FLEX Final Report

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Presented to the UVA Staff Senate by the FLEX working group:

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This FLEX project report will cover:

Executive Summary

Summer 2022 Survey Results

Final Recommendations

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Executive Summary

During Fall 2021, the Staff Senate discussed staff concerns around flexwork/remote work options at UVA. The discussion focused on the benefits and challenges of remote work:

Benefits	Challenges

Benefits

- Reduces UVA's carbon footprint
- Decreases traffic congestion in the UVA community
- Improves work for staff with disabilities
- Great for employee recruitment and retention

Challenges

- Costs for additional equipment for employees at home
- Additional internet/electricity costs
- Equity concerns for essential workers/in-person staff
- Uncertainty re: continued flexwork

Executive Summary

Staff Senate formed a working group of Senators called FLEX to address the concerns around remote work. FLEX developed a mission statement to guide their work:

The FLEX Working Group Mission Statement

Staff Senate aims to contribute to a 21st-century university workplace where:

- Staff have access to flexible work arrangements through channels that are clear and equitable.

- There is institution-wide transparency about the level of flexibility that is role-based and about times when additional manager discretion is appropriate.

- Managers are actively provided with the ongoing support they need to manage flex and hybrid teams.

Executive Summary: Winter 2021 Survey

In December 2021, the FLEX team used a very brief survey of staff to find out what questions they had about the University's current flexwork policy and/or guidance.

The 114 responses received fell into these categories:

Departmental decisions around flexwork	Diversity, equity, and inclusion issues
• How to challenge leadership decisions around flexwork • Equity in decision-making process • Long-term status of flexwork/remote work policies • Flexibility of flex schedules • Additional guidance needs for supervisors or managers	• Accessibility for at-risk, disabled, women employees • Options for positions usually considered in-person only • Hybrid meetings becoming the norm • Equitable practices for snow days for those w/o power, internet • Equipment and infrastructure costs while working remotely vs in-person parking, transportation expenses

Executive Summary: Meeting with UVA HR - 1/2022

FLEX met with Rich Parella, HR Sr. HR Business Partner, to learn more about the Future of Work project, of which he was a part. He reported:

- UVA is only 6 months into implementing a flexwork approach with some units and departments at UVA on the Academic side.

- No appeal process is currently set up for challenging leadership decisions around flexwork. Decisions are made locally.

- There should be transparency in the decision-making process for the sake of equity.

- The market dictates whether flexwork is here to stay.

- Inequities in childcare and eldercare need further consideration.

Rich Parella
Sr. HR Business Partner

Executive Summary: FLEX Next Steps-Winter 2021

From the meeting with HR and survey responses, FLEX recommended the following:

1. **Survey to Academic Division (ACD) managers** to learn how flexwork was going.

2. **Survey to ACD staff again** for additional data points and feedback.

3. **Additional resources to support managers** making flexwork decisions.

4. **Liaison with Family Support Collab** for updates on childcare, dependent care, and eldercare options that impact flexwork options.

5. **Communication with constituents** on policy/guideline updates, additional training for managers, and childcare, dependent care, eldercare options.

6. **Research into the process and possible future need for a formalized appeal process.**

7. **Recommended Timeline: 5 months**, complete by August 31.

The FLEX team recommendations were approved unanimously by the Staff Senate during its March 2022 meeting.

Summer 2022 Surveys

Summer 2022 EMPLOYEE Survey

Two new surveys were sent by Staff Senators in early June 2022:

1. To 6,235 Non-Classified Academic Division staff (EE)
2. To 3,415 Non-Classified Academic Division managers (MGR)

Purpose:

1) To understand how flexwork/remote work is going for Academic Division staff and their managers

2) To gather additional data points around constituent concerns raised in the December 2021 survey

Classified Staff were not included in the surveys; Classified Staff are subject to the Commonwealth of Virginia telework policy as communicated on May 5, 2022, by the Office of the Governor.

The overall response for the two surveys was 30% of all Academic Division non-Classified employees. The following slides summarize the Summer 2022 survey findings.

Summer 2022 EMPLOYEE Survey

Non-Classified Academic Division Employee survey results revealed the following:

1,540 Employee survey responses (25% response rate)
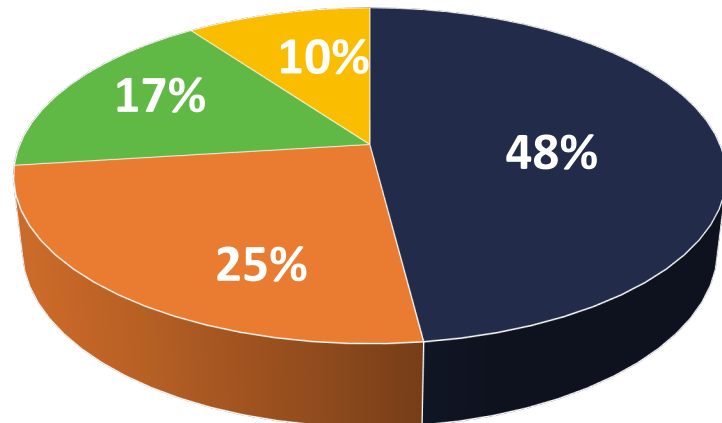
60% Unaware of Flexwork Employee Toolkit

83% Working some kind of flexwork schedule

WORK SCHEDULE

- Hybrid
- Remote
- In Person
- Occasional Flexwork

48%
25%
17%
10%

Summer 2022 EMPLOYEE Survey

Many employees reported BENEFITS OF FLEXWORK/REMOTE WORK:

# of employees:

767 — **More Productive:** less distractions, better concentration, more privacy, quiet time for focused work, better workspace

753 — **Commuting:** less gas and car use and commuting expenses, less parking issues and costs, easier logistics

484 — **Work/Life Balance:** more time for work, or exercise, self-care, quality family time & care, prof. development
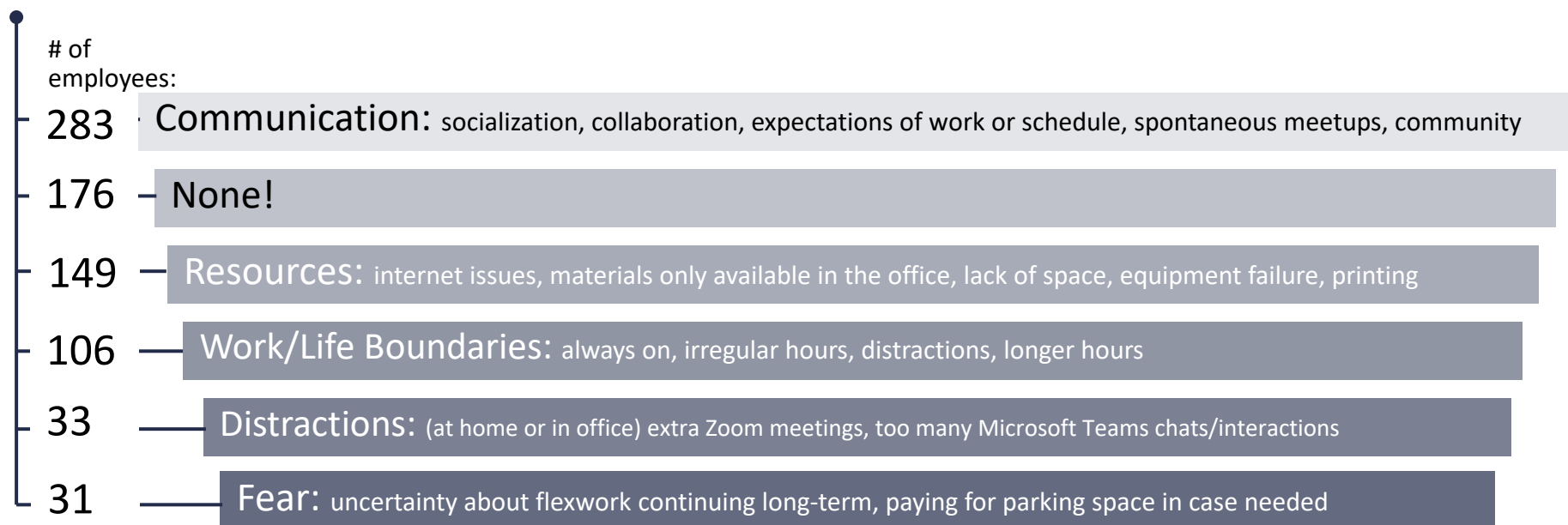
389 — **Flexibility:** in schedule and location, can address work emergencies while traveling, longer hours okay

331 — **Happiness:** less stress, increased job satisfaction, trust in EE by MGR, better quality of life, less social anxiety

132 — **Health & Safety:** better personal & family health, eating better, safer for family (not in open space)

![University of Virginia | Staff Senate]

Summer 2022 EMPLOYEE Survey

Fewer employees reported CHALLENGES OF FLEXWORK/REMOTE WORK

# of employees:

283 — Communication: socialization, collaboration, expectations of work or schedule, spontaneous meetups, community

176 — None!

149 — Resources: internet issues, materials only available in the office, lack of space, equipment failure, printing

106 — Work/Life Boundaries: always on, irregular hours, distractions, longer hours

33 — Distractions: (at home or in office) extra Zoom meetings, too many Microsoft Teams chats/interactions

31 — Fear: uncertainty about flexwork continuing long-term, paying for parking space in case needed

Summer 2022 EMPLOYEE Survey

Additional feedback from the survey

Develop consistent flexwork policy and options supported by UVA leadership that are predictable and not solely dependent on individual managers.

Telework should be encouraged to address parking issues, commuting costs, employee stress, retention, hiring, environmental impact.

Provide choice to employees in working hybrid/remote and empower employee + manager to create a person-specific flex plan.

Offer additional schedule options – 4x10 hr. days for positions needed in person, alternate schedules, reduce Zoom mtgs to allow breaks between.

Summer 2022 MANAGER Survey

Academic Division Employee Managers survey results revealed the following:

355 Manager survey responses (10% response rate)

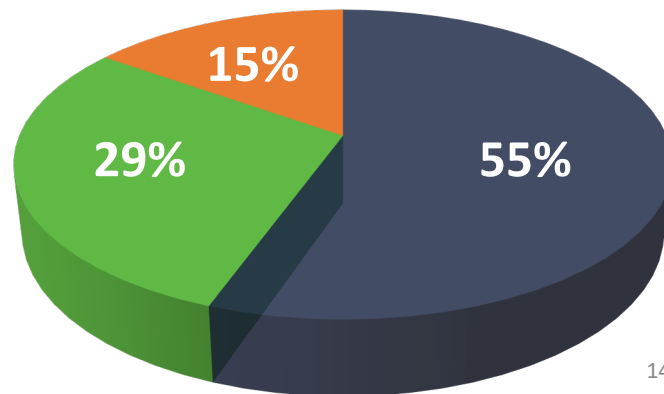**71%** Working some kind of flexwork schedule

35% Unaware of Flexwork Manager and Employee Toolkits

14% Unaware of Ustaff and Classified Staff policies

WORK SCHEDULE

■ Hybrid ■ In-Person ■ Remote

15%

29%

55%

14

Summer 2022 MANAGER Survey

Managers reported the following feedback about hiring and retention:

Level of flexibility sufficient for recruitment needs

Level of flexibility contributed to strong recruitment

Insufficient level of flexibility has contributed to vacancies remaining unfilled

Top candidates looking for greater flexibility did not accept positions offered.

35%

20%

12%

11%

16%

of managers reported that

1-5 Employees

have left due to lack of flexibility

Summer 2022 MANAGER Survey

Do you feel supported in making decisions about flexwork?

No = 18%

Yes = 82%

Are you able to hold an employee accountable for their flexwork?

Yes = 88%

No = 12%

Summer 2022 MANAGER Survey

Many managers reported BENEFITS OF FLEXWORK/REMOTE WORK:

# of managers:

156 — **Happiness:** better morale, staff satisfaction with flexibility, appreciation of flex options, less stress

109 — **Efficiency:** staff more efficient, communication improved/more focused, easier to schedule meetings

103 — **Work/Life Balance:** more time for work, ability to attend to childcare/family needs, better work/life balance

100 — **Productivity:** higher/maintained productivity, more innovation, better ability to focus

62 — **Zoom/Teams:** improved tech skills, more inclusive/remote collaboration, can work when away from Cville, easier to have private performance/coaching conversations, can offer more programs by offering them virtually

52 — **Improved transit:** less travel time; saving gas money, cost of wear and tear on car

Summer 2022 MANAGER Survey

Fewer managers reported CHALLENGES OF FLEXWORK/REMOTE WORK:

# of managers:

69 — Connection: loss of community, loss of personal connection, connected to the business goals

59 — Working Together: creating a culture, "reading" people online, morale, collaboration

56 — Logistics: increased organizing demands, harder to schedule in-person meetings, maintaining coverage, tracking

51 — Communication: communication is harder, loss of impromptu conversations

50 — Managing: requires more effort, harder to mentor, lack of accountability, staff expectations vs UVA policies

44 — Technology: technical issues, Zoom fatigue, meetings over Zoom not as effective, loss of power or internet

Summer 2022 MANAGER Survey

Managers offered additional write-in feedback and recommendations:

Flex/hybrid options need to stay because they help with recruiting and retention and help UVA stay competitive with other higher education institutions.

UVA needs a culture shift to rethink in-person work based on role; leadership needs to adapt its message and make flex/hybrid/remote work the norm.

Equity issues need to be addressed in the form of financial incentives for EEs working in person, and internet and infrastructure costs for hybrid/remote Es.

Remote employees are less responsive, and managers need support/guidance on how to hold remote workers accountable to maintain equity.

Summer 2022 MANAGER Survey

Asked what additional information they would like to see in the **Manager toolkit**:

Policies – Clear (and reasonable) expectations around policies for weather events, power outages, internet outages, and similar events

Guidance – on holding flex employees accountable, long-term planning with the hybrid workforce, fairness and equity with different roles, hybrid meetings

Communication – tips, sample scripts, action steps, discussing impact of flexwork with departments working together with different flex plans

Clarity – on when in-person work is required, working away from the remote work location, University-wide vs unit decisions, equipment, code of conduct

Summer 2022 MANAGER Survey

Finally, managers reported they want **additional support from UVA leadership**:

- ✓ To encourage flexibility around flex and remote work options and schedules
- ✓ To encourage "work from home" whenever possible, ideally with employee being able to choose work from home in most instances where the work is not physical in nature
- ✓ To declare that flexwork/remote work is okay as long as the work gets done
- ✓ To require every UVA manager to take a training class on flexwork and on how to manage a remote/hybrid team

Additional notes

What the FLEX team did NOT address:

- 2022 survey data was not parsed for responses by school/unit/department
- 2022 surveys were not set up by demographic criteria to examine demographic trends
- Current national trends on the future of work were not researched
- Findings and recommendations from the [Family Support Collab](#) final report were not included – have not been made public yet

Final Recommendations

Final Recommendations

PARADIGM SHIFT: "How can we help YOU?"

Request by employees and managers for clear and visible leadership from the UVA President's Cabinet on flexwork with the **following guiding principles**:

- o Unified strategy around flexwork/remote work (encompasses infrastructure, culture, equity, manager required training, etc.) -- making UVA a 21st century "Great and Good" workplace

- o Attending to the holistic needs of the employee as a priority that improves University excellence long-term

- o Prioritize addressing childcare, dependent care, eldercare options and how flexwork/remote work may mitigate the shortfalls in family support

- o Focus on work getting done regardless of location, embracing an ethos of: "We take care of each other"

- o Flexibility around flex and remote work options and schedules, encouraging work from home whenever possible, ideally with EE being able to choose

- o More consistent policies across employee types

Final Recommendations

MANAGER TRAINING and TOOLKIT:

The FLEX team recommends the creation of three phases of supervisor training to help supervisors adapt to enhanced workforce flexibility:

Phase 1: How-To Guides/Checklists/FAQs

Phase 2: Remote Work Training Programs

Phase 3: Explore Remote Work Certifications

Final Recommendations

MANAGER TRAINING and TOOLKIT (cont.):

- **Establish** common expectations for the role of the managers

- **Training** - Learning programs, and the *time to take the programs*, for building skills needed for a hybrid workforce

- **Training** - Long-term planning for a hybrid workforce

- **Policies** - Clear and reasonable policies around weather events, power outages, internet outages, and similar events

- **Communication** - Tips, sample scripts, action steps for managing and increasing engagement with a hybrid workforce

Final Recommendations

MANAGER TRAINING and TOOLKIT (cont.):

Guidelines: Provide guidance on:	
Holding flexwork employees accountable	Holding hybrid meetings
Fairness and equity amongst different roles	Working away from agreed upon remote work location
University-wide vs. unit decisions	Equipment needs and maintenance
When in-person work is required and why	The impact of flexwork with departments working together with different flex plans

Final Recommendations

EMPLOYEE TOOLKIT:

- **Communication** - Talking points for employees to use with managers, including whom to call for assistance (HR Business Partners, Employee Relations)
  - May we discuss my current position description?
  - Have there been any changes to our business needs that should be updated in the position description?
  - Are you open to considering an alternative or flexible work arrangement?
  - May we engage in an interactive discussion with our partners in HR?
  - What items for consideration can I provide you with to further discuss this topic?
  - (Escalating the discussion to include HR): I've contacted HR as a resource, and would love to have a meeting with you and me and HR; are you open to that?

Final Recommendations

EMPLOYEE TOOLKIT (cont.):

- **Bring Awareness to Employee Training Courses Offered through UVA HR:**
  - ➤ How to Have Difficult Conversations
  - ➤ Crucial Conversations
  - ➤ Tough Conversations
  - ➤ Influencing Change
  - ➤ Communicating About Culturally Sensitive Issues
  - ➤ Giving and Receiving Better Feedback
  - ➤ Dare to Lead program and Dare to Lead featured classes

Final Recommendations

EMPLOYEE TOOLKIT (cont.):

- **How to review manager decisions around flexwork**

    - ❖ **Contact Employee Relations -** establishes discovery process and facilitates conversation between employee and manager to resolve concerns.
        - ▪ ADA accommodations
        - ▪ What's different now that requires employees to be in person?
        - ▪ Productivity, attendance, making meetings on time
        - ▪ Employee's job description
        - ▪ Equity vs. equality

    - ❖ **Contact the UVA Office of the Ombuds** (when the position is filled)

Final Recommendations

EMPLOYEE TOOLKIT (cont.):

- **Video Resources on the HR Flex Employee Toolkit webpage:**
  - Update and enhance current video to maximize employee engagement
  - New video: Where to find resources, flexwork guidance, who to contact for help
    - Shared in communications to staff and managers
    - Shared on multiple websites and channels
    - Shared in social media

Final Recommendations

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION:

- Bring high-level attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion, especially:
  - ❑ Building diverse teams in a hybrid environment
  - ❑ Addressing childcare, elder care, and dependent care challenges and resources.

  UC Berkley: *The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities, and therefore we approach reimagining the future of our work as an opportunity to actively promote employee well-being, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Actual and perceived fairness and equity need to be measured, monitored, and maintained. Managers will be expected to seek solutions that advance the mission without disadvantaging or marginalizing any individual team member.*

Final Recommendations

COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN:

Improve awareness of flexwork/remote work resources for staff and their managers by creating a centralized "Future of Work Resource Center" (FOW Resource Center):

- **Landing page/hub for FOW resources**: policies, flexwork toolkit for employees, child and family care resources, education and training support, well-being resources
- **Increase visibility** of current Employee Flexwork Toolkit, Manager Flexwork Toolkit, and Classified Staff Telework webpages & new Future of Work Resource Center landing page/hub
- **Liaise w/HR Onboarding** regarding including flexwork/remote work resources in new hire information
- **List who to contact for questions** in all communications (HRBPs for managers, Employee Relations or managers for employees, UVA Ombudsman)

Final Recommendations

COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN (cont.):

- Improve awareness of flexwork/remote work resources for staff and their managers (cont.)
  - **Send monthly reminders** about flexwork/remote work resources (through department newsletters and Staff Senate emails to constituents); policy/guideline updates; additional training for managers; and childcare, dependent care, and elder care options
  - **Consider setting up occasional Workday announcements** to point to FOW Resource Center
  - **Create social media campaign** for communicators in the Academic Division to use for ongoing marketing of flexwork/remote work updates, resources, trainings, etc.

Final Recommendations Summary

Paradigm Shift/Culture Change

Communications Campaign

Manager Toolkit

- Expectations
- Communications
- Training
- Policies
- Guidelines
- Resources

Employee Toolkit

- Communications
- Training
- Resources
- How to Review Manager Decisions

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

APPENDIX 1

Flexwork/Remote Work Options
&
Approval Process by Peer Institutions

Flexwork by Peer Institutions

Institution	Flex/remote options	Approval process
Rutgers University	Ad hoc/temporary; compressed workweek; flex workday times; hybrid; fully remote (as long as within commutable distance, including states of NJ, NY, PA, and DE)	Compressed workweek, flex workday, and hybrid (1-2 days): subject to approval by the Department Head. Hybrid (3-4 days remote): subject to approval by Cabinet Officers. Fully remote or out of state: subject to approval by University HR.
U of Arizona	Hybrid work week, summer remote periods, fully remote, flexible workday times, compressed work week.	It appears that the supervisor approves/denies requests, but that was not clearly spelled out on the website.
University of Illinois	Remote and hybrid work may be approved on a case-by-case basis considering the mission and business needs of the university and the respective unit.	The decision to offer a specific remote and hybrid work arrangement shall be within the authority and discretion of the respective campus unit managing supervisor in consultation with unit human resources and unit senior leadership.
U of Colorado-Boulder	Flex workday schedule; hybrid; remote (out-of-state [domestic] and international remote work is only permitted temporarily); ad hoc/temporary; reduced schedule options such as part-time or phased retirement, though reductions to part-time may not be eligible for return to full-time.	Agreement reached between the employee and supervisor; subject to approval by the Director of OCG and/or Deputy Director.

Institution	Flex/remote options	Approval process
University of Iowa	Remote; hybrid; out-of-state (domestic); out-of-state (international); flex workday schedule; compressed workweek; reduced (full-time to part-time); job sharing.	"Colleges and administrative units determine which jobs are eligible for remote/hybrid work, alternative schedules, or other types of flexibility. Staff and faculty in these jobs work with their supervisors to establish and evaluate arrangements." Out-of-state (domestic) requires additional university-level review. Out-of-state (international) requires additional university-level review and memoranda of understanding.
U of Maryland	Telework; remote work.	Telework –Subject to supervisor approval; individual departments may establish additional approval routing. Remote – Subject to approval to the appropriate Vice President.
U of Michigan	Flex workday schedule; compressed schedule; reduced (part-time); job sharing; hybrid; phased retirement; gradual return to work.	Subject to approval by supervisor/manager.
U of North Carolina-Chapel Hill	Adjusted work schedule; compressed workweek; seasonal flexibility ("off season"); hybrid; remote; telework. Added note: "This is not an exhaustive list. Be creative and find a solution that works best for you team."	Flex location: "Flexible work location arrangements exceeding 30 calendar days in duration are determined by a unit-wide assessment and plan made by the unit's Dean or Vice Chancellor and approved by the Chancellor or designee, rather than by individual request." Flex schedule: Subject to approval by the unit and/or supervisor. "Unit leadership and/or supervisors may establish their own protocols for requesting and approving flexible work hours and communicate such to their employees."
University of Texas-Austin	Flex workday times; ad hoc/temporary; reduced hours/part-time; compressed workweek; telecommuting; job sharing; shift flexibility; gradual return to work.	Subject to approval by supervisor. The employee is instructed also to consult their local HR, as their CSU might require additional approvals.

APPENDIX 2

References

References

Rutgers University-New Brunswick/Piscataway : https://uhr.rutgers.edu/future-of-work/home
- Announcements - https://uhr.rutgers.edu/hr-professional/flexwork-pilot-program-update- 8-10-22
- FAQs - https://uhr.rutgers.edu/future-of-work/frequently-asked-questions

University of Arizona (AZ): https://hr.arizona.edu/content/Flexible-Work-Guidelines#Overview
- Flexible Work Initiative: https://universityinitiatives.arizona.edu/current-projects/flexible-work-initiative

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: https://cam.illinois.edu/policies/hr-87/
- "10 Cultural Standards" https://humanresources.illinois.edu/assets/docs/Future-of-Work-Executive-Summary.pdf
- "Classifications that cannot perform remote work" https://humanresources.illinois.edu/assets/docs/Classifications-that-cannot-Perform-Remote-Work-by-Functional-Area.pdf

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University of California-Los Angeles: https://chr.ucla.edu/flexwork-guide-2021

University of Colorado at Boulder:

https://www.colorado.edu/ocg/ocg-staff-resources/flexible-work-arrangements

University of Florida:

https://hr.ufl.edu/forms-policies/policies-managers/university-of-florida-standard-operations/

University of Iowa: https://hr.uiowa.edu/employee-well-being/workplace-flexibility

University of Maryland-College Park: https://uhr.umd.edu/telework/

University of Michigan-Ann Arbor: https://hr.umich.edu/benefits-wellness/work-life/flexible-work-options

References

University of Nebraska at Lincoln

- Alternative worksites: https://hr.unl.edu/alternative-work-sites/
- Flextime: https://hr.unl.edu/policies/flextime/

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: https://hr.unc.edu/employees/policies/flexible-work-arrangements/

University of Pittsburgh-Main Campus:
https://www.hr.pitt.edu/news/interim-flexible-work-arrangement-ifwa-policy

University of Texas at Austin

- https://hr.utexas.edu/current/fwa
- https://hr.utexas.edu/current/fwa/alternative-flexible-work-arrangement- immunocompromised

University of Washington-Seattle Campus: https://hr.uw.edu/policies/flexwork/

University of Wisconsin-Madison

- https://kb.wisc.edu/ohr/policies/page.php?id=53021
- https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-5042

THANK YOU!

The FLEX Team