

Statement on “Best Places to Work Rankings”

by Ms. Lacey Dingman
Director, Office of Human Resources and Chief Human Capital Officer
U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission

before the

Subcommittee on Government Operations
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives

Chairman Meadows, Ranking Member Connolly, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to speak today regarding the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission’s (SEC) Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results and the improved rankings of Best Places to Work by the Partnership for Public Service. I am Lacey Dingman, the SEC’s Chief Human Capital Officer, and I am honored to have the opportunity to speak to you about the SEC’s efforts over the past five years to improve employee engagement. We are very pleased by the SEC’s improved employee engagement scores as reflected in the most recent FEVS results and by the recognition by the Partnership for Public Service as the “most improved” of any mid-sized agency. These positive results reflect the culmination of a persistent, multi-year effort by employees, the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU), and the SEC’s leadership team in working together to create an environment that engages employees and supports their commitment to excellence on behalf of America’s investors and our markets.

The mission of the SEC is to protect investors; maintain fair, orderly, and efficient markets; and facilitate capital formation. To achieve this mission, we rely on an exceptionally-skilled and dedicated workforce of over 4,750 employees in our Washington, DC Headquarters and 11 regional offices located throughout the United States. The SEC’s staff includes economists, accountants, compliance examiners, securities attorneys, quantitative analysts, information technologists, and administrative and operations personnel. Through their efforts, our employees strive every day to promote a market environment that is worthy of the public’s trust.

The Office of Personnel Management administered the 2016 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey at the SEC in May and June of last year. More than 76 percent of the eligible workforce shared their views by completing the survey. The response rate was our highest participation rate to date.

Notable results include:

- The SEC now ranks 6th among small- and mid-sized agencies in the Best Places to Work rankings. This is a significant improvement from our 27th place ranking in 2011.
- The FEVS survey results increased for 69 out of 71 (97%) questions, with an average increase of four percentage points.

- The SEC now ranks in the top 10 in most Best Places to Work categories, including work-life balance, training and development, strategic management and effective leadership.
- The SEC received recognition by the Partnership for Public Service for being “Most Improved” for mid-size agencies.
- The SEC now ranks 3rd in OPM’s Global Satisfaction Index with an 18 percent improvement compared to 2012. We also saw an 11 percent increase in both OPM’s Employee Engagement Index and the New Inclusion Quotient Index.

It has taken five years of effort by SEC management, the NTEU, and SEC employees at every level and across every division and office to achieve this progress. Our experience shows that any change of this magnitude cannot begin, nor succeed, without significant buy-in at the top and without significant involvement and constructive engagement from rank-and-file staff and their representatives. As a result of numerous meetings with senior managers, listening sessions with frontline employee teams, focus groups, and employee suggestions, the agency chose to focus on the following initiatives: improving communications across the agency and up-and-down the management chain; improving workforce engagement; greater recognition of employee contributions to the mission; and better leadership development and employee training opportunities.

Improving Internal Communications

Over the last several years the SEC has undertaken major efforts to improve internal agency communications. Representatives from every division and office across the SEC came together to discuss both formal and informal mechanisms to build, sustain, and encourage intra-agency communication and collaboration. As part of an initiative called “*All Invested*,” for example, agency senior leadership is holding periodic agency-wide Town Hall meetings with employees to communicate about topics of common interest and answer questions. The agency also strengthened its efforts to provide employees with regular messages on agency business, such as alerting them to upcoming Commission meetings and recognizing the contributions of staff who worked on the items under consideration. These efforts by senior leadership to communicate with staff, as well as holding events that bring employees together, have helped build a greater sense of mission across different divisions and offices within the agency.

The agency also has consistently highlighted the importance of communication and collaboration and stressed the value of teamwork and joint problem-solving through cross-divisional teams, groups, and task forces. We offered employee training and development opportunities focused on team building to help SEC employees effectively communicate with their peers, subordinates, and supervisors. These efforts have helped employees learn new ways to overcome obstacles and improve outcomes in their day-to-day work.

Our success in improving both our survey participation and results stems from our commitment to the simple fact that we work on it year round. We have found that communicating with staff before, during, and after the survey is administered – when the results are released, as action plans are being developed, and when issues are addressed – underscores the agency’s commitment to improving our organizational health. We also implemented a “FEVS

Champions” program, which involves employees, managers, and labor representatives from each division and office in encouraging survey responses. Good or bad – we want to hear from all employees. Finally, to improve communication, transparency, and accountability for the results, in December 2016 we launched the “FEVS Insights Dashboard” – an initiative resulting from discussions in the SEC’s national Labor Management Forum. The dashboard allows employees to see the entire agency’s survey results and helps individual work units to diagnose their areas of strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Improving Workforce Engagement

Our years-long effort to improve employee engagement has also taught us that success does not happen overnight. We have learned that it requires the commitment and involvement of agency leadership and the support and involvement of agency employees. An important starting point for the agency occurred in 2013, when management and NTEU partnered to form committees in each division and office comprised of both employees and managers to work together to assess the annual survey data and create action plans focused on improving employee engagement in the office. These local labor-management committees facilitate open dialogue in identifying strengths and areas for improvement and exploring solutions to address specific issues within each organization, which has resulted in meaningful action at the frontline. We are proud that nine SEC offices ranked in the top 50 out of over 300 offices in the federal government in the Best Places to Work office-level rankings.

Our improved labor-management relationship fostered, in part, through these committees, has in turn helped us make progress in resolving other disagreements surrounding workplace issues. Our working partnership with the union focuses on obtaining pre-decisional input and pursuing informal means to resolve workplace disputes and issues when they arise.

Recognizing Employee Contributions to the Mission

We have also prioritized developing new ways to recognize employees for their achievements and acknowledging their hard work in a number of different ways. For example, the SEC uses the annual observance of Public Service Recognition Week as a key opportunity to mobilize senior leadership to facilitate discussions about the work we do as an agency; show employees our appreciation; and celebrate the accomplishments of each of our divisions and offices. We coordinate events during this week and try to reach every SEC employee to say “Thank You.” Likewise, during the week employees are encouraged to give their colleagues a “Shout Out” for either their great work, support of others, or their can-do attitude. Hundreds of employees take advantage of this opportunity and post their positive messages on an internal website.

Our annual honorary awards ceremony formally recognizes the accomplishments of high achieving individuals and teams. The awards recognize achievements across the agency and link those accomplishments directly to the SEC mission.

Developing Leaders and Training Employees

Sustained progress in improving employee engagement has required sustained commitment from all levels of management. Through our leadership development programs, we cultivate and maintain a cadre of managers who are able to conduct their supervisory responsibilities effectively, while meeting the dynamic challenges of the SEC mission. The agency's training and development unit in the Office of Human Resources works with each division and office across the SEC to assess and identify mission-related training needs for managers and non-supervisory employees. The SEC offers abbreviated, virtual, and tailored classes, while also adding multi-session programs and training opportunities for non-supervisory grades and those aspiring to leadership roles. Last year, the SEC revamped the training provided to our senior leadership corps, an initiative which was recognized by the consulting firm McKinsey & Co. and the Partnership for Public Service in their 2016 report on training the SES (Company, 2016). We believe these efforts have had a positive impact on our Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey scores.

Pursuing Continuous Improvement

I am proud to acknowledge that the SEC's Best Places to Work index score of 76 in 2016 is significantly improved from the agency's 2012 score of 56. The SEC's 2016 score is the highest in our agency's history. The SEC is now ranked in the top 25 percent of mid-size agencies. While we are very pleased with these results, we know there is always room to improve. We know that we still have work to do and we will continue our collective efforts to demonstrate our values of integrity, effectiveness, fairness, accountability, teamwork, and excellence; foster communication, collaboration, and transparency; and empower our employees to carry out the SEC's critical mission on behalf of American investors.

We believe that the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey is an important tool that provides a snapshot of the opinions of our employees. While the results and rankings are informative, they are only the starting point. The real work begins when we hold meaningful discussions with division and office leadership teams to help them understand their results, create action plans, and follow through on how those plans can help our employees be efficient and productive.

Mr. Chairman, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to share with you the everyday efforts of my colleagues to make the SEC one of the best places to work in the federal government. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Lacey Dingman is the Chief Human Capital Officer for the SEC and the senior officer in charge of the Office of Human Resources. She has responsibility for developing, implementing, and evaluating the SEC's programs and policies for staffing, compensation and benefits, performance management and awards, employee and labor relations, disability programs, work/life programs, and professional development. Prior to assuming her position, Ms. Dingman was the deputy managing executive in the SEC's Division of Enforcement, with responsibility for fulfilling the program's staffing needs and providing advice and assistance on human capital planning and development. Before coming to the SEC in April 2010, Ms. Dingman was at the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, where she started as a forensic investigator and later became a special advisor to the Chairman. She also served as special advisor to the Undersecretary of State for Economic, Energy, and Agricultural Affairs from July 2007 to November 2008. Ms. Dingman received her bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Iowa.