

## **Recommendation to Implement a Flexible Remote Work Policy for all Staff**

It is hereby resolved by the Staff Advisory Council of Case Western Reserve University that the Council recommends that the University update the remote work policy so it permits more flexibility for both exempt and nonexempt staff to work remotely when appropriate and feasible.

### **Whereas**

For the past 15 months, both exempt and nonexempt staff have successfully worked a variety of full-time in-person, hybrid (remote 1-4 days/week) and full-time remote work schedules;

During this time at home and in the office, staff demonstrated dedication to the university and “continued to serve our students and advance research in remarkable ways.” (Interim President Scott Cowen and Provost Ben Vinson III, email to staff and faculty, sent May 13, 2021.);

Staff Advisory Council surveyed staff from May 25, 2021 - June 1, 2021 to ascertain the impact of remote work, and had a 33% response rate (956 staff members);

Hybrid and remote staff overwhelmingly reported their work arrangements had a positive impact on both their professional productivity and personal well-being;

72% of supervisors who responded reported productivity improvements from the hybrid and remote staff they supervise;

37% of respondents indicated they would consider leaving CWRU if they could not continue hybrid work arrangements;

Nearly 70% of respondents indicated hybrid work arrangements were appropriate for their work; and

The desired outcomes of Pathway 4-2 are to ensure a high level of mental and physical wellness among staff, ensure university systems and policies are *agile and effective*, and ensure university procedures are practiced fairly and equitably...to sustain CWRU as a just and fair community that consistently puts our people first.

### **Be It Resolved**

That we, the members of the Staff Advisory Council of Case Western Reserve University, hereby recommend the following:

- the University shall provide timely and transparent communications about their proposed plan for non-exempt and exempt staff work arrangements; and
- the University shall establish a working committee to reopen, review, and revise the Remote Work Classification Policy to allow for a fair and equitable flexible work arrangement policy for exempt and nonexempt staff; and
- Staff Advisory Council will have equitable representation on this committee; and
- a flexible remote work policy be available to all staff, and supported, encouraged, and implemented from the top down to advance Pathway 4-2 and continue to shape the Agora.

Respectfully submitted,

Staff Advisory Council, Case Western Reserve University

## Appendix

The Staff Advisory Council surveyed staff from May 25, 2021 - June 1, 2021, to ascertain the impact of remote work, and had a 33% response rate (956 staff members).

### Key Insights

Of the University staff members that participated in the remote work survey, at least one-third reported positive outcomes in one or more of the following areas:

- Improvement in completing work responsibilities;
- Increased punctuality;
- Better flexibility with work schedule;
- Better work-life balance;
- Improved concentration and ability to stay on task;
- Improved communication with colleagues; and
- Improvement in personal physical and mental health and wellness.

Hybrid work arrangements appear to suit most job functions reported by the respondents. *In fact, many supervisors reported productivity improvements for hybrid and remote staff.*

Question number 20 of the survey specifically asked supervisors, “what about your team, unit, or office’s work arrangements worked or went well?”

- 45% - Improved Communication
- 28% - Improvement in completing work responsibilities
- 19% - No issues with WFH
- 13% - Better flexibility with schedule
- 8% - Work/Life balance
- 7% - Reduction in distractions

### Staff Retention

When questioned about the likelihood of looking for other work if remote work no longer becomes an option, **almost 20%** of respondents said they would likely leave the University as soon as a remote work opportunity becomes available elsewhere. **42%** of respondents stated that CWRU is not a competitive employer without remote work as an option.

### Shape the Agora

A flexible remote work policy would help advance the [Desired Outcomes of Pathway 4-2](#). The first desired outcome is to ensure a high level of mental and physical wellness among faculty, staff, and students. As seen in the data below, hybrid and remote staff overwhelmingly reported their work arrangements positively impacted both their professional productivity and personal well-being.

The second desired outcome is to ensure university systems and policies are agile and effective. We have seen positive outcomes and lessons learned during the pandemic. We want to stay agile and on the front lines of the changes and advance how higher education functions. One suggestion is to create a pilot program similar to what

is being used at the University of Utah (referenced in the June 8, 2021 [Chronicle of Higher Learning](#)) tailored to fit the needs of our current University culture.

The third desired outcome is that university procedures are practiced fairly and equitably. Remote work has been used by some segments of the university community for years and is a regular practice among full-time and part-time faculty. As the survey data shows, exempt and non-exempt staff members desire equitable access to virtual work flexibility.

In relation to the U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act, employers can implement remote and flexible working for their employees as long as they maintain an accurate record of the hours worked. Where an employee is allowed to work from home, the relevant provisions can be included in their employment contract. We can modify an already existing tracking system from University Technology to track non-exempt work hours and modify the [Alternative Work Arrangements agreement that already exists](#). Together let's have a conversation around exempt and non-exempt staff policies and be transparent and clear in the policies that will ultimately be implemented.

### **Work Towards a Carbon-Neutral Campus**

Under the [University's Climate Action Plan](#), CWRU committed to net-zero carbon emissions by the year 2050. CWRU could seize this moment to make inroads on their pledge. Allowing staff to work remotely on a hybrid schedule would provide savings on electrical plug load. It would also provide savings on transportation and greenhouse gas emissions as we have staff commuting in from 14 different counties.