Northern Illinois University

Remote Working Task Group Report

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Remote Working Task Group Report

August 13, 2021

In April 2021, The Remote Working Task Group was developed to gather information, engage in discussions, and make recommendations for how best to implement remote working at NIU moving forward. Many employees across the institution have been working remotely for more than a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and institutional leaders sought guidance on how best to harness what we've learned about flexible and remote work from those experiences in considering remote working for the longer-term. The task group was made up of about 55 employees representing diverse roles across campus, organized into six subgroups: Policy, Technology, Student Experience, Faculty Experience, Models and Effective Practices, and Employee Engagement, Support and Work-Life Balance. See *Appendix A: Membership* for a list of task group members.

The charge of the Remote Working Task Group was to develop an institutional framework for decisions related to remote work. In developing recommendations, the guiding principles for the task group included:

- Prioritizing students' needs and service to students.
- Promoting flexibility to enhance employee health/well-being, recruitment and retention of a diverse and talented workforce, and engagement.
- Ensuring fairness and equity among employees.
- Ensuring or strengthening operational effectiveness and efficiency.

The subgroups reflected on lessons learned from COVID-19 and resulting conditions, mined internal NIU experiences, collected models from external resources, and offered recommendations for the NIU context. This report presents the task group's findings and recommendations.

Considerations for Remote Work Arrangements

Student Experience
Student feedback was gathered through a student survey. The survey, administered in April 2021, captured responses from 997 NIU students about how the pandemic is affecting their academic experiences and general well-being.

- The majority of survey respondents reported being satisfied with flexibility in course modality and in working with professors and advisors, and also reported no change in their progression to graduation.
- The majority also reported being dissatisfied with peer interaction, participation in clubs and extracurricular activities, co-curricular activities, and connection to the NIU community.
- The majority of participants reported a decrease in work-life balance since the start of COVID-19, with a negative impact on physical, social, emotional, intellectual, vocational, spiritual, and financial well-being.
- Qualitative survey responses reported lack of motivation, focus, and self-discipline and perceived lack of faculty support as reasons for lower grades and lack of success in online

courses. However, some students appreciated the flexibility, better work-life balance, and cost savings from not having to commute to campus.

- Some students commented that they did not feel engaged with a campus community, felt isolated and sad, and experienced anxiety and depression. Students expressed a desire for better access to professors and campus space for studying and other activities.
- Students expressed that they would like a university experience beyond coursework, through which they feel engaged, supported, and part of the NIU community. Robust support services, programming, extracurricular activities, and co-curricular activities are desired whether remote or in person.
- For the future, the majority of respondents (63%) prefer to take all or most classes in-person rather than online. 21% prefer all or mostly online classes, and 16% prefer half of their classes online and half in-person.

To see a fuller description of survey results and representative qualitative comments from students, see *Appendix B: Student Experiences Report*.

Faculty Experience

Faculty feedback was gathered through task group members' interviews with chairs and faculty and through a survey. The survey was distributed to chairs, directors, deans, associate deans, and assistant deans in June 2021 to assess their perception of faculty concerns about this "new normal" of remote work, eliciting 31 responses.

- The majority of faculty reported a preference for face-to-face interactions with students when teaching and mentoring, and also with colleagues when conducting research or for accessing resources.
- For other activities, such as holding office hours or attending department/college meetings, faculty would like to maintain online or virtual options.
- Faculty and supervisors desire stronger support in enforcing rules related to health and safety, such as mask-wearing in the classroom.
- Several respondents did not feel they had the resources within their department to make hybrid meetings effective. Faculty require technology for remote work, including laptops, and equipment.
- Chairs and directors require support to manage and implement remote working conditions.

To see a full report on survey results, see *Appendix C: Faculty Experience In and Beyond the Classroom*.

Employee Support, Engagement, and Work-Life Balance

Employees representing all classifications and varied job functionalities participated in discussions about the benefits and challenges they perceive with hybrid/flexible/remote work modality. From these meetings, the themes below emerged.

- The university can benefit by embracing flexible and remote work options, which can make the university more competitive and able to retain and attract a more diverse work force.
- Some employees perceive the option for remote work as a benefit, allowing them to save on gas, commuting expenses, parking, and lunches. In this regard, remote work has perceived equivalency to a pay increase, which may also contribute to perceived inequities as well.

- Employees working remotely report feeling more efficient and better able to concentrate when completing some tasks, especially for tasks which require individual work. Productivity, however, may be lower for work processes that rely on access to students, colleagues, labs, and other campus resources.
- Employees are concerned that hybrid models could lead to inequities in workplace participation, resulting in other job inequities, such as reduced access to promotion. Employees working in person may be "seen and heard" more than remote employees, asked to take leadership roles more often, and therefore promoted more readily.
- Working from home also has the benefit of increased flexibility and work-life balance. Employees with dependents may have more flexibility. Remote working can improve personal wellness such as increased sleep, exercise, and healthy eating. Working from home can help people who have disabilities and/or who have medical appointments they need to schedule around.
- Depending on job function, some employees can't work from home and therefore cannot experience the benefits in terms of cost savings and work-life balance. Differences can lead to feelings of unfairness among employees with different job duties.
- Employees working remotely may experience less cohesion with their unit or colleagues as they do not have the same opportunities for hallway/breakroom/brainstorming connections and quick responses. It can be more difficult for a leader to create cohesive bonds and engagement among employees as a unit or department. This obstacle also holds true for new employees during the on-boarding process.
- Employees who are physically in the office are often asked to perform additional tasks, outside their normal job, because they are more visible and available. This shifts some burdens of the workplace to the face-to-face employee, further contributing to feelings of inequity or jealousy.
- Employees remain concerned about safety protocols and processes for in-person work, such as social distancing, ventilation systems, and methods for verifying vaccines.
- Most employees have familiarity with Microsoft Teams and other university- provided technologies available for remote work.

See *Appendix D: Employee Engagement, Support, and Work-Life Balance* for a longer list of positives and negatives of hybrid/remote working at NIU.

Recommendations for Remote Work

Policy and Compliance

A remote working policy is needed at the institutional level, with individual remote working arrangements for employees set at the unit-level. As the university shifts to a more flexible remote working policy, other policies will also be impacted and will require revision. Overall, any remote work policy will need to be consistent with federal and state laws, and collective bargaining agreements.

Item	Recommendations
New Remote Working policy (to replace Work At Home Policy)	Human Resource Services revises Revise Work At Home policy and replaces it with a Remote Working policy.

	The Remote Working policy should include minimum, enforceable university-wide requirements for the following:
	• Hours of operation for in-person student-facing offices and offerings of essential services.
	• Performance of job responsibilities (the needs of the department and university must be met, and the essential job responsibilities will not be altered nor the level of service compromised by the employee or the unit).
	• Access to resources and opportunity to participate in activities and operations when working remotely, to ensure equity and fairness.
	• In-person attendance as required by supervisors and/or university administration when needed, with advance notice given.
	• Individual remote working arrangements for employees should be set at the unit-level. We recommend that an appropriate upper-level administrator within the division/college/unit review either the process or the individual agreements; however, that should be left to internal policy. Where a job description is changed to include remote work, or the agreement is longer than a few months, review of the agreement beyond the immediate supervisor is recommended to provide support for employees and supervisors in successful implementation.
	• Written remote working agreements, once approved by the unit director, should be submitted to HRS. The remote working agreement should be submitted before remote work begins, and kept in the employee's personnel files.
	• Trial period and review of remote working agreements during first year, and if the agreement is for longer than 12 months, should be reviewed annually before renewal.
	• Amendment, continuation, and revocation of remote working agreements, and procedures for non-compliance.
	• Compliance with other university and state policies, including Ethics, FERPA, HIPAA, Information Security, Property Control.
	See *Appendix E: Recommended Revisions to Work At Home Policy*, for recommended revisions to the current Work At Home Policy.
	See *Appendix F: Initial Draft of Telework Policy* for an initial draft of a telework policy, which serves as the basis for the above recommendations.
Guidelines for determining work modality viability	Through the Remote Working policy, provide guidelines for supervisors for determining optimal modality that consider the following:
	• How does this modality prioritize student needs?

	• What is the impact on productivity, effectiveness, and operations of the team, unit, and university? • Will remote working arrangements for one employee negatively affect other employees' schedule, workload, or working conditions? • Is the modality based on job function or the individual employee's preference? Ideally, both should be taken into consideration, but job function should be most important.
Guidelines for remote work agreements	Through the Remote Working policy, ensure that remote work agreements between supervisor and employee include the following information: • Duration of agreement, including trial period and schedule for review and renewal. • Scheduling for remote work. • Technology required for remote work, including hardware, software, Internet connectivity, and secure access to necessary files and resources. • Location/workspace, with attention to distraction-free settings and ergonomic workspaces. • Communication, including contact information, reporting, and means for communicating for different work purposes/activities. • Means for reporting hours and work performed and evaluation of remote work. • Acknowledgement by employee of compliance with policy and state/federal regulations when working remotely.
Additional policies to be reviewed for possible revision	Flextime Arrangements (HRS) - https://www.niu.edu/hrs/benefits/leaves/flextime.shtml Bring Your Own Device Policy (DoIT) - https://www.niu.edu/policies/policy-documents/bring-your-own-device-policy.shtml Technology Purchasing and Refresh Standards (DoIT) - https://www.niu.edu/doit/about/policies/desktop-standard.shtml
Compliance with state, federal and other requirements	General Counsel investigates which relevant state and federal laws pertain to remote work arrangements and resolves issues, such as: NC-SARA recommendations and state requirements for distance education. Tax compliance where employees are fully remote, either outside the state of Illinois or the United States.

	Accreditation and licensure requirements for programs and students who are out-of-state.

Work Arrangements, Team Management, and Employee Engagement

Remote, hybrid and other flexible working arrangements can have a significant impact on processes at all stages of the employee life cycle, from recruitment to onboarding to development and retention. Robust support is needed at the university level. Supervisors need tools for decision-making, development, implementation, and evaluation of hybrid and remote working arrangements, as well as training for managing hybrid and remote teams. Employees require support for learning to work effectively and efficiently in hybrid and remote contexts. Support from EAP and HRS is needed for challenges and conflicts that may arise.

See *Appendix G: Models and Effective Practices* for further discussion of recommendations and best practices for remote and hybrid work arrangements.

Item	Recommendations
Supervisor training and support	All mandatory training should be virtual. Human Resources and Employee Assistance Program should develop training and support for supervisors to address the following: • Determining appropriate work modality of a position. • Developing remote work agreements. (Consider offering tools or a template for supervisors and employees. See *Appendix H: Employee Remote Work Plan* for an example template.) • Managing hybrid and remote teams, including fostering employee engagement, ensuring equity and fairness for hybrid teams, and communicating with remote employees and among remote/hybrid teams. • Tracking and evaluating employee performance (evaluation of remote working activities as part of annual employee evaluation). • Managing challenges and conflicts related to remote working.
Recruitment	Human Resources Services, in cooperation with General Counsel, should address the following: Including work modality in job descriptions. Conducting interviews via phone and video, with best practices guides. Ensuring policy compliance when hiring new employees living in other locations.

	Developing policies regarding pay differential for different locations.
Onboarding	Supervisors, in cooperation with DoIT, should determine equipment/ technology needs and best methods for distribution to new employees (e.g., purchase, provide stipends, reimbursement). Ensure compliance with Illinois Property Control rules. Supervisors may consider onsite work with daily contact during an onboarding period for new employees. Supervisors should host virtual meet and greets, hold regular team meetings, and/or provide peer mentors to build a sense of team and social connection for new hires.
Employee perception of fairness	At the university level, provide incentives for employees that are unable to work remotely due to their work responsibilities. Marketing and communication could develop features in NIU Today or other venues and other programming to share experiences with remote versus in-person work ("day in the life of" remote employee and in-person employee, benefits and challenges of each, etc.).
Communication	Supervisors should establish communication expectations and norms with remote/hybrid employees and teams to support effective practices in communication, file sharing, collaboration, etc.
Hybrid and remote meetings	Meeting facilitators should follow best practices for facilitating remote and hybrid meetings: • Consider the impact of a hybrid versus a remote meeting in terms of access and equitable participation of all attendees. In some cases, hybrid can be less effective in terms of engagement among all attendees and less equitable for those attending remotely. • Meetings should not be scheduled during lunch hours or outside of an employee's regular working hours. • Virtual meetings have a higher cognitive load. Keep meetings to 50 minutes or less. Avoid scheduling meetings back-to-back. • Test technology and allow for rehearsal and/or early entry. • Use interactivity techniques to keep all attendees engaged. Ex. discussion prompts with time to answer; polls or emoticons for quick pulse' breakouts for smaller groups; electronic white boards and post-it tools. • If the meeting will be primarily 1 or 2 speakers sharing news/content, have someone monitor the chat for remote staff and interject on their behalf. "Seeing" all faces may not be important.

	• Think about accessibility. The Disability Resource Center can provide CART support for meetings. Teams and Zoom can provide live closed captioning.
Team cohesion and engagement	Supervisors should consider a "spirit team" or group devoted to fostering community and engagement activities for your unit. Supervisors should schedule regular in-person supervisor-employee meetings, team meetings, and social events.

Technology

We currently have access to many software and hardware resources to support remote teaching and working, as well as ample opportunities for training and support. A goal for technology leaders and support services on campus will be to assist faculty and employees with discovering/matching different activities to appropriate hardware/software when performed in a remote or hybrid setting. Current desktop and laptop models will continue to serve employees in remote and hybrid work settings, with a few modifications.

Funding for technology to support remote working will be needed, beyond the regular operational budgets for individual units.

Item	Recommendations
Faculty and staff support	DoIT, working with CITL, should: Provide support to faculty and staff in mapping technology to activities, from orientation, to teaching, to department meetings, to employee evaluations, to conferences. See *Appendix I: Tech Recommendations Mapped to Activities* for a current list of tech recommendations mapped to activities (still under development). Create a technology support list for faculty/staff working remotely. Develop recommendations for employees establishing a remote workspace (including ergonomics).
Hardware recommendations	Continue to use of NIU's Desktop/Laptop Standard Models, all of which have acceptable resources for remote/hybrid work: https://www.niu.edu/doit/services/desktop/desktop-standard-models.shtml. Desktops should be the exception, laptops with docking stations should be standard to support remote/hybrid work. All primary devices should have an internal or external microphone and webcam for employees expected to attend meetings.

	Establish a laptop lifecycle of 4 years. Because laptops are difficult to repair and suffer from more wear and tear than a desktop, this lifecycle keeps the majority of the laptop components under support with Dell given the standard support plan purchased with laptops. Should a desktop be required, a lifecycle of 6 years is recommended. Provide units with videoconferencing hardware. Encourage units to identify limitations that may be overcome with updated tools.
Technology security	DoIT should update computer security training to reflect the needs of remote workers.

Place/Space

The demand for office workspaces on campus could decrease as policies for remote working and hybrid work are implemented, which could translate to cost savings and lower the environmental impact of the campus. The move in this direction gives an opportunity to evaluate utilization space for each building to ensure it is best for the university overall. These are long term considerations and should be done in conjunction with existing projects, including the work of sustainability efforts on campus.
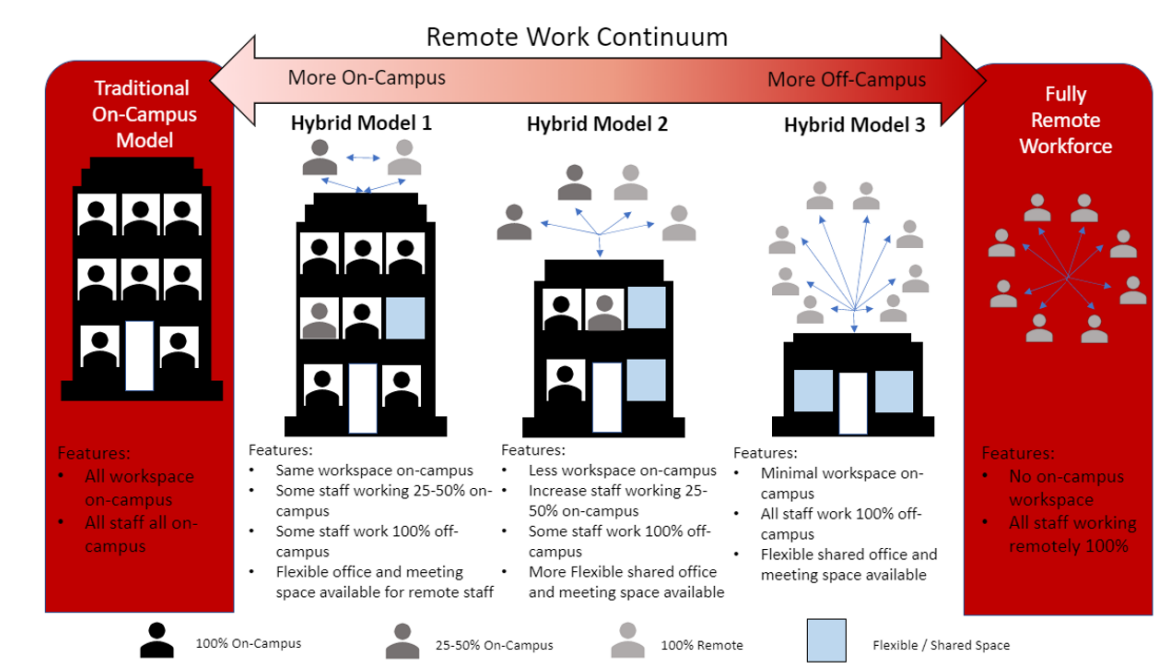
Implementation of a permanent remote working policy could result in the reduction of the physical space usage (see figure above). There is potential for consolidating like functions and reconfiguring spaces for smaller and/or shared work areas. Systematically consolidating functions can result in space reduction where the usage of an entire building could be discontinued and can provide savings, such as

utility, maintenance, repair, cleaning, etc. Further savings may be gained through the sale of buildings or demolishing unused facilities.

Remote work can reduce environmental impact. Transportation contributes greatly to greenhouse gas emissions and remote working could reduce commuting, and energy consumption on campus could be lessened by employees working remotely. Sustainability plans also play a role in recruiting students who seek campuses taking productive action toward being carbon neutral (see, for instance, the Sierra Club's "Cool Schools" rankings).

See *Appendix G: Models and Effective Practices* for further discussion of the impact on remote working on campus space usage.

Item	Recommendations
Matching environmental goals to remote working goals	Coordinate remote working plans with university sustainability efforts. Assess short- and long-term environmental impact. Track energy usage from previous years and as we move forward into a remote working model to assess environmental impact. This assessment can include energy consumption on campus as well as impact of telecommuting.
Assessing and shifting physical space usage	Consider campus-wide space usage when devising remote working plans. Reconfiguration of space can be used to support expanding programs, repositioning programs for better synergy on campus, and/or supporting the opportunity to phase out spaces or buildings. Units should prepare to have flexible space options for remote and hybrid employees. Create "hotel" or "convenience" offices to accommodate those no longer assigned an on-site office. RIPS is piloting this model. Track usage and evaluate physical space usage after a trial period.
Parking	For on-campus parking, consider other employee parking rate options for remote and hybrid employees.

Conclusion

We recommend future review and iterations of remote working goals, guidelines, and policy. Within six months to one year we should employ a university-wide survey of both employees and students to review the effects of remote working conditions. Such a review should focus on identifying successes or challenges in areas aligning with NIU's institutional mission, such as:

- Supporting student needs and success

- Retention and recruitment of a diverse and talented workforce
- Fairness, consistency, and transparency (including perceptions of fairness) in how decisions on remote work are made
- Work-life balance and morale among employees
- Employee productivity and success in job functions
- Interactivity and campus culture, and how much face-to-face connection is optimal.

Looking forward, we should consider how these policy recommendations may also open the door for larger changes in the way that the institution views on campus vs. remote work. Options could include flexibility in defining work hours, compressed work weeks, more 100% remote employees, and/or different options for part-time positions, among others.

Remote Working Task Group and Subgroup Membership

Group	Co-Leaders	Members
Task Group	Jessica Reyman Fred Barnhardt	
Subgroup: Policy	Miriah Ranken Therese Arado	Sarah Garner Becqui Hunt Natasha Johnson Jeanne Meyer Sandy Jakubiak
Subgroup: Technology	Jason Rhode Andrew Johnson	Rick Schwantes Jason Underwood Jared Adelman Mike Kuba Katie Whitelaw Aleks Kosoric Holly Nicholson
Subgroup: Student Experience	Michelle Pickett Jenna Osterlund	Ron Smith Meg Junk Linda Condon Ariel Owens Angie Flannery J Pappas Lauren Teso-Warner Lisa Carlsen Khadija Sadia Angelica Gutierrez- Vargas Patricia Gingrich
Subgroup: Models and Effective Practices	Greg Martyn Michael Stang	Liberty Turner

		Alan Clay Tracy Miller Cathy Doederlein
Subgroup: Employee Engagement, Support and Work-Life Balance	Anna Quider Susan Swegle	Kate Quinn Susanne Lodgson Renee Page Michael Kushnik Jessica Seipp Dan Koenen Andy Pemberton Stefan Grobel Christine Lagattolla Melanie Costello Tracey Ward
Subgroup: Faculty Experience In and Beyond the Classroom	Ralph Wheeler Mya Groza	Mary Lynn Doherty Barbara Gonzales Dana Isawi Jamie Mayer Leeanne Vandercreek Stephanie Richter

Student Experiences Subgroup Report

June 2021

Members:

Lisa Carlsen, Linda Condon, Angie Flannery, Patricia Gingrich, Angelica Gutierrez-Vargas, Meg Junk, Jenna Osterlund Oltmanns, Ariel Owens, Jane Pappas, Michelle Pickett, Khadija Sadia, Ron Smith, Lauren Teso-Warner

The PCSW and Return to Work Student Experiences COVID-19 Task Force wanted to begin to understand how COVID-19 is affecting academic and social life, well-being and mental health, degree progression, access to resources, comfort with returning to campus, and location preference to continue duties at NIU in Fall 2021.

The survey, hosted on Qualtrics, was distributed through three announcements in NIU Today. The survey was made available to participants for approximately two weeks in April 2021. The goal of this survey was to gather data about the experiences of our student campus community during COVID-19 to inform policies and practices at NIU. We also captured participants' perceived stress levels using an established measure, the Perceived Stress Scale (Sheldon, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). We also collected information regarding participants' perceptions of NIU's response to COVID-19.

When the survey closed, 997 participants had completed 98% or greater of the entire survey. All questions had the option to not be answered. N/A was included where appropriate. N/A and no answers were not included in the following percentages:

- Participant demographics:
  - Race, ethnicity, Hispanic/Latinx, and sexual orientation of the participants were representative of NIU's collected data.
  - Female participants were overrepresented compared to NIU's collected data.
  - Disclosed disability, financial assistance, first generation status, honors program status, international status, number of dependents, student status (full/part-time undergraduate/graduate/student at large), and years at NIU were collected.

- Impact of COVID-19 on academics:
  - The majority of participants reported no change in their progression to graduation (52%) and reported that all remote work is sufficient to complete their program (37%).
  - The majority of participants were satisfied with flexibility from teachers/advisors (66%), advising (58%), and taking courses (55%).
  - The majority of participants were dissatisfied with interacting with NIU peers (57%), participating in NIU clubs and extracurricular events (57%), connection to the NIU community (55%), expected quality of education (44%), Completing

clinicals, student teaching, and/or internships (40%), and attending academic presentations, workshops, and events (40%).

- o The majority of participants found COVID-19 to have a negative impact on communication with teacher/advisor (43%), retention of material (63%), ability to focus (74%), interaction with peers (71%), depth of material covered (49%), engaged learning activities (55%), and expected quality of education (55%).

- Impact of COVID-19 on resources:
  - o The majority of participants have found computers and other technology important (99%) and easy (62%) when performing remote class/assistantship/work duties remotely. All participants found Wifi (100%) important and easy (58%). The majority of participants found workspace important (90%) with nearly half finding it difficult and half finding it easy. The majority of participants found teacher (81%) and advisor (67%) important, and easy (58%, 60%), respectively. Just over half of participants found access to research/artistry labs important (52%) but difficult to access (64%). Finally, the majority of participants found peer interaction important (66%), but difficult to access (65%).
  - o The majority of participants found COVID-19 to have a neutral impact on access to Wifi, computers, and other technology (52%), grades (41%), access to research and artistry materials (50%), advising and mentoring (46%), and research and artistry projects (50%).
  - o Participants incurred on average $110.22 in costs for required technology, office supply, caregiving, and travel expenses.

- Impact of COVID-19 on work/life balance
  - o The majority of participants have found less work/life balance than normal since the start of COVID-19 (71%). Average time spent in hours per week increased for class work (2.28h), work (1.72h), and graduate assistantships (0.19h), but decreased for extracurricular activities (-1.68h) internships (-1.22h), clinical experiences (-0.78h), student teaching (-0.70h), learning activities outside of class (-0.41h), research and/or creative activities (-0.17h), and work (-0.17h).

- Impact of COVID-19 on well-being
  - o The majority of participants experienced a negative impact of COVID-19 on their physical well-being (62%), social well-being (56%), emotional well-being (68%), intellectual well-being (55%), vocational well-being (51%), spiritual well-being

(48%), financial well-being (48%). Most participants reported a neutral impact on environmental well-being (43%).
- o The majority of participants are aware of the mental health resources NIU has offered throughout COVID-19 (80%) and have increased their use in mental health services during COVID-19 (62%).

- Safety concerns during Spring 2021
  - o The majority of participants did not have advisors that evaluated their comfort with returning to campus (59%).
  - o The majority of participants were concerned about their own health and safety (67%), the health and safety of those they lived with/visited (75%), the spread of COVID-19 on campus (77%), and the spread of COVID-19 in the community (76%).
  - o While the majority of participants were confident in NIU's Protect the Pack Plan (56%) and the ability for NIU to reach herd immunity through vaccinations (54%), there were concerns about effects of social isolation on well-being (66%). The majority of participants were not concerned about their domestic safety during remote work (67%), nor participation in COVID-19 safety protocols by those they worked/lived with (49%).

- Safety concerns for Fall 2021
  - o The majority of participants reported they are concerned about their own health and safety (66%), the health and safety of those they live with/visit (72%), the spread of COVID-19 on campus (77%), the spread of COVID-19 in the community (76%), and the ability for NIU to reach herd immunity through vaccines (62%).
  - o Half of participants were concerned for their own health and safety due to COVID-19, with nearly a third of participants reporting being in an at-risk category (31%) and nearly half of those they lived with/visited being in an at risk category (47%),

- Future location preferences:
  - o The majority of participants would prefer classes to resume with a mix of remote and in person once COVID-19 is resolved (47%).
  - o The majority of participants would prefer their work-study or other on campus work to resume with a mix of remote and in person once COVID-19 is resolved (47%), and the majority of graduate students would prefer assistantships to resume with a mix of in remote and in person (40%).

- Future directions:

- Gather perspectives from different departmental heads (Academic Advising Department, Center for the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality, Center for Black Studies, etc.) on student needs:
    - What services do existing and incoming students need?
    - What expectations do students have for staff availability?
    - Do you believe students can succeed in hybrid learning?
    - How do you plan to retain education quality during hybrid learning?

Faculty Experience In and Beyond the Classroom

A Subgroup of

Workplace Flexibility/Remote Working Task Group

Preliminary Report

June 30, 2021

Mya Groza (co-chair)

Ralph A. Wheeler (co-chair)

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Executive Summary: The global pandemic of 2020-2021 required universities and businesses to suspend most face-to-face interactions and move most of their operations online. Anticipating the return to face-to-face operations during Fall 2021 will entail major changes for NIU. At this point, the scope of those changes remains uncertain, but they will certainly lead to a 'new normal'. The Faculty Experience sub-group conducted a short survey of Chairs, Directors, Deans, Associate Deans, and Assistant Deans to assess their perception of faculty concerns about this new normal. Most respondents were looking forward to increased face-to-face instruction of students, interactions with colleagues, and increased opportunities for collaboration. The following concerns were addressed:

- Availability of dependent care.
- Access to appropriate technology to deliver online or hybrid courses.
- Proper training in the use of new technologies.
- Clear, flexible policies and procedures to guide their work life during this 'new normal'.

Report:

Retrospective. During mid-March of 2020, as concerns mounted about a growing number of COVID-19 infections worldwide, President Lisa Freeman extended NIU's Spring break by one week. Before that week ended, she closed campus to face-to-face instruction and all courses were delivered online for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester, as well as the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters. Despite unprecedented challenges, faculty did a truly remarkable job transitioning instruction to online formats; maintaining productivity in research, artistry, and scholarship; and continuing to engage internal and external stakeholders, all while trying to maintain work-life balance. Challenges to faculty that arose during these times include: (1) the lack of dependent care when schools and daycare centers abruptly closed, (2) the need to become familiar with new teaching modalities, technologies, and pedagogies with virtually no advance notice, (3) the challenge of remaining productive in research, artistry, and scholarship without direct access to students, colleagues, and the necessary physical resources, (4) challenges communicating and engaging with internal and external communities, and (5) difficulties maintaining boundaries between professional and personal responsibilities. These challenges where exacerbated in many cases by a shortage of computer and networking hardware, the need to acquire new software, and the rapid training needed to use unfamiliar modes of remote communication effectively.

Prospective. As we look forward to the campus re-opening more fully during mid- to late-2021, President Freeman has empaneled a Task Group to promote Workplace Flexibility and Remote Work. The sub-group devoted to the Faculty Experience In and Beyond the Classroom took as its charge to understand what worked well during the past year and to understand, anticipate, and prepare for the multiple challenges likely to arise as the campus re-opens. To gauge faculty sentiment, a short survey was developed and administered to Chairs, Directors, Deans, Associate Deans, and Assistant Deans. The survey was opened on June 20th, 2021 and remained open until June 27th, 2021. An anonymous email link was sent to 76 possible respondents. Of the 31 respondents who completed the survey, 17 were Department Chairs/Directors, two were Center Directors, two were Deans, eight were Associate/Assistant Deans, and one was an Assistant Chair/Center Director (see Figure 1), and one no response. Figure 2 further indicates that faculty have express their concerns to the respondents "a moderate amount".
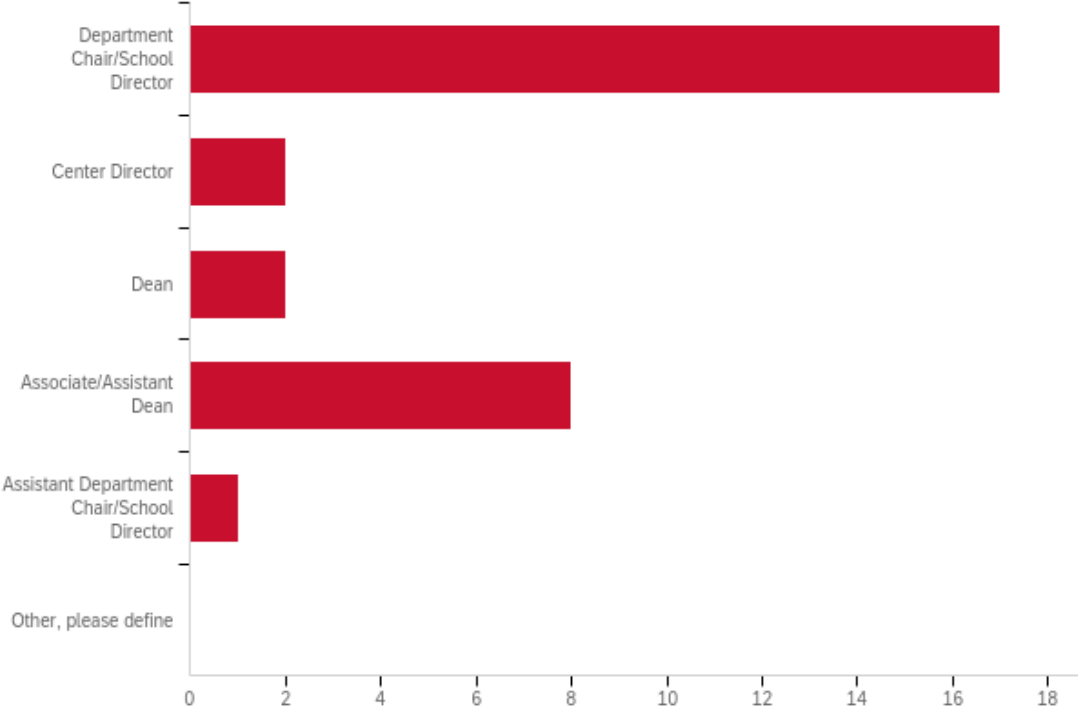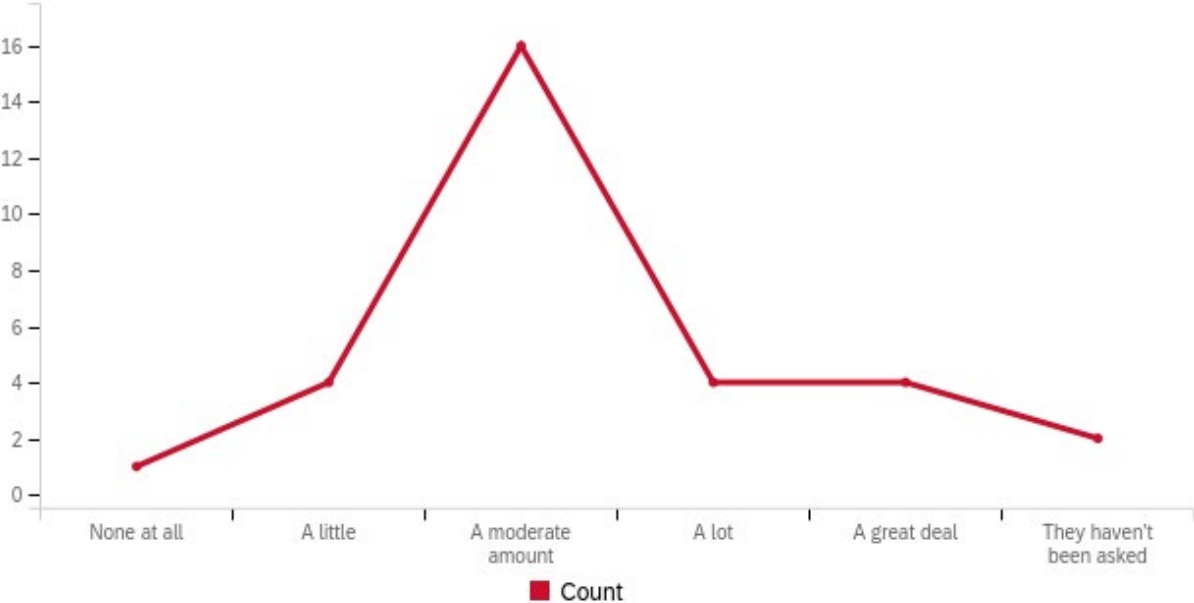
Figure 1. "What is your current role?"

Figure 2. "To what extent have your faculty expressed their sentiment in returning to campus (2021-2022 AY)?"

Additional results of the survey are reported below.

Figure 3 – Eighty-three responses to the question "What brought faculty to campus this past year (2020-2021 AY)?" imply the desire to teach in a quiet space, with the necessary resources.

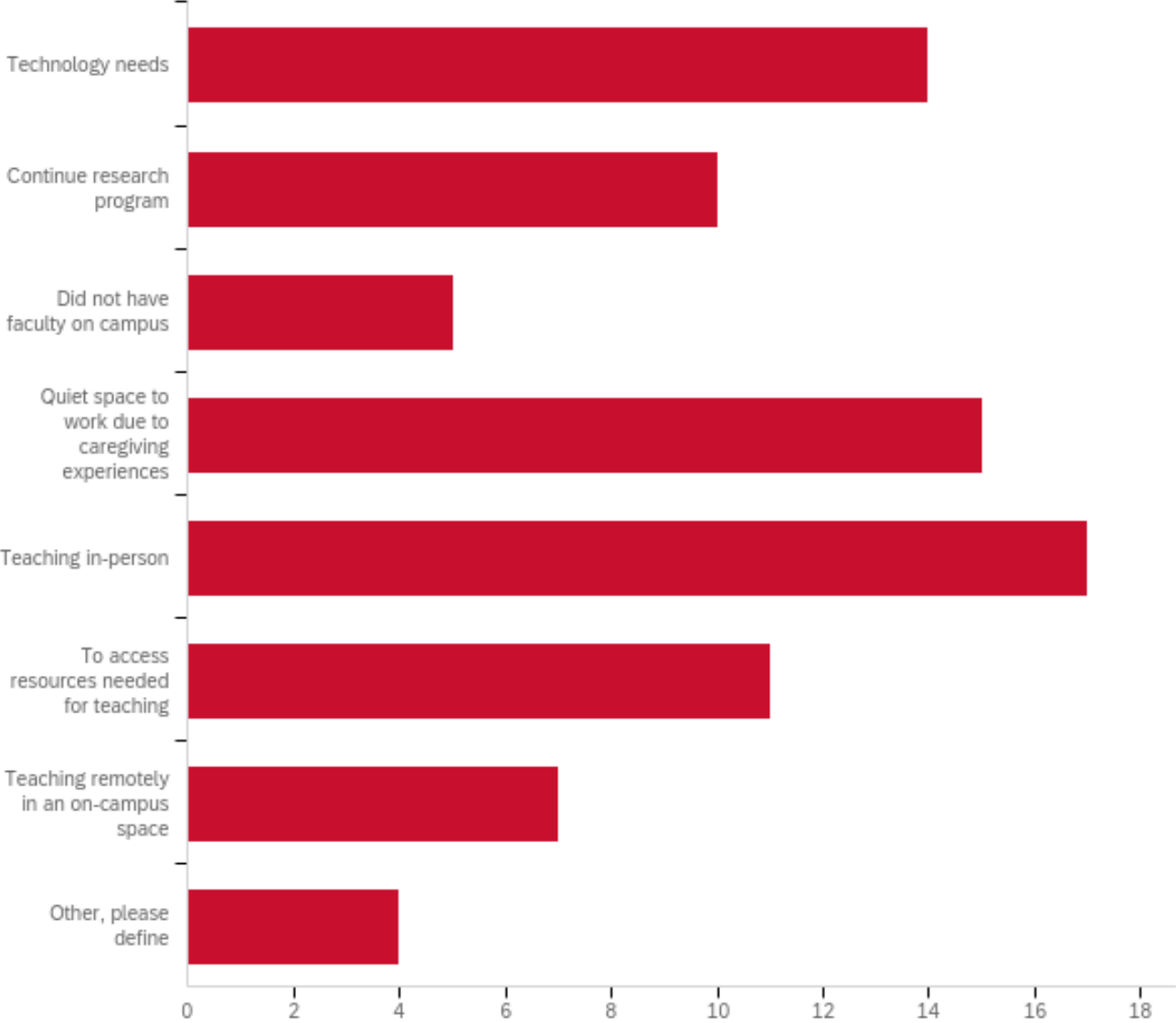Figure 3 shows that most respondents felt faculty returned to campus during the past year to teach in person and access resources needed to teach. When queried about what faculty were looking forward to when they return to campus, most respondents found that the majority of faculty want face-to-face interactions with students and colleagues, as well as increased opportunities for collaboration (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. "What are faculty looking forward to about returning to campus? Please select all that apply."
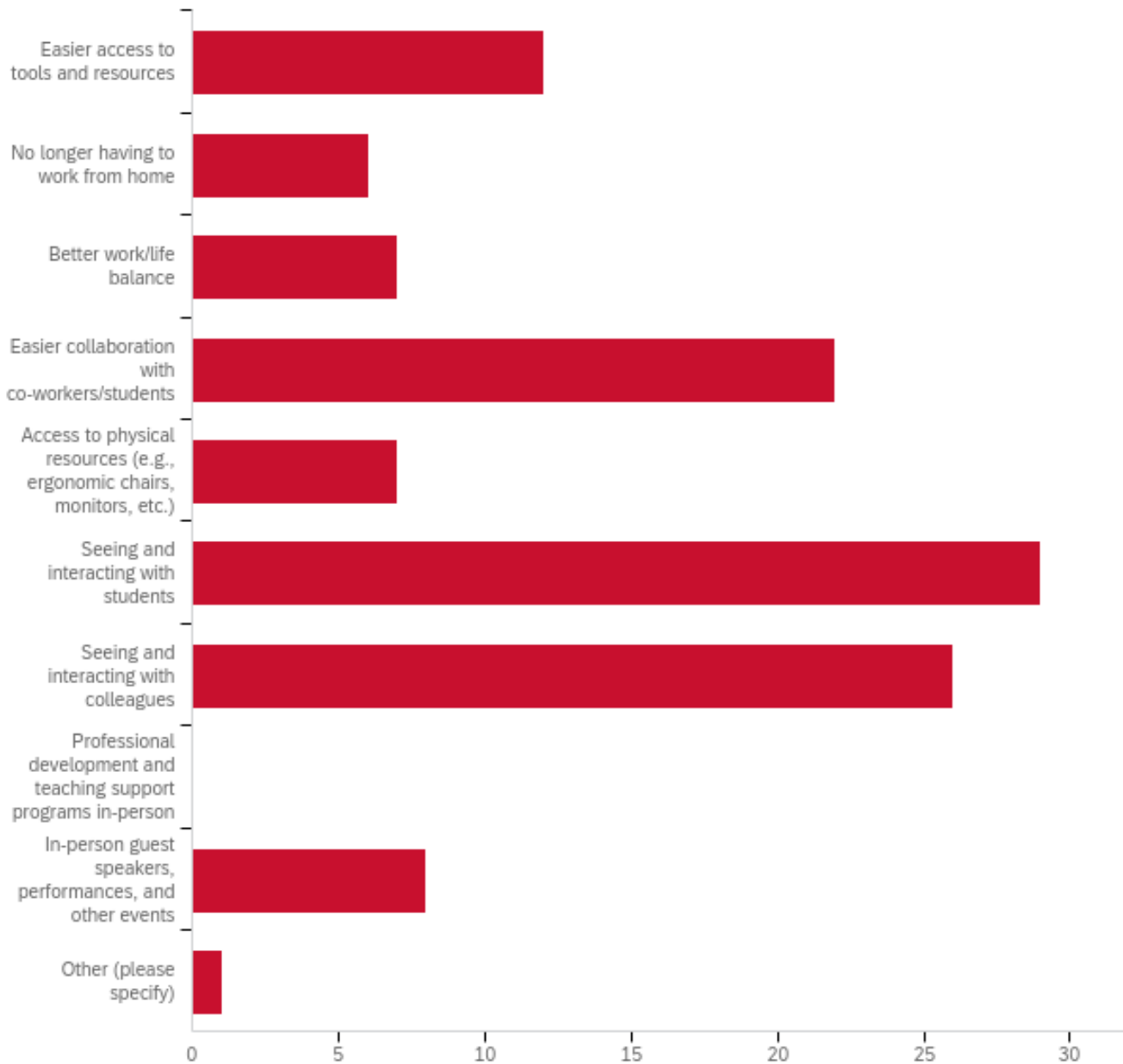
In contrast, faculty concerns about returning to campus were more varied (Figure 5). The availability of dependent care accounted for 16 of 78 responses (20.5%) and concerns about re-adjusting to office life and having in-person interactions were also cited in 11 (14.1%) and 12 (15.4%) responses, respectively. The length of the commute (9 responses, 11.5%), adjusting to the new teaching environment (7 responses, 9.0%), and concerns about returning to campus prematurely (7 responses, 9.0%) were also cited.

In the open-ended responses, many individuals expressed concerns about interactions with unvaccinated individuals. It was suggested that technology in every classroom to teach remote students, clear physical distancing guidelines, plastic dividers, air filters, cleaning supplies, and regular cleaning of classrooms would mitigate many of these concerns. Faculty are also concerned about enforcing facemask and vaccination policies.

Figure 5. "What are the main concerns your faculty have expressed about coming back to campus? Please select all that apply."
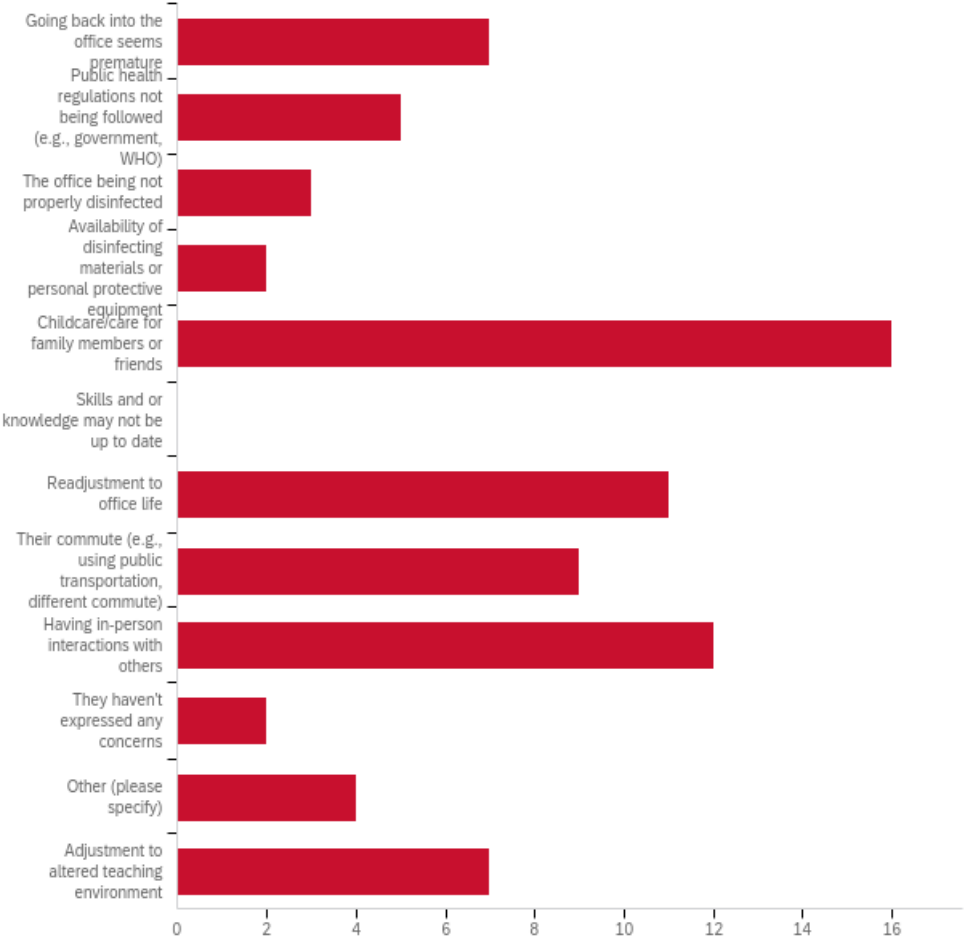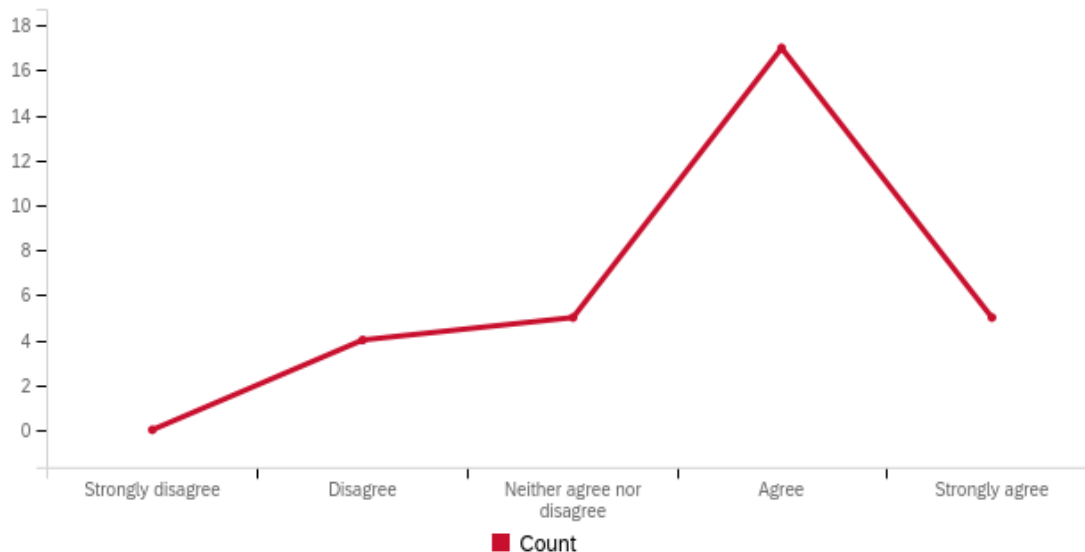

Figure 6 shows that 17 of 31 respondents agree that they have sufficient resources to return to campus.

Figure 6. "We have the resources my faculty need to get back to work quickly and effectively."

Additional resource needs include daycare options (especially if K-12 experience is completed remotely or hybrid), Wi-Fi upgrades, upgraded office computers and laptops for faculty, upgraded classroom technology (meeting owls, etc.), instruction in hybrid classroom technologies, and ventilation (especially in windowless classrooms). The impact of COVID on research productivity, especially for female faculty and faculty of color, was noted. The desire to provide additional research time for Assistant and Associate Professors was suggested. The need for clear university policies communicating expectations and modes of interaction for office hours, hybrid or parallel course delivery for students who cannot or choose not to attend face-to-face classes, faculty meetings, committee meetings, seminars, outreach, engagement, etc. was also noted.

Some feedback suggested that not all academic leaders understand the affective aspect of returning to campus for faculty who may not have been on campus at all in the last year. It would be helpful for university leadership to continue to communicate that the last year has been traumatic for everyone and that some faculty, staff, and students may find it difficult to return to campus.

Open ended questions that solicited feedback to ease faculty members' transition back to campus resulted in suggestions that NIU:

- Make difficult policy decisions (e.g., whether to require masks in class) at the university level.

- Ensure that policies are flexible and communicated clearly.
- Require vaccination of students, faculty, and staff.
- Continue COVID testing on campus.
- Continue using the COVID dashboard, for transparent communication.
- Offer robust training in new technologies.
- Continue access to virtual meetings and events, with guidance on making decisions about offering events in-person, hybrid, or virtual.
- Allow flexibility for those with dependent care responsibilities.
- Provide resources to help them get their research back on track.

Implications for Future Policy on Remote Work. The return to campus this fall is different from a long-term remote work policy in many ways. Faculty concerns over health and safety are a reaction to ongoing and still rapidly evolving conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and are (we hope) still only a temporary need. For long-term remote policies, the following themes can be extrapolated from the survey:

- More flexibility in working on-campus or remotely is desired going forward. Although faculty have expressed excitement over meeting in person for certain activities, like mentoring students and conducting research, they have asked for online or virtual options for others, like holding office hours or attending department/college meetings.
- Clear communication and expectations are critical, but guidelines should allow for some local adaptation at the department/school level.
- Care of both children and other dependents, such as parents, will be a long-term issue. Flexibility in working remotely for last-minute changes in dependent care would be helpful.
- As an institution, we need to rethink the technology provided that enables remote work, including laptops for faculty and equipment for streaming in meeting spaces, and how those resources are allocated. Many departments did not feel they had the resources within the department.

Sub-group #5: Employee Engagement, Support, Work-Life Balance (EESWLB) Report

Co-Leaders: Dr. Anna Quider and Susan Swegle

Sub-group members: Kate Quinn, Susanne Logdson, Renee Page, Michael Kushnick, Jessica Seipp, Dan Koenen, Andy Pemberton, Stefan Groebel, Christine Lagattolla, Melanie Costello, Tracey Ward

EESWLB co-leaders have met on several occasions and one specific occasion with our sub-group members for insight on our charge. We also requested their review of this report for additions and necessary corrections. Those have been added at this time.

We asked our sub-group what positives and negatives they see from hybrid/flexible/remote working at NIU. From this meeting, we have addressed and categorized themes of the discussion below. The first table consists of the positives and negatives that were discussed.

Positives	Negatives
• Less commuting • Employees feel more efficient. • Employees feel better able to concentrate. • Employees save money on gas, parking, and lunches. • MS Teams is a good system for connecting face to face and sharing files. • WFH helps people who have disabilities and medical appointments they need to schedule around. • Seeing family/children more frequently • Improved personal wellness such as increased sleep, exercise, and healthy eating. • May need less office space or parking spaces on campus. • Improved work/life balance. • Larger pools of talent if recruiting with remote work options. • Positive environmental impact – old paper processes moved to electronic.	• Less connection (hallway/breakroom/brainstorming connections/quick answers) than in-person work • Jealousy among employees with different job duties • Employees who can't work from home are upset that they can't save money on gas and lunches. • Concern over whether WFH employees are doing non-work-related tasks during work hours. • Difficult to create cohesive bonds among employees as a unit or department. • More difficulty connecting to new employees during the on-boarding process. • Employees who come into the office are asked to do additional tasks, outside their purview, because they are more visible. • It is more challenging to track hours worked when working remotely because of blurred boundaries between work and non-work times. • It is difficult to work remotely in student-facing positions. • May need larger spaces with fewer people for physically distancing if vaccines cannot be verified.

The second table identifies possible resources/assistance which can be provided to alleviate some of the negatives from above. It is the hope of the EESWLB sub-group that these can be incorporated into policies/guidelines to help the Creator/Supplier (the person or persons we believe can deliver the description) with ideas to achieve hybrid working conditions.

Audience	Creator/Supplier	Description
**Sub-topic: Communications Resources – ensuring that communication resources exist to promote a well-balanced work environment for those who may be working hybrid/flexible/remote situations and for those working on campus.**
Employees	Supervisors	• Setting ground rules for cameras, etc. (including camera etiquette in invite). • Maintaining the employee engagement during meetings with those who are remote and with those who are in the office (calling on both remote and on campus employees for input, allowing use of chat functions, etc.). • Set expectations about how tone is communicated via textual communication; for example, the use of emojis or GIFs to convey tone, one-word email replies, etc.
Employees	Supervisors	• Clearly communicate the expectations of technology to be used (Teams, texts, phones, SharePoint, email, etc.) and circumstances for using a specific technology.
Employees	Supervisors with HRS assistance	• Specifying working hours to assist the management of the department/work area if necessary – can employees be flexible; are core hours required for business purposes, when employees need to be available. • This includes the Creator/Supplier maintaining the respect of honoring alternative work times.

Employees	Supervisors and NIU Communications (NIU Today & Staff Announcements)	• Creating training articles for these publications to talk about:
		  ○ Flexibility and/or inequity of flexible options (i.e., remote workers can save on gas and food purchases; remote workers only do household chores when working from home, etc.).
		  ○ remote working cannot be available for every job on campus. Many Dining, Residential Housing, Building Services and Physical Plant positions must be done on campus. When possible, supervisors can look at flexible work schedules to allow some freedom of flexibility to their employees in these positions.
		• Giving each other grace about returning to the office or working flexibly – it will be

		different. Productivity looks different to everyone.
Sub-topic: Training – areas where training may need to occur to help the understanding of those on campus vs. those working flexibly to break down barriers.		
Supervisors	EAP HRS Career Services Other training entities on campus may be able to join forces to create adequate training on this topic.	• Supervisors need to have training on providing work-life balance for their employees. The mindset of requiring 24/7 work (i.e., working through holidays, vacations, leaves of absence, etc.) needs to be addressed. Employees are looking for work-life balance and employers who can show that they honor this will create more dedicated employees. • This training should also build awareness and empathy for the many reasons that an employee may choose to work a hybrid or remote schedule (e.g., family obligations, disabilities, mental health, etc.) and dispel the outdated notion that remote workers are not working or are unproductive. • Setting boundaries and sticking to them as much as possible is crucial to show that we honor work-life balance as an employer.
Sub-topic: Evaluations		
Employees and Supervisors	Supervisors and HRS	• Supervisors should have the opportunity to undergo a 360 evaluation which includes evaluation of their management of employee work-life balance and management of remote employees.
Employees	Supervisors and HRS	o Supervisors need to ensure that timely evaluations are occurring for all their employees. Evaluations are an employee engagement and support tool which are crucial to improvement of areas of necessary growth and to foster encouraging environments for employee retention. o HRS is working on improving supervisor notification of required evaluations.
Sub-topic: Hiring and resourcing remote employees		

Hiring Managers	HRS and other departments/work groups	• Human Resources create guidelines for hiring managers regarding hiring part-time and full-time remote employees.
		• Topics covered include:
		   o hiring employees who will work from a location outside of Illinois.
		   o hiring employees who are located within Illinois but work remotely.

Sub-topic: Employee Engagement Tools		
Supervisors	Training entities on campus	• Conduct training on how to manage remote employees so that remote employees are not "out of sight, out of mind."
Supervisors	DoIT HRS	• Supervisors should be provided with guidelines for up-to-date technology resources, regular contact via face to face/Teams meetings, regular and timely evaluations, other feedback and the ability to maintain promotional rights even if not working on campus.
Employees	Supervisors Training entities on campus	• Employees should receive information and resources to assist them in maintaining engagement with their co-workers and supervisors. • This should include resources that explicitly address the mental health aspects (pros and cons) of working remotely. • New employees should receive some in-office training even if they will be working remotely or hybrid. • Employees should have the option to ease into changes in their work location or work schedule so they can get used to their new environment. HRS, EAP, MarComm, financial services and DoIT could collaborate on training and resources for supervisor and employees to assist with transitions and remote working.
Employees	Supervisors and Department Heads	• Departments/offices could consider creating a "Spirit Squad" of sorts to maintain interpersonal connections amongst remote employees. HR is doing this now and could provide some advice to other units that would like to start a similar effort.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna Quider

Susan Swegle

Summary of Recommended Revisions to Current Work At Home Policy

1. Note benefits of remote working in the Purpose section.
2. Include guidelines for 1) determining work modality viability and 2) developing work arrangements.
3. Revisions should reflect that remote working agreements are made between employee and supervisor, with approval at division level and documentation being submitted to HRS.
4. Indicate whether the remote working agreements are temporary or permanent/ongoing.
5. Include a process for review and renewal of remote working agreements, including a trial period for new agreements.
6. Policy should address whether employees on probation are eligible for remote working. Some employees may be hired as remote workers in the future, and the policy should address that possibility as well.

Work At Home (Current Policy)

Policy Approval Authority	President
Responsible Division	Human Resources Services
Contact Person	Vernese Edghill-Walden
Primary Audience	Faculty Staff
Status	Active
Effective Adoption Date	10-01-2016
Last Review Date	10-01-2016
Policy Category/Categories	Human Resources / Employment

I. Purpose

Provide guidelines for departments which permit civil service and supportive professional staff employees to work from home.

II. Policy

General Provisions

It is important that clear guidelines and expectations be established between the department and employee prior to the start of the work from home arrangement. Employees approved to work-at-home remain obligated to comply with all University rules, policies, practices, and procedures. Violation of such rules, practices, and procedures may result in immediate termination of the arrangement and possible disciplinary action. For the purposes of this policy, work-at-home is defined as a situation where circumstances are deemed appropriate by the relevant University department and Human Resource Services for an employee of the University to be compensated for performing assigned responsibilities in a non-campus, non-University affiliated environment, typically their place of residence. Departments should consult with the Provost Office to determine if an undated TA-2 form is required and the Controllers Office for questions regarding travel reimbursement for conferences or meetings while working from home.

Guidelines

1. Prior to establishing a work-at-home arrangement, the department should ensure that all of the following conditions are met:
   - There is a mutual agreement between the employee, supervisor, and applicable vice president
   - Those required duties of the job, as determined by the department, can be done at home
   - The operational needs of the department will still be met
   - The work required is considered official University business
   - The department has developed the required documentation outlined below in coordination, and with final approval by, Human Resource Services before the work-at-home arrangement begins
2. To establish the work-at-home arrangement, the documentation outlined below is required and should be coordinated, with final approval by, Human Resource Services. A copy must be on file with Human Resource Services:

- The duration of the arrangement, including dates and times. Since different scenarios necessitate the work-at-home arrangement, supervisors must adhere to University policy when it comes to creating schedules or the amount of time worked each day
- Address and phone number of where the work will be performed so that the employee can be reached by the supervisor or colleagues for work-related issues
- A description of the work being performed at home, including the type of information the employee will have access to from home
- Confirmation that the employee has been made aware of the university Information Security Policy and applicable state and federal information security and privacy laws (e.g. FERPA and HIPAA) and the requirements to safeguard university information and that employee agrees to safeguard the information in accordance with an information safeguard plan developed by the supervisor and employee and in consultation with IT security
- A written explanation on how the supervisor will monitor and evaluate the work product and productivity of the work being performed
- If University owned equipment is used at home, a record of the equipment submitted on the proper form to Inventory Control in Materials Management and a copy retained by the supervisor

  In the written explanation on how the supervisor will monitor and evaluate the work product and productivity the expectations regarding productivity, volume of work, quality, deadlines, and check-in requirements should be clearly communicated in writing and signed as part of the agreement.

3. All initial written arrangements and paperwork must be completed, approved by both the employee and supervisor, and on file with Human Resource Services prior to any work beginning. Likewise, Human Resources should be notified by the supervisor of the extension, conclusion, or termination of the arrangement. This can be done by a memorandum to Human Resource Services. No work-at-home arrangements can be made that conflict with law, University Policy or Procedure, or that conflict with any Bargained Agreements or other terms of employment.
4. As part of the approval process, Human Resource Services is responsible to ensure that all initial paperwork is completed correctly and notify the affected parties when work can begin. Human Resource Services will maintain all paperwork in the employees personnel file for record keeping and audit purposes.
5. Additional expectations during the arrangement include the following:
- The supervisor is responsible for monitoring and evaluating of the employee while the arrangement is in force
- The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that all steps of the process are being followed and that appropriate documentation has been forwarded to Human Resource Services
- The employee is required to complete the assigned work within the required deadlines
- Employee may be required to be available and to participate in meetings and other official university functions related to their employment during the course of this arrangement. The University will make reasonable attempts to give the employee advance notice if he/she will

need to be available for a meeting or other University function. Such reasonable notice should provide as much advance notice as possible., Determinations of whether circumstances were impractical to provide reasonable advance notice can be appealed to the applicable Vice President for this arrangement

- The supervisor should provide regular feedback and communication to the employee
- The employee should provide progress reports on a regular basis to their supervisor
- In accordance with the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act, employees must document all hours spent on state business. Salaried employees working less than the required hours must document the appropriate benefit usage (e.g. sick or vacation time)
- If the employee is hourly, the supervisor must accurately track hours worked and approve any overtime or compensatory time prior to the employee accruing the time. University policies provide that overtime or compensatory time occurs when an employee works over 7.5 hours in a day or 37.5 hours in a week. Hourly employees working less than the required hours must document the appropriate benefit usage (e.g. sick or vacation time)

   At the conclusion of the arrangement, an evaluation of the performance and effectiveness of the arrangement must be documented and included in the employee regular evaluation.

6. A work at home arrangement may be amended or revoked by the University if it is in the best interests of the business and operations of the University. The University shall make reasonable efforts to give the employee advance notice of the amendment or revocation of the arrangement. Such reasonable notice should be no less than 10 days in advance, unless circumstances dictate that such advance notice is impractical. Determinations of whether circumstances were impractical to provide reasonable advance notice can be appealed to the applicable Vice President for this arrangement.

Recording of Hours Worked and Benefit Usage

Hourly and salaried non-exempt employees are required to record their hours worked on the Hourly Time Sheet and Benefit Usage Report and submit it to their supervisor for approval. The supervisor is responsible for certifying that the time submitted accurately reflects the hours worked. Request for time off and utilization of benefits must be requested and recorded in accordance with department requirements.

Salaried employees are required to record their benefit usage on the Salaried Employee Benefit Usage Form in accordance with University policy and submit it to their supervisor for approval. The supervisor is responsible for certifying that the usage reflected is accurate. Request for time off and utilization of benefits must be requested and recorded in accordance with department requirements.

Utilization of University Equipment, Supplies, and/or Records Off-Campus

If University-owned equipment is used when working remotely, a record of the equipment should be submitted through the proper form to Inventory Control in Materials Management, with a copy retained by the supervisor. Originals or copies of university records must not be taken off campus without supervisor approval and without documenting the contents and the need. Supplies taken for use at home must be recorded for control purposes. If University equipment, data, or files are lost, stolen, or

damaged, the employee agrees to immediately notify both the supervisor and Human Resources and participate in any investigation and, when appropriate, to include the University equipment in any associated home owner's insurance claim. Other costs associated with the arrangement will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The University reserves the right to conduct and or require physical inspection of equipment, supplies, and/or records being used in the home. Upon reasonable notice, the employee may be required to arrange to bring the items in to the designated representatives for checking. University equipment, records, and access utilized by the employee during the arrangement are the responsibility of the employee. They must be safeguarded to ensure unauthorized disclosure, loss, or damage. Records and equipment no longer needed must be returned to the campus location and documented by the supervisor. If the individual resigns or terminates while on a work-at-home arrangement, it is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure return of all records and equipment.

Non-University equipment owned or provided by the employee is used at no risk to the University and employee agrees to maintain such equipment in accordance with University security standards if used for University business purposes. The employee is also responsible for all operating costs, home maintenance, or other incidental costs associated with working from the location in the home.

Injury During Work-at-Home Schedule

Workers' Compensation laws may apply if the employee is injured in the course of performing official duties at the work location in the home. The University is not liable, to the extent provided by law, for other property damage or bodily injury that results from participation in a work-at-home arrangement.

References

State Employees and Officials Ethics Act
State Property Control Act

Policies must be written in compliance with the university's [Editorial Style Guide](#).

Submission Date: MM/DD/YYY

Telework Policy

Policy Approval Authority: President

Responsible Division:

Responsible Office: Human Resources Services

Responsible Officer (title only):

Contact Person:

Purpose

The Telework Policy ("the policy") sets forth the requirements of employees who work outside of their usual campus location. Telecommuting can benefit both the institution and the employee by promoting an effective work/life balance, increasing space utilization, reducing impact on the environment, and increasing employee recruitment and retention. Teleworking can increase the quality and effectiveness of employees.

Policy

It is important that employees are knowledgeable of the requirements and expectations of themselves and the department prior to the start of telework arrangement. Employees approved to telework remain obligated to comply with all University rules, policies, practices, and procedures. Violation of such rules, practices, and procedures may result in immediate termination of the arrangement and possible disciplinary action.

For the purposes of this policy, telework is defined as a situation where circumstances are deemed appropriate by the relevant University department and Human Resource Services for an employee of the University to be compensated for performing assigned responsibilities in a non-campus, non-University affiliated environment, typically their place of residence.

The policy does not provide for every contingency that may arise and there is no one size fits all approach. Supervisors and employees entering into a telework arrangement based upon this policy should endeavor to work together to resolve any unique situation that exists and unforeseen situation that may arise.

artments should consult with Human Resources to determine if an undated TA-2 form is required and the Controller's Office for questions regarding travel reimbursement for conferences or meetings while working from home.

Conditions of Telework

Prior to establishing a telework arrangement, the department should ensure that all of the following conditions are met:

- There is a mutual agreement between the employee and supervisor.
- The department has determined that the duties of the job can be done remotely.
- The needs of the department and university will be met.
- The essential job responsibilities will not be altered nor the level of service compromised either by the employee or the department.
- The work required is considered official University business.
- The department has completed the required documentation outlined below in coordination with appropriate university officials before the telework arrangement begins.
- Issues regarding non-compliance with the policy should follow established university procedures including CBU and non-union grievance procedures.

Telework may be occur in conjunction with flextime, job sharing, or a position that does not have regularly scheduled hours between the normal operating time of the university.

Responsibilities

The following are the responsibilities of the employee during their telework arrangement:

- Complete the assigned work within the required deadlines.
- Demonstrate work habits and performance suited to successful telework.
- Comply with all university policies and procedures.
- Be available and participate in meetings and other official university functions related to their employment.
- Provide progress reports on a regular basis to their supervisor.
- Document all hours spent to the nearest quarter hour on official state business- when appropriate?
- Utilize appropriate benefit time, when applicable.
- Notify their supervisors immediately of any situation that interferes with their ability to perform their job.
- Safeguard university property, including computers, records, and other supplies.
- Maintain appropriate workspace conducive to the type of work to be completed, such a maintaining an appropriate level of confidentiality.
- Must not take restricted access materials from the office without the written consent of their supervisor.

The following are the responsibilities of the supervisor during an employee's telework arrangement:

- Monitoring and evaluating of the employee while the arrangement is in force.
- Ensuring that all steps of the process are being followed and that appropriate documentation has been forwarded to Human Resource Services.
- Provide sufficient advance notice to the employee if their physical attendance on campus is needed.
- Provide regular feedback and communication to the employee.
- Certifying time submitted accurately reflects the hours worked.
- Provide opportunities for the employee to receive training and guidance on telework.

Documentation

To establish the telework arrangement, the necessary documentation must be completed by the employee and their supervisor prior to the start of the arrangement. A copy of the documentation must be sent to Human Resources Services and Human Resource Services will maintain all paperwork in the employees personnel file for record keeping and audit purposes. Likewise, Human Resources should be notified by the supervisor of the extension, conclusion, or termination of the arrangement. This can be done via email to Human Resource Services. No telework arrangements can be made that conflict with law, regulation, policy or procedure, or that conflict with any collective bargaining agreements or other terms of employment.

- The duration of the arrangement, including dates and times. Since different scenarios necessitate the work-at-home arrangement, supervisors must adhere to university policy when it comes to creating schedules or the amount of time worked each day.
- Address and phone number of where the work will be performed so that the employee can be reached by the supervisor or colleagues for work-related issues.
- A description of the work being performed at home, including the type of information the employee will have access to from home.
- Confirmation that the employee has been made aware of the university Information Security Policy and applicable state and federal information security and privacy laws (e.g., FERPA and HIPAA) and the requirements to safeguard university information and that employee agrees to safeguard the information in accordance with an information safeguard plan developed by the supervisor and employee and in consultation with IT security.
- A written explanation on how the supervisor will monitor and evaluate the work product and productivity of the work being performed.
- If University owned equipment is used at home, a record of the equipment submitted on the proper form to Property Control in Materials Management and a copy retained by the supervisor.

  In the written explanation on how the supervisor will monitor and evaluate the work product and productivity the expectations regarding productivity, volume of work, quality, deadlines, and check-in requirements should be clearly communicated in writing and signed as part of the agreement.

Duration and Continuation

No telework agreement may exceed twelve (12) months. The telework agreement will be reviewed after three (3) months to establish if the duties of the position are being met. Upon completion of a positive three (3) month review, the agreement will then be in effect for the remainder of the duration of the agreement. The agreement may be renewed annually and will be in effect during the time the employee is working/teleworking. A three-month review is required for each agreement, including renewals.

If the employee assumes a different position on campus or the same position within a different department/division, the telework agreement will be terminated. A new telework agreement may be developed between the supervisor and the employee.

A position that was previously completed via telework may not automatically be appropriate for telework for an employee that later assumes that position.

Amendment or Revocation

A telework arrangement may be amended or revoked by the University if it is in the best interests of the business and operations of the University. The University shall make reasonable efforts to give the employee advance notice of the amendment or revocation of the arrangement. Such reasonable notice should be no less than ten (10) days in advance, unless circumstances dictate that such advance notice is impractical.

Location

Location of telework (depending on needing to get to campus quick)

Tax implications?

Injury During Telework

Workers' compensation laws may apply if the employee is injured in the course of performing official duties at the work location in the home. The university is not liable, to the extent provided by law, for other property damage or bodily injury that results from participation in a telework arrangement.

Additional Telework Considerations:

Employees working from home during a university closing are expected to continue working unless it is not possible due to power outages or other conditions that prevent them from working. Employees Teleworking or Remote Working from home during an authorized closing do not receive compensatory time off.

Employees' classification, compensation, benefits, and conditions of employment will not change upon their acceptance of any telework arrangement.

Subject to supervisor and department head approval, Telework may be used as an opportunity for partial or full return to work, if appropriate, in cases of short-term disability, workers' compensation, family and medical leave, and illness. Telework is not intended to be used in place of leave taken for these reasons.

Employees working offsite are responsible for the security and confidentiality of any information, documents, records, or equipment in their possession. When the offsite work involves remote access of the university's computer network, remote users must abide by the university's security standards relating to remote access. All remote access involving data stored on the University network requires encryption. The University will provide the encryption mechanism that is appropriate for the level of access and the data involved. Sensitive data should not be included in email messages unless there is some form of encryption being used.

Telework and remote work employees will not act as primary caregivers for dependents during the agreed upon work hours. Dependent care arrangements should be made to permit concentration on work assignments.

All employees and departments utilizing Telework or Remote Work will complete a Telework/Remote Work Agreement, including a formal schedule, and NIU equipment log. The agreement must be agreed to by the employee, his/her supervisor and the department head and reviewed by HR & Payroll. Those employees and departments utilizing Flex Time, Compressed Schedule or Job-Sharing arrangement must complete a Flexible Work Agreement. Both the Telework/Remote Work Agreement and the Flexible Work Agreement must be completed and submitted to Human Resources and Payroll for review before beginning the flexible work arrangement.

References

State Employees and Officials Ethics Act

State Property Control Act

Information Security Policy

Types of Flexible Work:

Flex Time Arrangement: An acceptable schedule, agreed to by supervisor and employee, that enables completion of the traditional work week in fewer or more than five (5) full workdays and where the start time and end time of an employee's workday may be varied. https://www.niu.edu/hrs/benefits/leaves/flextime.shtml

Job Sharing: A work arrangement where two or more staff members share the responsibilities of one full-time position, in which each staff member shares a specific proportion of a full-time position. Employees who participate in job sharing share one FTE and are considered part-time employees.

Regular Work Schedule/On Call Evenings and Weekends: An arrangement whereby an employee works a regular schedule but is on call evenings and/or weekends.

Remote Work: A work arrangement where an employee spends most or all of their working hours outside of the traditional place of work. Remote workers differ from teleworkers in that they work from their home or other agreed upon alternate work site located far enough away from an NIU campus that commuting on a daily basis is not possible, or their position is designed for off-site work. Visits to the campus are infrequent but can be regularly scheduled.

Telework: A work arrangement where an employee of the university spends all or most of their working time at an approved Alternate Work Site for an agreed period of time.

Emergency or Intermittent Telework: Telework planned on an irregular schedule or in response to contingency operations related to an emergency or unforeseen incident.

Other Definitions:

Alternate Work Site: An acceptable site for performing job duties and responsibilities outside the traditional university office where official state business is performed. Such locations may include, but are not necessarily limited to, employees' homes and satellite offices.

Overtime: For purposes of Flexible Work Agreements, hours in excess of the approved alternate work schedule.

Flexible Work Agreement: The written agreement between the supervisor and the employee that details the terms and conditions of an employee's use of a flexible work arrangement, other than telework or remote work.

Telework/Remote Work Agreement: The written agreement between the supervisor and the employee that details the terms and conditions of an employee's work away from the traditional NIU office.

Work Schedule: The employee's hours of work in the traditional university office or in an alternate work location.

Procedural History of the Policy

[Insert text.]

Tips: Include date of original adoption, date of revision(s) or amendment(s)
   Example:
   Policy originally adopted on 1/16/12
   Section 1 amendment to reflect changes in state law 9/7/2015

Policies Reviewed from Other Institutions:

University of Wisconsin- Flexible Work Schedules and Telecommuting:

https://kb.wisc.edu/ohr/policies/page.php?id=53021

University of Washington - Telework Policy

   https://hr.uw.edu/policies/telework/telework-remote-work-and-out-of-state-work/

Virginia Commonwealth University -Telework @ VCU

   https://telework.vcu.edu/

Northwestern University - Policy on Alternate Work Strategies

https://www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits/work-life/flexible-work-arrangements/policy-on-alternative-work-strategies_final.pdf

University of Illinois – Chicago -Telecommuting/Remote Work

https://uofi.app.box.com/s/9vfkjypzm2lrr12d0awizeisowkgi6uq

Eastern Michigan - Telecommuting and Remote Work Policy - Non-Instructional Staff

https://www.emich.edu/hr/documents/policies/remote-work-policy-and-agreement.pdf

George Mason University

   https://flexwork.gmu.edu/

Flexible Work https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/flexible-work/

Future of Workplace Flexibility and Remote Working

Models and Effective Practices Subgroup

Co-Leads: Greg Martyn and Mike Stang
Subgroup Members: Alan Clay, Cathy Doederlein, Tracy Miller, Liberty Turner

Overall Task Group Objectives

The Future of Workplace Flexibility and Remote Working Task Group has been formed with the goals of:

- developing an institutional framework for decisions related to remote working (higher level guiding principles that address issues of flexibility, fairness, and functionality), and;
- developing an inventory of options (tactical as well as strategic) that can be used to increase employee flexibility for remote working in the context of NIU (to include options that can be adopted at the institutional level or be available to guide divisions/units in their decision making).

Guiding principles

- Prioritize students' needs and service to students.
- Promote flexibility to enhance employee health/well-being, retention, and engagement.
- Develop recommendations guided by fairness, equity, and functionality.
- Ensure operational effectiveness and efficiency will be maintained or strengthened.

Models and Effective Practices Subgroup Goals and Objectives

- Learn effective practices and lessons from within and outside NIU.
- Include resources/toolkits for remote working employees and supervisors.
- Develop inventory of options for hiring, onboarding, team building and inclusion.

Summary

Members of the Models of Effective Practices subgroup reached out to their internal and external networks, reviewed articles and publications, and have followed other College and Universities' progress in the pursuit of re-envisioning the future of the workplace.

There has been no external consensus on what this should look like, and the common sentiment is that the road forward will be a series of iterations and trial and error. However, where there has been consistency is in the understanding that there is immense value in remote and hybrid working arrangements, including employee morale and productivity, larger recruiting pools, and cost savings. Below are best practices and recommendations that have been compiled based on the documentation reviewed to this point.

Recommendations and Best Practices

Flexible working arrangements, including hybrid and fully remote positions, will impact many organizational processes and procedures. The recommendations and best practices have been broken into the below categories:

- People
- Community
- Communication
- Place
- Compliance Considerations

The recommendations and best practices will generally not include a deep dive into items covered by the other subgroups in efforts to minimize duplication. These include recommendations that fall under the following categories:

- Policy
- Technology
- Student Experience
- Employee Engagement, Support and Work-Life Balance
- Faculty Experience in and Beyond the Classroom

People

Personnel best practices and recommendations have been organized into the below phases of the employee lifecycle to help ensure all processes impacted have been considered.

| Attraction and Recruitment | Onboarding | Development | Retention | Separation |

Remote, hybrid and other flexible working arrangements can have a significant impact on the attraction and recruitment phase of the employee lifecycle, ranging from the ability to increase the size of the recruiting pool to offering flexible working arrangements as a benefit to entice prospective employees.

Onboarding plays a critical role in a new hire's long-term success with the university. Helping new hires adjust to the social and performance aspects of a new role while working remotely can be challenging, but with the proper tools and processes in place, remote onboarding can be efficient and effective. The building blocks of a successful onboarding are often referred to as the Four C's, compliance, clarification, culture, and connection. Providing supervisors with tools and processes to ensure all elements are included in a remote onboarding process will increase the likelihood of a new hire's long-term success at the University.

Employees (new and current) may need to ease into their remote work habits. Supervisors may seek guidance on how to measure employee performance for their remote workforce. Most employees grow with their positions and seek greater responsibility over time. A growth-minded institution is nimble and can adapt to an ever-changing landscape.

Employee engagement and benefit offerings are important components to employee retention, which are both impacted by flexible working arrangements. Retention recommendations will also be covered in more detail by the Employee Engagement and Faculty Experience subgroups.

Employee separation may occur for several reasons such as retirement, resignation, termination, or other reasons. It will be important to determine best practices and recommendations for employee separations.

Attraction and Recruitment

Considerations	Best Practices & Recommendations	Rationale	Subject Matter Expert/ Responsible Dept.
Job descriptions	Include "work modality" in job description.	Many prospective employees may only be interested in certain types of positions (e.g., remote positions) and fully remote positions can be listed differently to attract candidates from a larger geographic area.	Human Resource Services
Conducting Interviews	Create a guide and/or policy for conducting interviews.	A consistent recommended approach for interviewing could assist supervisors or hiring managers with how interviews are to be conducted (e.g., phone, video, in person), as well as provide some other best practices, (e.g., camera on for video calls).	Human Resource Services
Determining work modality viability (e.g., remote vs hybrid vs in-person)	Create a tool for supervisors to determine appropriate work modality of a position. Determination must be made at the "role" level and not based on an individual employee. Document work modality determination analysis.	A tool would help supervisors and/or departments determine whether a position could be conducted in a hybrid or fully remote manner. A checklist or tool could help walkthrough the various considerations.	Human Resource Services

Guidelines for Work Agreements	Create template and guidelines for both staff or supervisor to request a flexible work arrangement.	Consistent tools would enhance equity and allow for as much standardization as possible.	Human Resource Services

Onboarding

Considerations	Best Practices & Recommendations	Rationale	Subject Matter Expert/ Responsible Dept.
New Hire Onboarding	Develop an onboarding checklist for supervisors.	Help ensure all required processes and compliance requirements have been considered and completed.	Human Resources Services
Welcoming new employees	Create a welcome note template for supervisors to send to new hires prior to their first day.	A sense of connection and inclusion is a vital component of the onboarding process. Creating a welcome note with links to a virtual campus tour or NIU fun facts would help virtual employees feel more connected to the university.	Human Resource Services
Ensuring new hires are adjusting smoothly to the new role	Create a New Hire First Week Checklist for supervisors.	It is important that new hires fully understand their new role and meet their new team members and other important contacts. A checklist for the first week could help supervisors manage the various components of a successful onboarding to help new hires adjust to their new roles.	Human Resource Services

Providing resources to new employees	Create a Remote Working Resource page for new employees.	Creating a resource page with FAQs for new hires, commonly used forms and/or other tools would help employees learn processes and know who to reach out to with questions.	Web Services, Human Resource Services, WFM Task Group
Building a Sense of Team	Schedule a virtual meet and greet for the new hire and some of the employees or other stakeholders they will work with closely. Schedule regular team meetings.	It is harder to meet people while working remotely, so ensuring that the new hire is included as part of the team will enhance the sense of inclusion and understanding of the department/ university culture.	Supervisor
Provide a Peer Mentor	Consider providing a peer mentor to new hires.	A peer mentor can answer common questions and create a social connection for the new hire.	Supervisor
Onboarding Paperwork – Compliance Requirements	Determine regulatory requirements for onboarding processes.	Determine whether there are any applicable Federal or state rules that may require an on-site presence, "wet" signatures, etc. (e.g., civil service testing, Form I-9, etc.)	Human Resource Services
Equipment/ Technology needs & distribution	Determine equipment/ technology needs and best methods for distribution to new employees (e.g., purchase, provide stipends, reimbursement).	Defer to Technology Subgroup	Technology subgroup, DoIT, Property Control

	Ensure compliance with Illinois Property Control rules.		

Development

Considerations	Best Practices & Recommendations	Rationale	Subject Matter Expert/ Responsible Dept.
Managing and tracking employee performance	Supervisors should create performance plans with measurable outcomes. Employee should set goals and receive feedback from supervisors on their achievement of goals. Supervisors should encourage and support professional development.	Goal setting and performance evaluation is a long-standing practice.	Human Resource Services
Annual training requirements	All mandatory training courses should be online. Time, equipment, and assistance should be made available to employees that typically do not work at computers.	Training is important to an employee's development so the way its conducted should accommodate all types of employees working arrangements.	Human Resource Services Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Professional Development	Professional development opportunities should vary in modality.	Growth-minded professional development increases quality of work and job satisfaction.	Supervisors ADEI EAP University Libraries

	Professional development and achievements can be recognized electronically.		
Awards and Recognitions	Recognition can be given and announced electronically using large audience communication channels.

Supervisors should personally recognize extraordinary work and accomplishments of their staff. | Electronic recognitions are often thought to be superior because they can be linked to employment style social media platforms and websites.

Personal appreciation should not be forgotten with distance workers that may not have the sense of connection from a physical presence. | Supervisors
Award Grantors |

Retention

Considerations	Best Practices & Recommendations	Rationale	Subject Matter Expert/ Responsible Dept.
Work / life balance	Minimize scheduling meetings during lunch hours.

Normal business hours should be maintained. Avoid meetings and checking emails during breaks and off hours.

Virtual meetings have a higher cognitive load. Minimize multitasking which may distract you from actively listening and engaging with other speakers. Keep meetings to 50 minutes or less. Avoid | Remote workers may feel like they are always "on." Burn out, poor health and decreased job satisfaction may result. | Human Resource Services, Employee Engagement and Work-Life Balance subgroup, and Faculty Experience subgroup |

	scheduling meetings back-to-back. Block time on your calendar to work without interruption.		
Sense of belonging retains employees	Use technology and communication platforms to replicate informal interactions. Check in with your team during the day: post questions, share best practices, form groups around topics.	Belonging to a community is motivating and increases job satisfaction.	Human Resource Services, Employee Engagement and Work-Life Balance subgroup, and Faculty Experience subgroup
Travel inbound to campus	Budget travel costs for remote staff to come to campus when necessary. Arrange remote staff to stay at hotel at Holmes Student Center	It may be beneficial for Remote staff to come to campus. Staff retreats, celebrations or institutional gatherings may require travel to campus.	Event planners Travel authorization Employee Engagement and Work-Life Balance subgroup, and Faculty Experience subgroup
Travel outbound	Budget costs for staff to perform work duties requiring travel. Ex. Clinical site visits, conference presentations, field trips, recruiting, research, etc. Create and implement electronic forms to request travel.	Fully on-campus and remote working staff may be required to travel to perform work duties or to enhance performance through professional development.	Supervisors Travel authorization P-T Card Administration

	Anticipate backup plans for staff covering day-to-day activities.		

Separation

Considerations	Best Practices & Recommendations	Rationale	Subject Matter Expert/ Responsible Dept.
Equipment Return	TBD	TBD	Models and Effective Practices Subgroup
Exit Interviews	TBD	TBD	Models and Effective Practices Subgroup
Access Rights Terminated	TBD	TBD	Models and Effective Practices Subgroup
Others TBD	TBD	TBD	Models and Effective Practices Subgroup

Community

Considerations	Best Practices & Recommendations	Rationale	Subject Matter Expert/ Responsible Dept.
Varying levels of technology efficacy.	Choose technologies that have a purpose. When possible, use technologies that are familiar and existing. Defer to Technology Subgroup for recommendations and best practices.	Technology is an important part of working remotely. Technology should support working remotely and not be a barrier.	Technology subgroup DoIT

Access to reliable internet	Determine a minimum level of internet speed required to successfully work remotely.	Connection speed is necessary for successful meetings, uploading and downloading files, etc.	Technology subgroup DoIT
Parking for remote or hybrid employees	Consider other employee parking rate options (e.g., sliding scale based on compensation, etc.)	Parking is necessary for anyone visiting campus; however, determining the best rates to be charged becomes more complicated when considering hybrid schedules, remote employees, and other flexible working arrangements. Determining an equitable long-term rate schedule would be beneficial.	Parking Department
Overall Hybrid Meeting Logistics	Technology will need to be utilized to blend in-person and virtual participants into one cohesive meeting experience.	Defer to Technology subgroup.	Technology subgroup DoIT
Quality Two-way Audio is important	Face-to-face and remote audience members require reliable cameras, speakers, and microphones.	Good audio quality is critical to each meeting attendee to have equal voice in the discussion.	Technology subgroup Supervisors DoIt
Current technologies may not be taking advantage of enhanced videoconferencing tools	Provide units with current videoconferencing technical abilities. Encourage units to identify limitations that may be enhanced with updated tools.	Enhanced videoconferencing systems may improve communication between on-campus and remote attendees.	Technology subgroup Supervisors DoIT
Consider the "style" of the meeting and how each	Begin with the virtual first. Best if sharing collaborative	Hybrid meetings are usually inferior to both face-to-face and virtual meetings. How do	Meeting hosts

attendee will fully participate in the meeting or discussion	documents/tools or everyone is required to "see" faces. Broadcasting: if the meeting will be primarily 1 or 2 speakers sharing news, hybrid may be fine. Have someone monitor chat for remote staff and interject on their behalf. "Seeing" all faces may not be important. Two-way audio and video: Use Streaming options similar to what's being used in the classrooms for dynamic hybrid meetings. This increases the presence of both types of attendees. Blended: content could be shared asynchronously. For physical, on-campus opportunities; create videos, share with all participants and open an asynchronous discussion.	you know a hybrid meeting is necessary? If it's determined a hybrid meeting is still best, what can the host do?	
Key practices can increase the productivity of a hybrid meeting	Start with a strong facilitator. The facilitator is prepared to keep all attendees active and heard.	Well facilitated meetings will solve problems and increase productivity.	Meeting hosts Event planning

	Test technology and allow for rehearsal and/or early entry. Use interactivity techniques to keep all attendees engaged. Ex. Discussion prompts with time to answer. Polls or emoticons for quick pulse. Breakouts for smaller groups. Electronic white boards and post-it tools Think accessibility. The DRC can provide CART support for meetings. Teams and Zoom can provide live closed captioning.		
Measuring Impact	Use scorecards, dashboards, or process models to measure and report on department outcomes. Use Qualtrics, Power Bi, SharePoint, and project management tools to gather data and support documentation of effectiveness.	Aligning mission, goals and outcomes with department activities can be measured with success indicators. Departments can measure the effectiveness of a remote working staff with defined short, intermediate, and long-term Key Performance Indicators.	Department and Unit Heads Institutional Effectiveness Academic Accreditation and Evaluation

Communication

Previous communication norms and expectations established during the in-office only working environments may no longer be appropriate in our hybrid or remote working environments. Communication best practices and templates should be included in the Supervisor Guide/Toolbox to assist in facilitating discussions about communication, file sharing, collaboration, etc. For illustrative purposes, below is a modified example template from the Harvard Business Review that could be used by departments to establish communication norms:

Tool	When to use	Response time	Norms
Instant Messenger (Teams Chat)	Time-sensitive, urgent messages. Short and simple conversations.	ASAP	Informal language style Use with fewer than 6 people (otherwise video call). Set your availability using MS Outlook. Available, Busy and Offline will indicate status. Avoid complicated questions or conversations that require visuals.
Channels (Teams)	Shared space for limited group with common goals. Shared Announcements and files Just-in-Time information, with the ability to foster dialogue.	Established by the channel members	Stacked conversations that reduce cluttering email. Easy to have channel members jump into a video call. Social media-type functionality to use mentions, emoticons, GIFs and other media. Easy to use search.

			Social lounge channels can be used for informal chit-chat.
Email	Provide directional, important, and timely information. Ensure there's a record of communication. Direct the receiver to an online source for more information.	<24 hrs.; priority dependent	Use identifiers in the subject line for urgency and response expectations. Use to share attachments. Avoid when immediate response is required. Not for random chit-chat. Take advantage of automatic away messages for vacation and personal days.
Phone	Direct or indirect calls to connect with internal or external constituents. Sim Rings, Google Voice, Ring Central and other virtual phone platforms can be used in place of an "office phone".	Instant and voice mail.	Use as or in place of traditional landline. Protects staff from sharing personal numbers. General office numbers can be answered, and calls can be transferred by office staff. Take advantage of automatic away messages for vacation and personal days.
Video Call (Teams, Zoom)	Use for meetings, including external ones that could benefit from visual interaction (e.g., project check-ins, introductions, deck sharing).	Schedule in advance; priority dependent	Use mute if you are not talking. Meeting host clarifies if video functionality is required for participation. Record calls for those who miss them.
Text (if applicable)	Time-sensitive, urgent messages Only use if you were unable to reach the person via other channels.	Within 30 minutes if between 7AM and 7PM; priority dependent	Use can be adjusted if it is the preferred communication for your manager. Avoid texting during meetings/working sessions.

Place

Facilities Management – rethinking the workplace (traditional, WFH and hybrid) to protect faculty and staff to enhance productivity and mitigate risk; incorporating the following can assure those returning will be safe and healthy: rethink meeting spaces, implement building-wide cleaning protocols, focus on indoor air quality, update and display safety measures regularly are some return strategies to return to the office workplace; long-term solutions rethink air-filtration systems, add outdoor space, implement biophilic design elements, rethink floor design. This section is to focus on the physical space and associated components.

Considerations	Best Practices & Recommendations	Rationale	Subject Matter Expert/ Responsible Dept.
Work-from-home Space: Guidelines on setting up a healthy, ergonomic work environment at home, or even provide one-on-one evaluations of home workspaces to evaluate ergonomics or health and safety risks. It's also important to review and comply with insurance policies for out-of-office working.	Develop guidelines for "Office Ready for the Home" program that offers a one-stop shop to assist in identifying and deploying a work-from-home setup: Identify private workspace in the home. Provision of ergonomically designed furniture, technology, and equipment Post-assessment reporting Equipment grants for office essentials. Allowance to procure additional materials or equipment to take care of things you need to take care of	Enhance productivity and reduce risk. Modified working hours - flexibility of hours. Establish boundaries for work-life balance.	Human Resources, DoIT, Procurement, Risk Management, Architecture & Engineering, Environmental Health and Safety

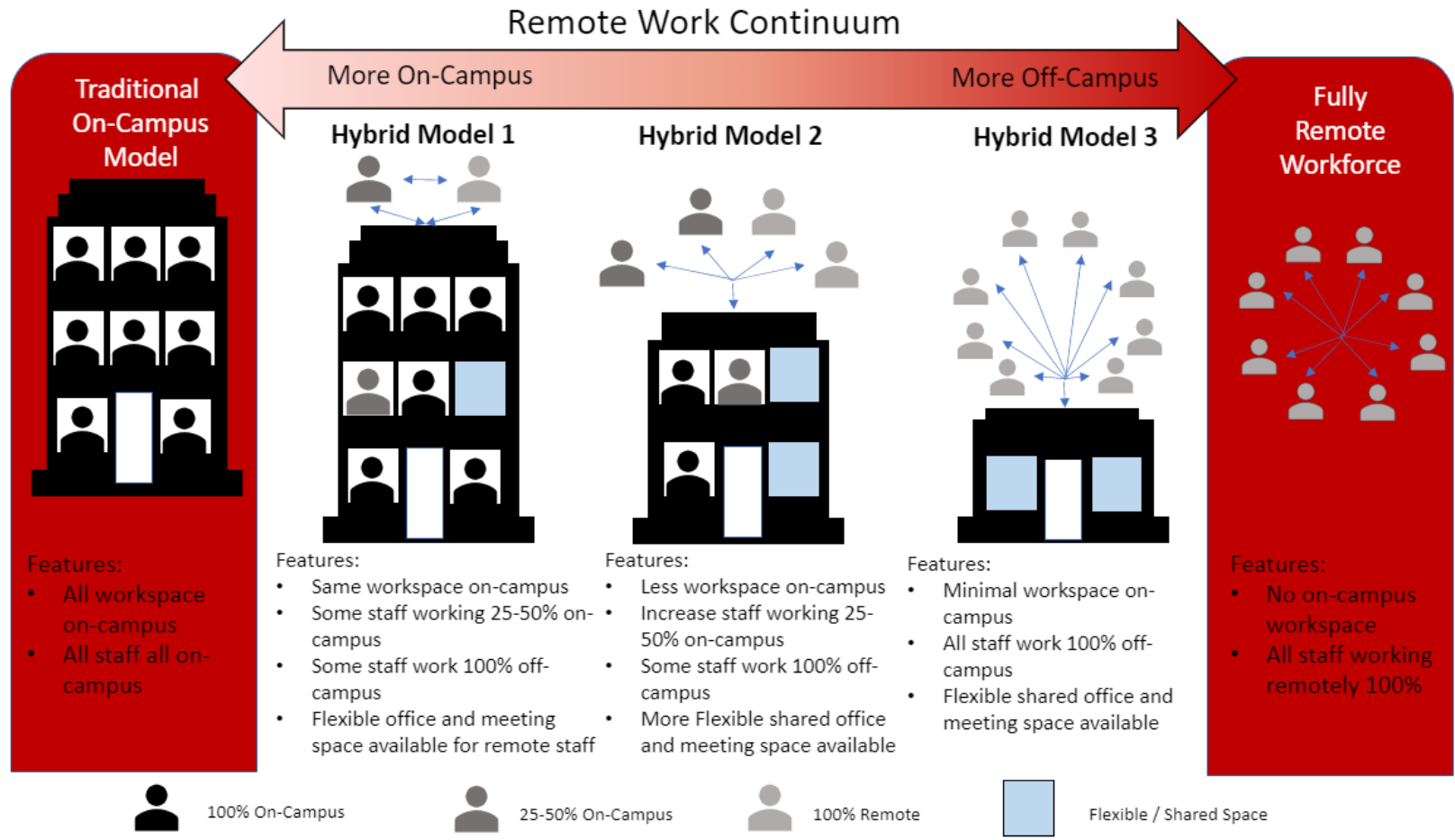|	to accommodate work from home. Focus online IT resources to assist with work-from-home workers.		
In-Office Workspace: The office should evolve into a place for "experience-based working", rather than for doing individual focused work—which can be accomplished at home.	Hoteling stations – hybrid worker Private office – job responsibilities require privacy majority of the time and works on campus majority of the week.	Modified working hours - flexibility of hours. Student facing positions. Work can only be performed on campus. Need for collaboration.	Furniture Vendors, A/E Firms, Architecture & Engineering
In-Office Public Workspace: The office work space becomes more of a collaboration hub. Experience-based working involves curating spaces and allowing individuals to be present at the office for specific reasons or experiences.	The hybrid office (see below diagram) Create a flexible separation between private and public spaces that can be opened or closed. Shared public spaces can act as co-working spaces with a variety of parts – like client meeting rooms, multipurpose rooms, work-cafes, one-to-one meeting spaces, and focus pods.	Focus on wellbeing and safety. Socially distanced meeting rooms and work areas Public workspace can be shared and dispersed throughout campus: utilize libraries or use side-by-side tables for problem-solving; access huddle spaces and maker labs for innovation; convene at cafe spaces or brand zones for community events.	Furniture Vendors, A/E Firms, Architecture & Engineering

Contactless Design: A deterrence against the spread of communicable viruses or disease	Entry doors and access points throughout the office can be automated to reduce the amount of physical contact. Occupancy sensors can be installed to keep a close watch on occupant capacity levels in certain spaces as well as light up the space. Minimize physical contact in toilet facilities with automatic water closet, sensor-activated faucet along with touch free toilet accessories such as soap dispensers, hand dryer, toilet seat cover dispenser.	Contactless technologies offer a potential solution to stay operational without increasing the risk of viral spread. Where fully contactless design cannot be implemented immediately, adjustments to existing equipment can be made, such as focusing on usage via the elbow or forearm to minimize touch. Alternatively, this equipment can also be replaced with self-cleaning machinery that can install fresh sleeves after each use or have high-touch surfaces coated with disinfecting agents to maintain high levels of cleanliness.	A/E Firms, Architecture & Engineering Building Maintenance and Operations
HVAC: Ventilations, air distribution, HVAC system operation, system commissioning are particularly important factors to prevent the airborne pathogens from spreading indoors.	Provide and maintain at least required minimum outdoor airflow rates for ventilation as specified by applicable codes and standards. Use combinations of filters and air cleaners that achieve MERV 13 or better levels of performance for air recirculated by HVAC systems.	Within limits ventilation, filtration and air cleaners can be deployed flexibly to achieve exposure reduction and mitigate indoor airborne transmission.	ASHRAE, A/E Firms, Architecture & Engineering, Building Maintenance & Operations, Environmental Health and Safety

| | Only use air cleaners for which evidence of effectiveness and safety is clear.

Select control options, including standalone filters and air cleaners, that provide desired exposure reduction while minimizing associated energy penalties. | | |
|---|---|---|---|

OPEN OFFICE
Reduced furniture density and sensors for real-time utilization data

OPEN OFFICE
Personalized, adaptive workstation

WAR ROOM
Gesture controlled digital boards for impromptu team collaboration sessions

SENSOR
Remote team members' location

CONFERENCE
Mixed-reality conference room to bridge virtual and physical worlds

Gensler
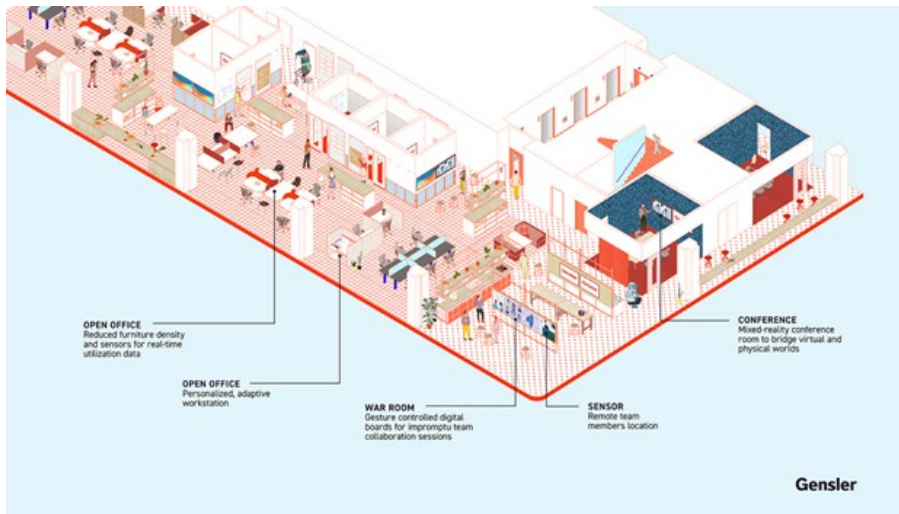
The demand for the office workspace on campus could decrease as policies for work-from- home and hybrid work are implemented, which could translate to cost savings. The move in this direction gives an opportunity to evaluate utilization space for each building to ensure it is best for the university overall. These are long term considerations and should be done in conjunction with existing projects.

Remote Work Continuum

More On-Campus → **More Off-Campus**

Traditional On-Campus Model

Features:
- All workspace on-campus
- All staff all on-campus

Hybrid Model 1

Features:
- Same workspace on-campus
- Some staff working 25-50% on-campus
- Some staff work 100% off-campus
- Flexible office and meeting space available for remote staff

Hybrid Model 2

Features:
- Less workspace on-campus
- Increase staff working 25-50% on-campus
- Some staff work 100% off-campus
- More Flexible shared office and meeting space available

Hybrid Model 3

Features:
- Minimal workspace on-campus
- All staff work 100% off-campus
- Flexible shared office and meeting space available

Fully Remote Workforce

Features:
- No on-campus workspace
- All staff working remotely 100%

Legend:
- 100% On-Campus
- 25-50% On-Campus
- 100% Remote
- Flexible / Shared Space

Considerations	Best Practices & Recommendations	Rationale	Subject Matter Expert/ Responsible Dept.
Cost Savings	Implementation of a permanent remote working policy would result int reduction of the physical space usage. Consolidate like functions and reconfigure the space for smaller and/or shared work areas.	Systematically consolidating functions can result in space reduction where the usage of an entire building could be discontinued and can provide savings, such as utility, maintenance, repair, cleaning, etc. Further savings may be gained through the sale of buildings or demolishing unused facilities. Evaluate all spaces being used to ensure it is best for the university overall.	A/E Firms, Architecture & Engineering
Space Planning Utilization	Working from home can reduce the demand for office workspaces and operations. Assessment of these spaces can be used to support expanding programs, repositioning programs for better synergy on campus, or just supporting the opportunity to work phase out an entire building, as mentioned above. For positions that can work remotely avoid assigning dedicated personal workspace and provide hoteling stations and use of shared workspaces.	Evaluate all spaces are being used to ensure it is best for the university overall.	A/E Firms, Architecture & Engineering

Compliance and Other Considerations

Considerations	Best Practices & Recommendations	Rationale	Subject Matter Expert/ Responsible Dept.
Employment tax and related rules and regulations	Register in each state for withholding tax and unemployment where applicable. Determine whether locality taxes exist. Look into workers compensation requirements. Determine whether any applicable state laws impact NIU operations in the respective states (e.g., labor laws, etc.). Consider working with a Professional Employer Organization (PEO).	NIU would need to ensure compliance with applicable state and local laws. Many states require that an organization register with the state if the organization has an employee whose primary work location is within the state. However, each state has its own set of rules and regulations that would need to be reviewed.	Human Resource Services (Payroll), Risk Management, University Tax Services, Office of General Counsel
Collective Bargaining Considerations	Review applicable collective bargaining agreements and work with respective areas to ensure compliance.	NIU must ensure compliance with applicable collective bargaining agreements.	Human Resources Services
State Regulations	Review applicable Illinois Compiled Statutes to ensure compliance with applicable rules and regulations.		

| NC-SARA Requirements | Follow NC-SARA compliance requirements.

Some states have additional requirements like acquiring Workman's Compensation in that state. Therefore, we need a working knowledge of state-by-state requirements as they related to where our students are learning and what activities are taking place. | Non-compliance leads to non-renewal and therefore increased workload and expense to individually file with each state.

Employees living in other states is not a trigger. Their activities could be. | Institutional Effectiveness
Admissions
Athletics
Program Directors |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2019 Federal Regulations for State Authorization and Accreditation** | Have a plan to track students' location, notify out-of-state prospective and current students if it has been determined that the NIU academic program leads to professional licensure.

Provide general and direct disclosures with the determination of eligibility.

Provide compliant process in a highly visible location.

Be prepared to discuss these implications when hiring out-of-state employees that may be engaging in these activities. | Non-compliance jeopardizes Title IV funding.

Employees living in other states is not a trigger. Their activities could be. | Institutional Effectiveness
Admissions
Athletics
Program Directors |

Questions for Leadership

- **Is NIU willing to employ persons living outside of Illinois (or the country) on a fully remote basis? There are various compliance issues that would need to be investigated further but this would also increase the talent pool from which we could recruit from.**

- **Will there be a required core hours or number of days required in-office? Cross-divisional committees/activities may be required to coordinate virtual meetings if onsite schedules are difficult to align.**

- **Should we consider incentives for employees that are unable to work remotely due the role they are in?**

Application Date: _____

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NIU Libraries
FY22 Application to Work Remotely:
</div>

Notes:

- This request form is intended for consistent remote work. Ad hoc remote work should follow the same guidelines, but may be arranged on short notice with the supervisor.
- Remote work is not recommended for the employee's probationary period.
- Remote work should not be used as a replacement for paid leave covered by sick time, personal time or vacation.
- Employees working remotely are expected to attend scheduled meetings virtually, unless otherwise requested by supervisor.
- Remote work should align with employee's regular work responsibilities

Employee Name:	Supervisor Name:
Description of work to be done remotely? Does it align with employee's job description? _____	
Requested remote work schedule? (hours and days of the week)	
When will supervisor and employee evaluate this arrangement? _____ How will remote work productivity be evaluated?	
Things to discuss before approving remote work: (Supervisor and Employee should initial) 1. Employee has necessary technology for successful remote work (Laptop, Internet access, camera, microphone, secure connection. _____ 2. Employee's workspace is conducive to work (individual needs may vary) _____ 3. Employee is sufficiently skilled with the relevant software and hardware to work remotely. _____ 4. Unless otherwise arranged, employee will be available for communication with supervisor and teammates during the university's normal business hours (e-mail, IM, phone, Teams, etc.) _____	
Date of plan approval:	Employee signature:
Supervisor signature:	Associate Dean's signature:

Activity	Category	Description	Implementation Recommendations	Hardware Considerations	Software Considerations	Equity Challenges
Orientation Activities	Service	Orienting students to programs, courses, processes, and physical facilities.	For orientation activities that involve presentation or document review, consider a synchronous meeting using a videoconferencing tool and recording the session for participants who cannot attend. For large groups (25+) consider using breakout rooms to divide participants up with another GA, faculty, or staff to answer questions, generate discussion, and build community.	Webcam, headset, whiteboard or document camera for videoconferencing.	Videoconferencing tool (Zoom, Teams, Collaborate). For students, consider using the same tools in classroom. For faculty and staff, consider using the same tool as meetings will be conducted in.	As with all videoconferencing situations, students may have hardware or Internet limitations. Students may also not have a private or otherwise suitable space to participate.
Classroom Teaching - Lecture	Teaching and Learning	Alternatives to face-to-face lectures.	The literature is clear that the most effective strategy for replacing a lecture that would normally occur F2F is one or more short, efficient videos. Effective video strategies link.	For audio slideshow style presentations, webcam, headset. For a more formal audio slideshow or simple formal video, consider the CITL or Founders One Button Video Studio. If content is largely handwriting focused (e.g. diagramming, mathematical problem solving), consider the CITL or Founders Lightboard Studio.	Kaltura for video hosting and simple edits. iMovie on MacOS for more advanced video editing if needed. Free tools such as Lightworks, OpenShot, or HitFilms Express for video editing on Windows.	Video requires appropriate bandwidth and should also be optimized for playback on mobile devices
Classroom Teaching - Labs	Teaching and Learning	Activities requiring specialized equipment and facilities.	If lab activities need to be conducted online, consider whether lab kits or other manipulative-based solutions will fulfill needs. Also consider creating videos of experiments and providing datasets for observation and analysis. Determine if a lab simulation is available	Videos of experiments may benefit from Webcams and headsets	Software for data analysis should be accessible to students at low or no cost, such as Excel or analysis packages available via AnywhereApps	Lab kits and other supplies can be expensive. Students may not have suitable spaces in their homes to safely store equipment/supplies and conduct activities.
Classroom Teaching - Small Group Work	Teaching and Learning	Teaching and learning activities involving small groups of students.	Use breakout rooms during synchronous sessions. Encourage students to negotiate the method of communication that works best for group members. Encourage the use of shared O365 documents for group collaboration and instructor feedback.	Webcam, headset	Videoconferencing tool (Zoom, Teams, Collaborate), social media tools, or other communication methods. O365 Word, Excel, PowerPoint for document collaboration. Consider VoiceThread for group presentation creation.	
Classroom Teaching - Discussion	Teaching and Learning	Discussion activities in courses.	Focus synchronous meetings in videoconferencing tools on whole-class and small group discussion, rather then lecture.	Webcam, headset	Consider discussion forums in Blackboard or Yellowdig as an alternative to traditional discussion forums.	
Classroom Teaching - Facility/Location Tours	Teaching and Learning		For facility orientation such as lab and workspace orientation, consider a short, scripted, pre-recorded video that can easily be rewatched.	Good mobile camera (e.g. iPhone or Android phone) for pre-recorded facility tours.	Kaltura for video hosting and simple edits. iMovie on MacOS for more advanced video editing if needed. Free tools such as Lightworks, OpenShot, or HitFilms Express for video editing on Windows.	Video requires appropriate bandwidth and should also be optimized for playback on mobile devices
Classroom Teaching - Guest Speakers	Teaching and Learning		Determine if guest speakers are able to present via videoconferencing and record. If speaker attends in person, consider a videocamera or smartphone and tripod to capture session and make recording available.	Good mobile camera (e.g. iPhone or Android phone) for recording in-person guest speakers.		
Classroom Teaching - Assessment	Teaching and Learning		As much as possible, design authentic assessments that require students to demonstrate knowledge and skills in ways that closely approximate actual performance. If objective tests are necessary, use Blackboard to create tests, using timers, random question banks, and Respondus to enhance test integrity. Use Respondus and Zoom together for no-cost proctoring solution.	Respondus/Zoom proctoring requires webcam and Windows or Mac PC.		Respondus/Zoom proctoring is not feasible on a mobile device such as a phone or tablet.
Office Hours	Teaching and Learning		Offer flexibility in office hours, including online and in-person options. Consider using a video conferencing tool for either flexible office hours (students choose in person or online), or conduct separate sessions at different times.	Webcam, headset, whiteboard or document camera	Videoconferencing tool (Zoom, Teams, Collaborate). Use the same tools in classroom.	As with all videoconferencing situations, students may have hardware or Internet limitations. Students may also not have a private or otherwise suitable space to participate.
Course Evaluations	Teaching and Learning		For formative evaluations, consider using Qualtrics for brief anonymous surveys midway through courses. For summative course evaluation, use departmental evaluation tool.			
Student Work Showcases	Teaching and Learning		For student work showcases, consider hosting live synchronous sessions in a videoconferencing tool. If guests are to be invited, consider tools with robust guest access and telephony options (e.g. Zoom).	Webcam, headset, whiteboard or document camera	Videoconferencing tool (Zoom, Teams, Collaborate). If guests are to be invited, consider tools with robust guest access and telephony options (e.g. Zoom).	As with all videoconferencing situations, students may have hardware or Internet limitations. Students may also not have a private or otherwise suitable space to participate.
Thesis Defense	Teaching and Learning		Consider recording the defense for students, faculty and staff who cannot join. Make sure to disable recordings for private deliverations		Videoconferencing tool (Zoom, Teams, Collaborate). If guests are to be invited, consider tools with robust guest access and telephony options (e.g. Zoom).	
Thesis and Dissertation Advising	Teaching and Learning		Use videoconferencing and collaborative documents in O365 for feedback and review.			
Supervision of Internships and Practica	Teaching and Learning		Use videoconferencing for meeting with on-site internship/practica supervisors. Consider student-created recordings of internship activities for evaluative and feedback purposes.	Good mobile camera (e.g. iPhone or Android phone) for pre-recorded facility tours.		
Conferences	Service		Test with presenters ahead of scheduled event		Teams Live Events	
Department Meetings	Service	Department meetings. May or may not have a voting component	Consider recording meetings for faculty who cannot join		Videoconferencing tool (Zooms, Teams, Collaborate). Make use of Zoom polls and questionnaires. Platform for sharing documents (Teams, OneDrive, Sharepoint, Network storage).	
Employee Evaluations	Service				Videoconferencing tool (Zooms, Teams, Collaborate).	
Meetings	Service				Videoconferencing tool (Zooms, Teams, Collaborate). Platform for sharing documents (Teams, OneDrive, Sharepoint, Network storage).	
Committee Meetings	Service		Consider recording meetings for faculty who cannot join		Videoconferencing tool (Zooms, Teams, Collaborate). Platform for sharing documents (Teams, OneDrive, Sharepoint, Network storage).	
Meetings with Voting	Service		Consider recording meetings for faculty and staff who cannot join		Videoconferencing tool (Zooms, Teams, Collaborate). Make use of Zoom polls and questionnaires	