UC RIVERSIDE

Memo

To: Peter Hayashida, Jorge Ancona, Johnny Cruz, and Marie Schultz

From: Lily Barger, Erika Bayless, Jules Bernstein, Nesha Crossman, Clyde Derrick, Jill Huff, Kim McDade, Sandra Mora, Dounia Sadeghi, Kristin Seiler, Iris Tam, and Christy Zwicke

Date: June 4, 2021

Re: University Advancement Return to Campus Committee Recommendations

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Introduction

COVID-19 has created, and may continue to create, dramatic changes to the way we all live and work. In the context of this ever-changing environment, the charge of the University Advancement (UA) Return to Campus Committee ("Committee") was to propose recommendations that align with our core values and would serve as a guide to UA leadership as they explore how staff will return to in-person operations.

Knowing that this Committee's recommendations will potentially affect our colleagues and the organization, we wish to emphasize that we did not take the charge lightly. Our process included first identifying and distilling main areas of focus in the charge document, addressing these main areas in smaller subgroups (health, operations, equity), creating and releasing a survey to staff to understand their thoughts and concerns, meeting with our subgroups to discuss survey results from 98 respondents, crafting recommendations for our respective areas, and reconvening as a larger group to consolidate the recommendations.

The Committee sought as much as possible to create general recommendations that will serve as a guide to UA leadership as we navigate a shifting dynamic, while also adding in specific suggestions where useful. The Committee also recognizes that we may receive future directives from government health officials, UC Office of the President (UCOP), or campus leadership; recognizing that there are areas that fall outside of our purview, we attempted to keep our recommendations as focused as possible.

Executive Summary

- In short, staff demonstrated flexibility, conscientiousness, and dedication to their work over the course of the pandemic. As the pandemic draws to a close, the Committee is recommending these qualities guide the plans that govern how staff return to work.
- Flexibility, in particular, should guide UALT's approach to the future. This means both having a mindset of flexibility as unanticipated issues arise during our return, as well as instituting flexibility toward remote work arrangements.
- These recommendations mirror the Chancellor's messaging and lead in his May 3, 2021 "Return to Campus Planning" email to all faculty and staff (Appendix 7). The Committee believes that flexible work arrangements can serve the interest of UA's mission by promoting employee productivity, work-life balance, and retention.
- UALT should allow off-campus work for all staff, as determined by specific job duties and through ongoing conversations between managers and their direct reports.

- This report offers UALT general recommendations that will inform planning. The report will not make recommendations about issues outside its scope, including specific meetings for which in-person attendance may be deemed required.

The following report is divided into four sections focusing on the following elements and their relevant recommendations (bolded):
- flexible work schedules
- health
- workspaces and equipment
- and management and staff engagement.

Flexible Work Schedules

A recent survey of 1,000 U.S. adults revealed that 39% would consider quitting if their employers were not flexible about remote work (Appendix 5a). University Advancement staff survey results indicated that a majority of staff prefer the flexibility to work remotely (Q1, Appendix 1). Only one survey respondent indicated that they wish to work in the office full-time; 49% of respondents would prefer a hybrid (mixed in-person and remote) flexible schedule; 50% of respondents wish to work remotely full-time. In addition, 97% of survey respondents consider a flexible work arrangement with an opportunity to work from home to be a benefit (Q14, Appendix 1). Furthermore, 93% of survey respondents indicated that as a whole, compared to working in the office, their productivity level at home has been the same or better (Q4, Appendix 1).

This committee recommends that every employee have the option to work remotely as their duties allow. We expect that supervisors will work directly with their staff to evaluate details of their position and how their work serves UA and the university in order to determine appropriate flexible work arrangements for each role. Similar to the performance appraisal process, implementing a "calibration" with leadership and supervisors would help ensure equitable decisions are made across University Advancement.

We acknowledge that there are some inherently invariable facets in the duties of each position that may allow some employees and teams to work remotely more frequently than others. These differences do not constitute a discrepancy in equity because they represent unique functional duties of each position rather than an inequitable application of the recommendation above. However, we hold that with creativity, flexibility, and use of technology, every position in UA has job requirements that can be completed remotely even after the campus returns to in-person operations.

We also acknowledge that there may be issues of perceived inequity surrounding any accommodations or exceptions provided on a case-by-case basis to some employees under ADA or other federal and state laws (Appendix 2). **However, based on comments in the survey surrounding mental and physical health concerns, the Committee recommends UALT provide training about reasonable accommodations and other lawful exceptions similar to the training that was previously provided by UA on available leave options.**

We recognize that flexible work arrangements could result in a reduced number of staff in office spaces at one time. As supervisors evaluate flexible work arrangements with staff, the safety of employees should be considered and addressed. **We recommend consulting with UCPD and the Campus Safety**

Committee regarding concerns staff may have and to solicit recommendations. In addition, we recommend "front line" employees be cross-trained as necessary to ensure exceptional customer service is maintained. Examples include processing purchase orders, processing Alumni Association memberships, and accepting deliveries.

We anticipate that campus guidance will be to document flexible work arrangements as UCOP has indicated that flexible work agreements should be created at the local level (Appendix 3). **We recommend that UA create a unit-specific flexible work arrangement template that will clarify expectations for each staff member**. This work arrangement template could include, but is not limited to:

- expected hours of availability
- number of days one is on campus/on-site
- employee responsibility for maintaining safe and healthy remote work environments
- parking fees are the responsibility of the employee and would not be covered by UA in accordance with UCR Policy 450-56 Parking Permits.

Finally, we recommend that every employee is expected to attend purposeful in-person meetings as deemed necessary by their job scope. "Purposeful" should be the guiding principle when determining which in-person meetings are necessary. If employees and their supervisors have differing opinions on which in-person meetings are necessary and purposeful, **we recommend that direct reports and supervisors engage in a collaborative discussion in consultation with their respective department head.** We hope this process will create a consensus about the needs of the position, team, and organization and helps supervisors understand each employee's preferences, concerns, and challenges.

Health

The committee recognizes that health and safety protocols continue to change as determined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the State of California, Riverside County, and UC Riverside Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S). We expect University Advancement leadership will continue to follow protocols provided by these governing agencies and campus EH&S.

Of the concerns staff have about returning to campus in the fall, the biggest one is health (37% of respondents; Q18, Appendix 1). Educating staff on protocols EH&S and Facilities Services have in place will address staff concerns. **We recommend inviting Sheila Hedayati from EH&S and Monty Anderson from Facilities Services to present UA staff with campus-wide efforts to reduce risk, including cleaning practices and building ventilation updates, and answer questions that could be submitted in advance from teammates. We recommend UA leadership who manage staff working in off-campus locations communicate with Real Estate Services to have those respective property managers share their cleaning practices and building ventilation.**

Providing disinfecting supplies recommended by Facilities Services for shared spaces, communal spaces, and conference rooms and encouraging their use by having them readily available will help staff feel safer upon returning to the office. We recognize that some of our staff have spaces in which they welcome guests. Installing temporary personal protection barriers for those staff members could alleviate concerns about coming back to the office. These barriers could also be installed in shared workspaces if flexible scheduling among those staff is not an option, based on the identified needs of the department; **we**

recommend UALT designate someone from their respective teams to manage Facilities ticket requests.

Coordinating schedules for those staff who work in shared spaces by alternating days in the office should be considered when preparing Work Site Specific Prevention Plans before returning to campus. As an example, if is a team of four who work in a shared office schedules could be created where two employees work in the office one day while the other two work remotely. On alternative days, the other two employees work in the office while the other two work remotely.

Mitigation strategies that have been suggested during the pandemic might be implemented to reduce the risk of seasonal colds and flu in the future. **When staff have symptoms but feel well enough to work, we recommend that supervisors both encourage and allow those staff members to work remotely on those days as their position allows them to do so.** Supervisors should direct their staff member to report their symptoms to the wellness hotline to ensure symptomatic tracking.

To support the holistic health needs of staff, **we recommend enhancing the section on UA4U with mental health resources and scheduling a Good Day UA session to share that information**. In addition, offering training sessions to staff to support them in how to work in a flexible work arrangement could be helpful as each individual adjusts to a work dynamic.

<u>**Workspaces and Equipment**</u>

As we consider workspaces and equipment needs in a flexible work environment, **we recommend that if an employee requires equipment (i.e., printer/scanner/copier) to complete a majority of their duties, that equipment be available at the location where they do the majority of their work.** For example, if an employee works 70% in the office and 30% at home and requires two monitors to complete their work, UCR would provide two monitors for the office and the employee would be responsible for monitors at their home.

We anticipate ergonomics will be a consideration in flexible workspaces. There are resources that campus has made available online to assist staff with creating healthy work environments. In addition, **we recommend that staff consult with Dr. Clyde Blackwelder, the campus ergonomist, to provide ergonomic assessments for both campus office and remote workspaces**. **In the event that Dr. Blackwelder suggests the purchase of items, we recommend that the same theory should apply here as above—UCR will provide one ergonomic chair, keyboard set, etc.** The employee will determine whether the ergonomic item is used at home or at the office, with exceptions made for medical requirements.

We recommend use of technical resources necessary for conference room spaces to be equipped for hybrid meetings to ensure that both in-person and remote attendees are able to engage effectively and equitably. An example of such technology is The Owl, which will promote inclusiveness in meetings. **We further recommend incorporating line items into the budget for such technology, noting that items like the Owl cost approximately $1,000 per device.**

In the UA staff survey, we asked what resources staff needed to perform their job, whether at home or in the office (Q7, Appendix 1). Of the responses, received, privacy tied in third place with a phone. **We recommend designation of existing spaces or the creation of new spaces in order to take private phone or Zoom calls in each UA office location (Appendix 4).** We recognize that these spaces would also be helpful for staff who attend meetings in various locations throughout the day on campus; as an

example, an employee with office space in the Chicago Office who attends several meetings on campus would benefit from this type of available private space. We suggest that UALT consider implementing privacy booths, such as those sold by [Room.com,](Room.com) for shared spaces that do not currently have a private area.

Management and Staff Engagement

We acknowledge and recognize that adjusting to a flexible working environment will be different for all staff. We anticipate that managers will need resources to assist them in how to effectively manage staff in this new proposed environment. As such, **we recommend that managers receive training on managing teams in a hybrid/remote environment**. The campus HR Employee and Organizational Development team will be offering a "UCR Managing in Modern Times Leadership Series" starting in July or August which could be used for this purpose. Encouraging managers to have intentional, possibly monthly, check-ins with their staff members will be critical in ensuring the flexible arrangement is working well for the needs of the organization, department, and employee. Asking UA supervisors to routinely share best practices of how they have supported their direct reports during this remote environment is an additional resource that could be created to support all supervisors.

As we envision a new work environment that includes flexible schedules, continuing intentional efforts to provide informal ways for staff to connect will be important to keep employees engaged. In our current virtual environment, survey responses indicate that 66% of staff feel more or just as connected to their co-workers; however, 33% of staff feel less connected to their co-workers (Q8, Appendix 1). 82 survey respondents identified "informal discussions with colleagues" as an activity that makes them feel connected and engaged with campus colleagues. "Team meetings" (64 respondents) and "Going out to lunch/coffee with colleagues" (60 respondents) were the next two activities that make staff feel connected and engaged with campus colleagues (Q10, Appendix 1).

To address these concerns, we propose maintaining time during the all-staff meetings for staff to connect with each other. **We recommend creating an optional opportunity for staff to connect informally helping to build relationships and increase/maintain engagement with colleagues.** We suggest maintaining Good Day UA social gatherings going forward to provide experiences for staff to connect and engage. **We recommend that the Employee Engagement Group focus on how to engage employees in a flexible work environment.** As we begin recruiting for new positions, being prepared to answer questions from candidates about flexible work arrangements and onboarding in a flexible work environment will be critical to ensuring a successful transition to the team.

We acknowledge the numerous ways for staff to stay connected, whether through email, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Slack, and in-person meetings. We also recognize that each department and team has found a communication tool that works for them. As such, rather than implementing a UA-Wide communication system, **we recommend that departments continue to determine how they would like to communicate in their team (Microsoft Teams, Slack, etc.).** It is important that all staff are aware that Microsoft Teams is readily available for broad usage and suggest providing a training session on how to use the platform. In addition, ITS has fee-based options for "soft phones" (phone numbers attached to staff computers) to be used for phone communications, to avoid distribution of personal phone numbers; we suggest this option be presented to staff as well.

Finally, **we recommend conducting pulse surveys periodically throughout the fall and winter quarters to understand how staff are adjusting to their flexible work schedules.**

Appendices

- Appendix 1: [UA Staff Survey](#)
- Appendix 2: [Disability Management](#)
    - While flexible schedules and remote work have always been among possible accommodations for these employees, the Committee considers the process of disability, mental/physical health, or religious accommodation to be distinct from the process of flexible work arrangements outlined in this report. We consider accommodation processes under these laws to be outside of the scope of the Committee and anticipate they will continue as they always have.
- Appendix 3: [UCOP Regarding Guidance Flexible Work for Staff](#)
- Appendix 4: Workplaces and equipment
    - Examples from one article can be found [here](#).
    - [Room.com](#) offers phone booths from $3995 and actual small meeting rooms from $15,995. (Government and nonprofits receive a 2.5% discount on these items.)
- Appendix 5: Relevant articles
    - 5a: [Employees Are Quitting Instead of Giving Up Working From Home](#)
    - 5b: [4 ways to prevent culture shock as employees return to work](#)
- Appendix 6: [Campus benchmark info](#)
- Appendix 7: [Chancellor Email Return to Campus Planning 5.3.2021](#)