed to employee dissatisfaction, compensation stagnation, and retention challenges for Data coordinators.

Operational impact:

- Limited career pathways reduced continuity in study oversight and preservation of institutional knowledge.
- Workforce instability limited development of internal expertise and long-term operational efficiency.

Program Manager (PM) readiness gap:

- Regulatory and data staff historically followed separate career ladders. While staff could transition into the PM role, experience was typically limited to either regulatory or data functions.

Goals

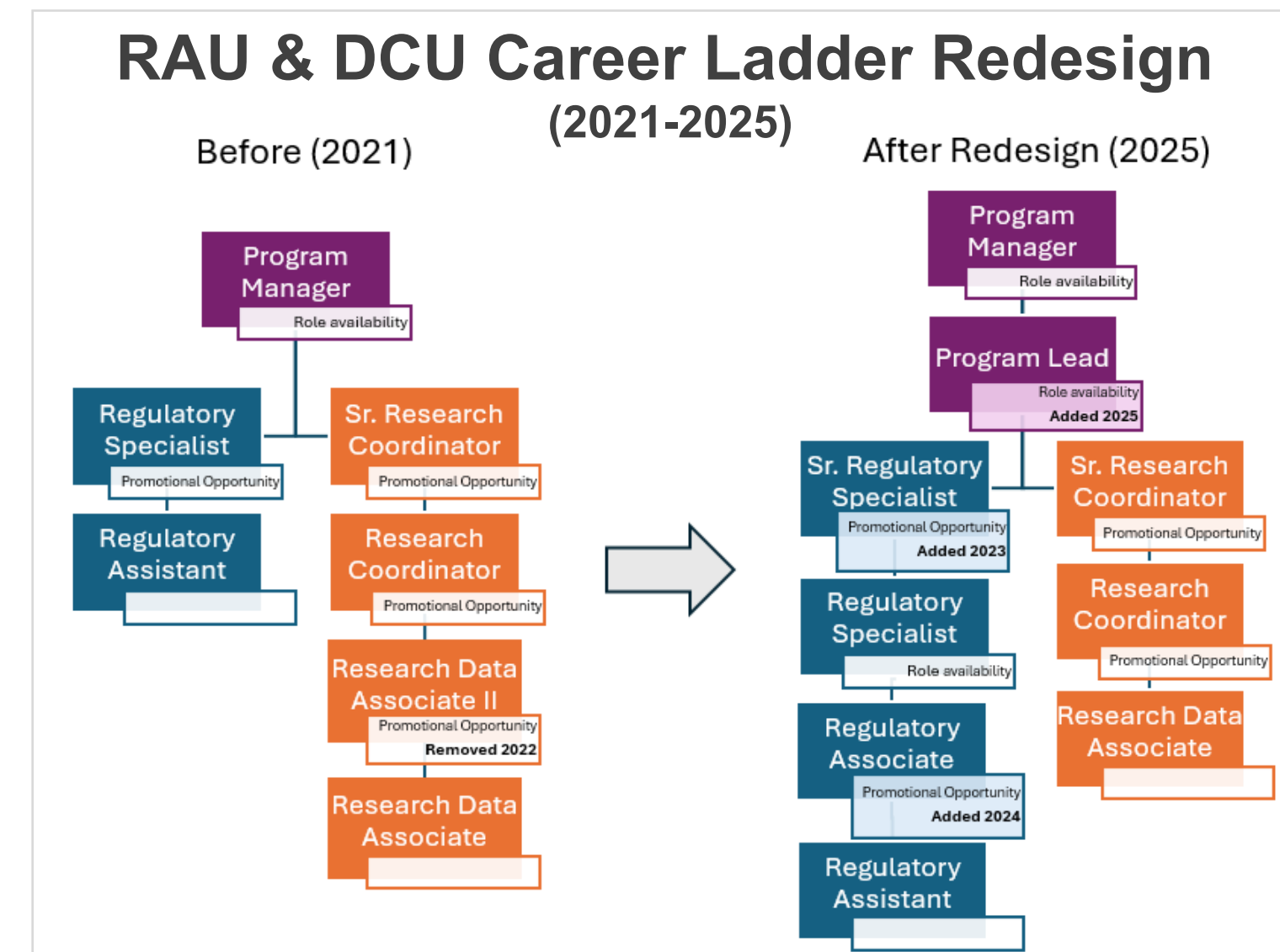
- Improve workforce retention through clearer and more supportive career pathways.
- Improve readiness for cross-functional leadership roles, including preparation for the PM role.

Solutions and Methods

To address these challenges, several new roles were introduced over time:

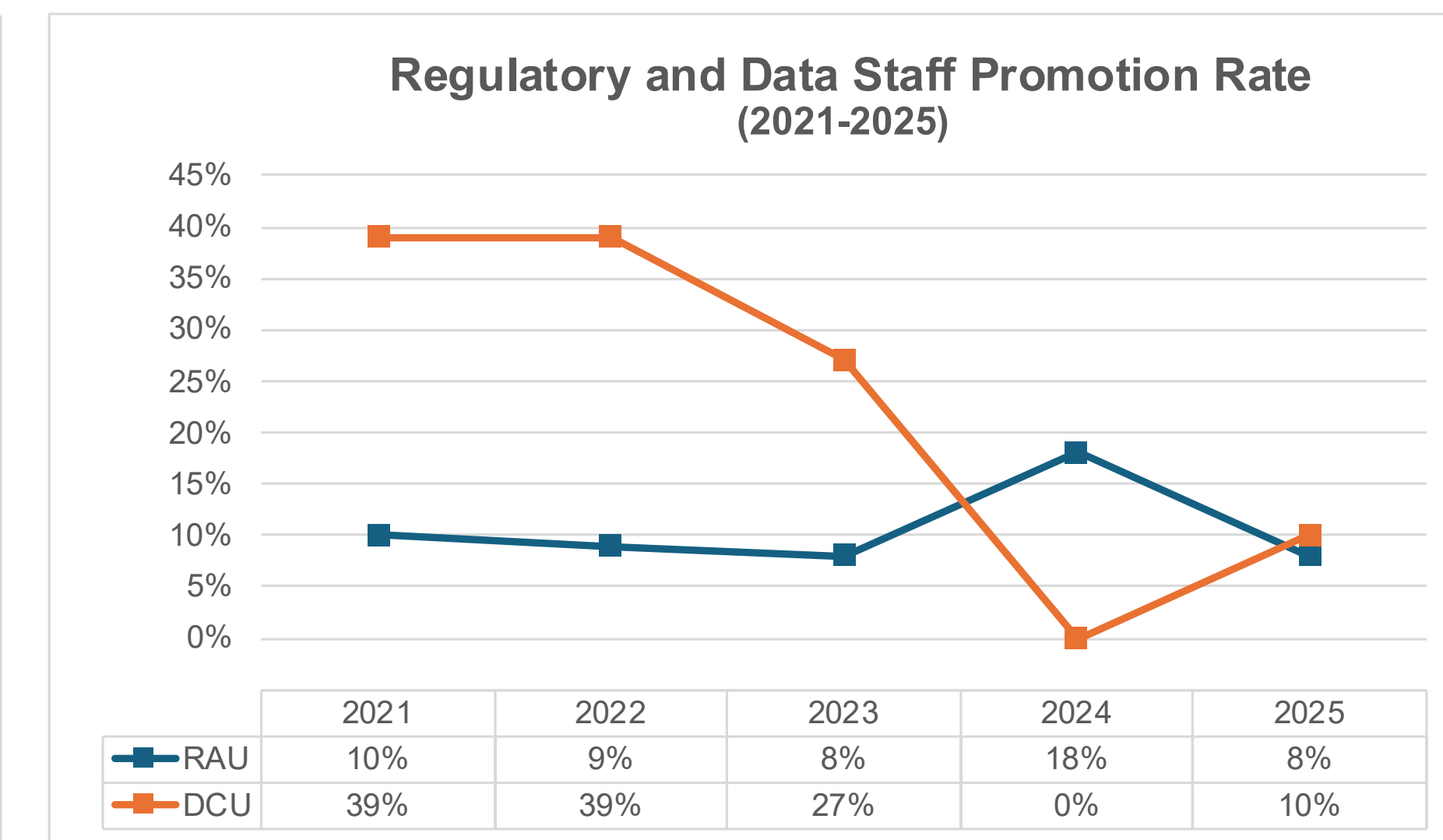
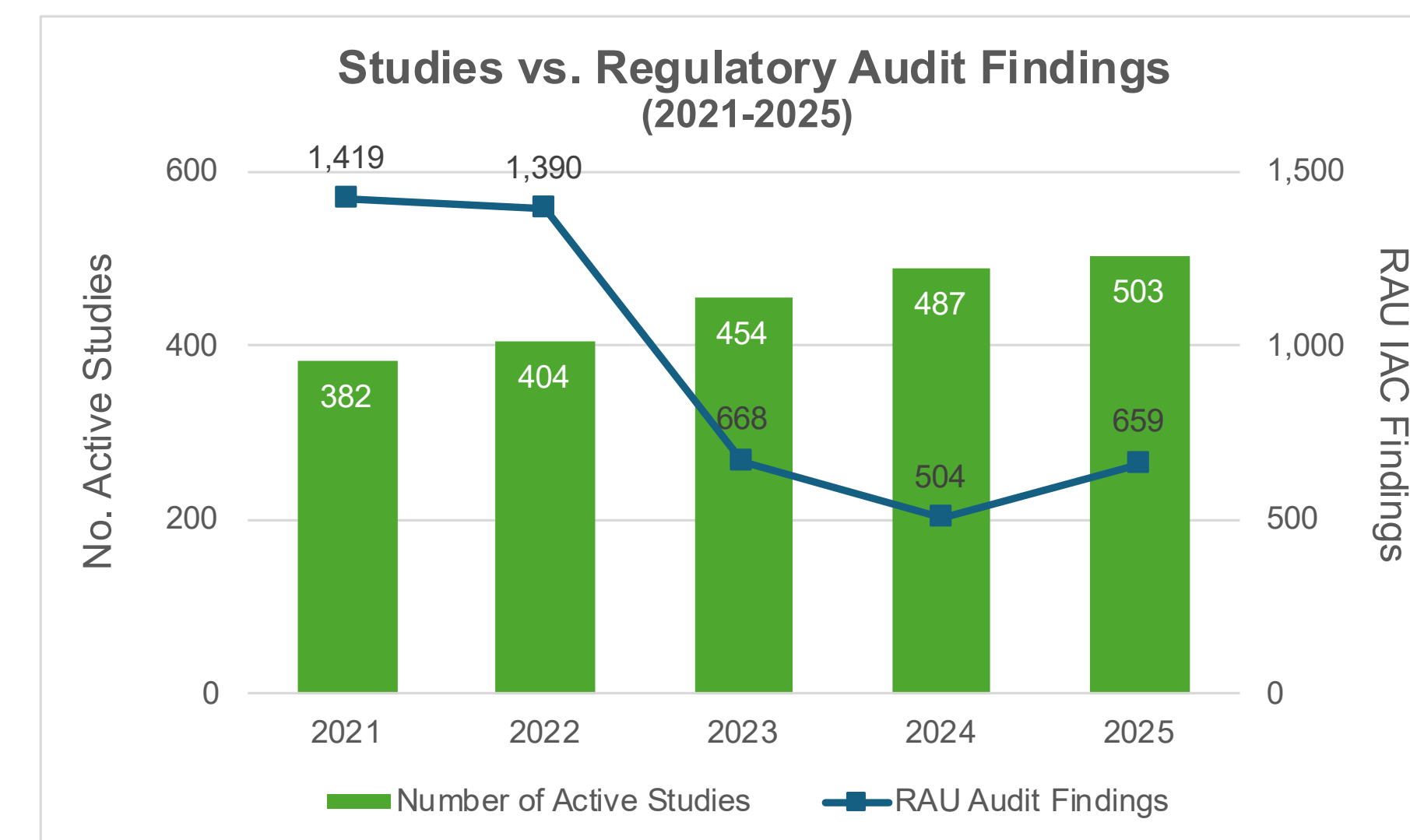
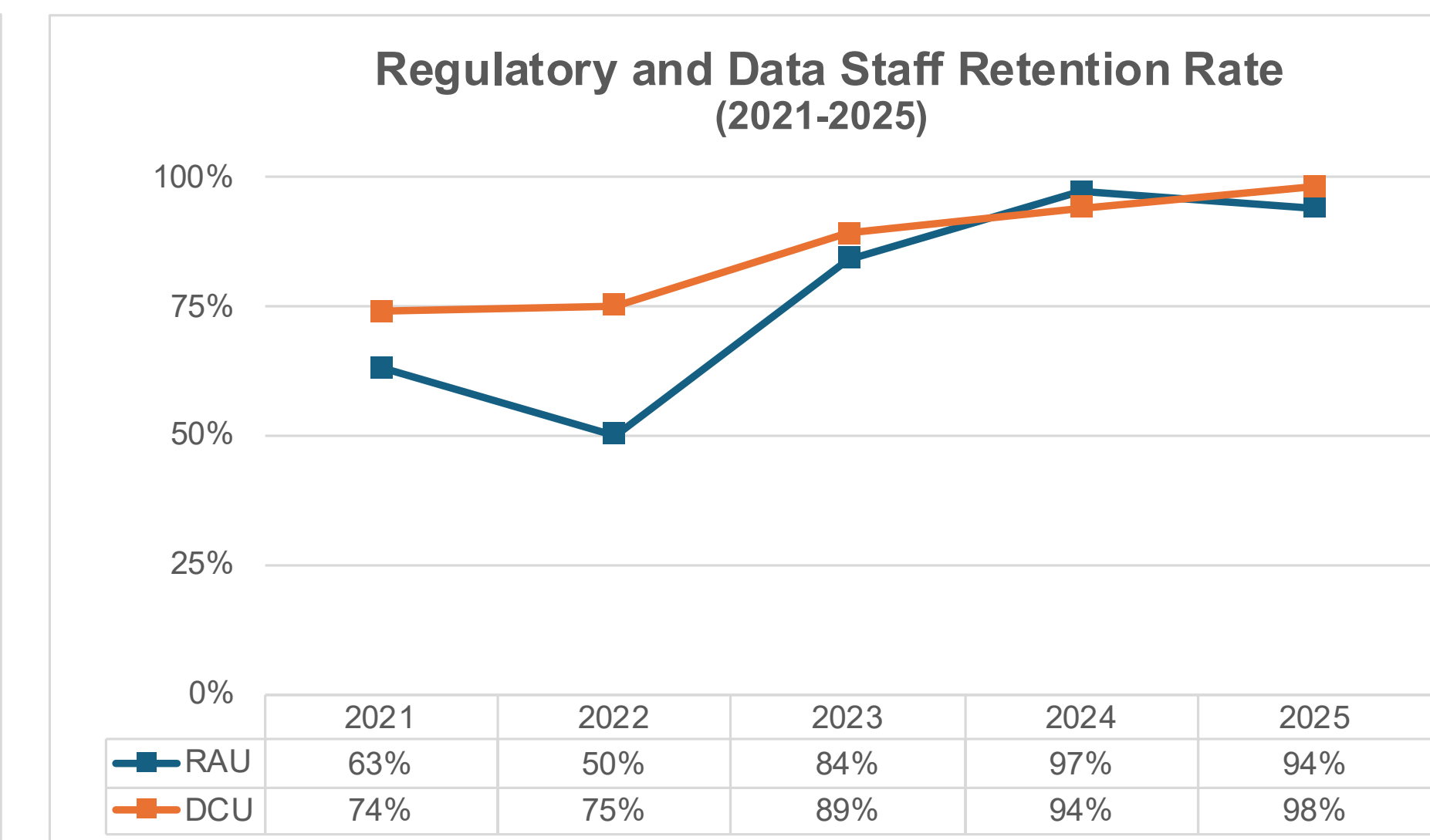
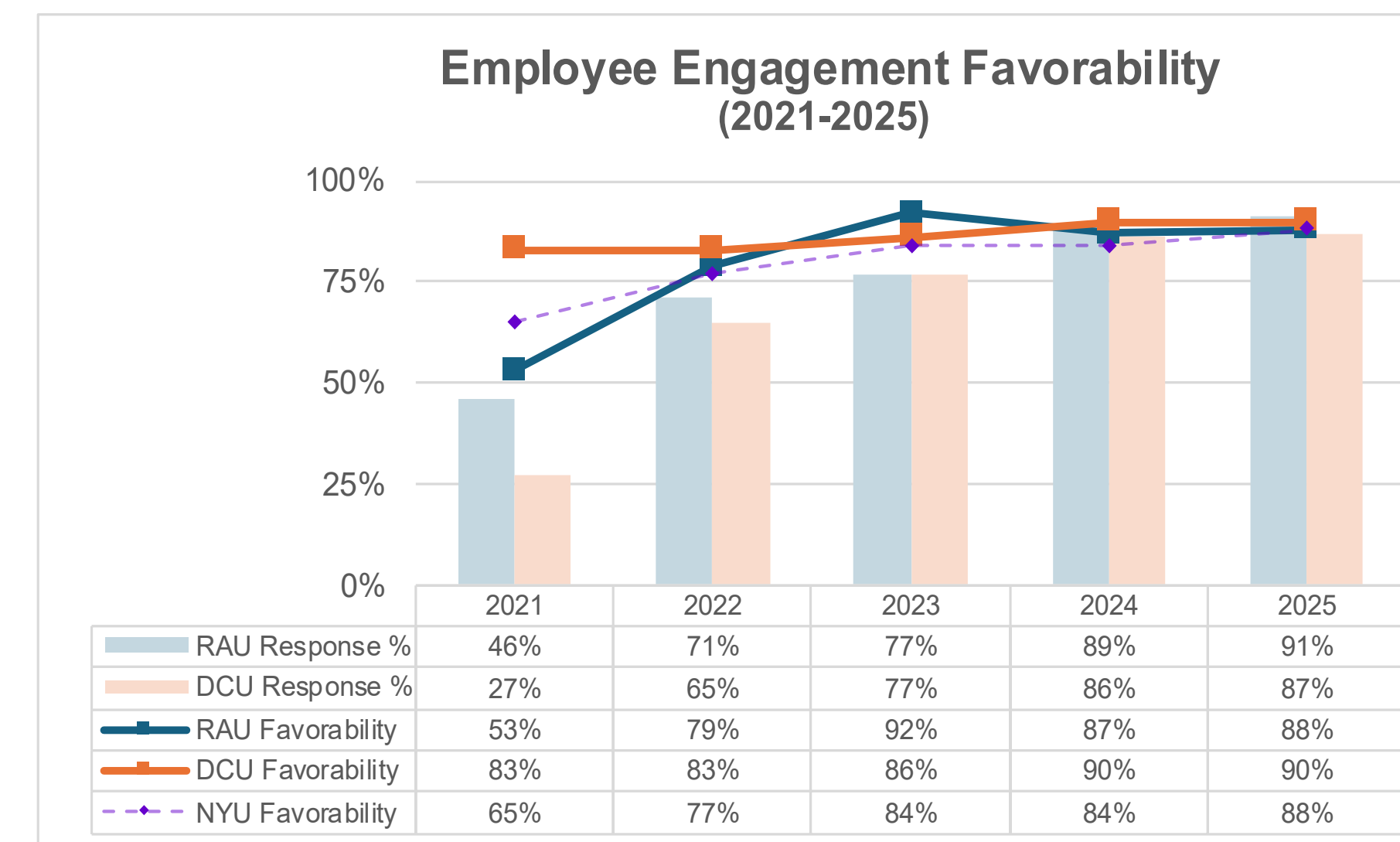
- Senior Regulatory Specialist (2023):** Created to provide advancement opportunities in post-activation side, previously only available for pre-activation.
- Regulatory Associate (2024):** Added as a bridge between Regulatory Assistant and Regulatory Specialist, providing early portfolio management exposure.
- Program Lead (PL) (2025):** Implemented as an intermediate role for Senior Research Coordinators and Senior Regulatory Specialists to strengthen programmatic oversight and cross-functional readiness for future PM responsibilities.

Evaluation methods included review of retention and promotion rates, employee engagement data from internal surveys, portfolio volume, and internal audit outcomes.



Outcomes

- Workforce stability improved, with higher retention rates among both regulatory and data staff.
- Internal mobility increased, reflected in greater promotion activity through newly established career pathways.
- Employee engagement improved, with higher favorability scores for career growth and job satisfaction meeting or exceeding institutional benchmarks.
- Organizational capacity strengthened, as study volume and portfolio complexity increased while regulatory audit findings declined.
- Early outcomes suggest positive impacts on workforce development, continuity, and operational performance.



Lessons Learned and Future Directions

Key lessons learned highlight the importance of providing early portfolio management exposure, structured cross-functional experience, and clearly defined advancement pathways prior to assuming PM responsibilities.

Future directions include expanding PL exposure to PM responsibilities, strengthening cross-training opportunities, and continuing to monitor retention, promotion, engagement, and quality metrics to inform ongoing career ladder improvements.