

## Thematic Analysis of CODRE Campus-Wide Listening Session #5 Fall 2021

### Topic: "Work Life Balance"

#### Defining Work Life Balance

- Keeping all the balls in the air! juggling my time and brain power. Not working all day every day, balance between work and life outside of work including time for social life, family life... Boundaries when needed, and respect for when the lines blur as well
- Having the energy to enjoy my work as well as enjoy my hobbies and interests outside of work.
- Part of my work like balance is having work that I enjoy!
- "balance" feels more like a compass to me--it's always a matter of degrees of what parts of life are in flux and which ones are stable.
- Flexibility is so important in work-life balance. Our needs at home and work shift all the time. Balance to me is when we have the flexibility to be responsive to these needs.
- Not having long days at work; focus on my writing one day; not everyone can do that. Four days for teaching; one for writing; I am helping other junior faculty and students to recognize the signs and not to ignore them.

#### Family first

- I'm a single mom. There's no such thing as work life balance for me. It's constantly negotiating boundaries and priorities, and constantly keeping in mind my goal is this, my child always comes first.
- I am responsible for my two elderly parents, two young adults in college, a husband, full-time job, and "moms" usually "manage" and "direct" all things.
- it was super hard when my two kids were virtual and my husband and I teaching at the same time!! it was a madhouse. Once kids returned to school, it was quiet and productive
- I have chosen to come into the office because I prefer to keep my home life my home life. I don't want to bring my work life into that although for some people that's just not possible.
- Once I became a mom, I didn't take any breaks at work. I try to push through and get work done so I can focus on my role as a mom when I get home.

#### Much easier from home/ Flexibility

- I have two children. Now, I am supposed to be on campus, but hardly anyone is here in my office. I am more productive if I can work from home.
- We need to have more flexibility; specially women who has the family on their shoulders. The support is not there, particular for women. I think after the pandemic, we need to realize that we can be more productive out of office.
- After the pandemic, it's obsolete to think everyone needs to be in the physical space to be more productive. I've been more productive during the pandemic. I was writing grants, teaching, I had the best teaching evaluations of my life. The flexibility is the balance.
- When I'm working in the office, I do not take breaks because someone was always trying to find me. At home I take breaks without the stress of being not found at my desk.

- I do much better with taking breaks when I work from home - I get up, I walk around, go check the mail, take a break from the screen but when I'm in the office it's so much harder. There have been days in the office when I have forgotten to eat lunch, I look up and 2-3 hours have passed, I work through lunch accidentally sometimes. I have tried to walk away and take a break, but I can't get far without someone looking for me for something.
- I enjoy lunch breaks more at home because I can eat healthier at home, and getting out the door with everything in the morning is hard to do
- Almost every position I have had at the university, lunch is taken at my desk while still working and that is what I see from leadership as well. When working at home, I can take a break, fix a meal, do a workout, or take a walk much easier.
- I usually don't take regular breaks and I eat lunch at my desk while working many times. That is not good! I have enough interruptions that I consider them a "break" of sorts. I do much better the day I work from home.
- I give myself a schedule, a start and end time and breaks as well. I found it easier to take a break at home vs, in the office where it often seems impossible.

#### **What Life**

- What life. Everything feels like work anymore. Work life balance is a myth. It's not real. There is no work life balance
- Work life balance has been hard during the tenure track process, almost impossible. I was not any more productive, not any more a better mom, just focused so much on work.
- I don't know what a work/life balance is anymore. I sort of thought I had one in the middle of the pandemic when I was working from home but since returning to more of an in-person schedule, I feel like I work all the time.

#### **Mistrust/Resentment/Micromanagement of those who can work remotely**

- I'm sensing that there is a growing sense of resentment because you have some people who are required to come into the office on the regular and those who aren't and so it has created a divide.
- I think the divide has happened because it was left up to the deans to decide how each school would approach the remote work schedules. Each dean has a different take on working from home, so it's not consistent across the university.
- I have heard several comments from leadership that people aren't working when at home. This way of thinking is unreasonable. If you don't trust your employee to meet expectations, then that is a separate issue.
- To me, work life balance is assuming the employees are there to do a good job rather than micromanaging. Assuming people are there to do their best work and prioritizing based on their needs and not thinking employees are trying to get one over on people.
- Sometimes I felt like nobody needed me here (at work). It was just a checkmark that I was here. I could have done more productive work at home when my children were sick. We didn't have the flexibility and we had a more micromanager kind of mentality.
- Many of us have worked from home and been extremely productive during that time. I don't like this misconception that those who are continuing to work from home are lazy or aren't working as hard. I honestly feel like I get LESS work done in the office than I do when working from home.
- People aren't trying to beat the system; they are just trying to sustain and balance everything.

- I have always said that as a Black person, I am always fighting against the stereotype that Black people are lazy, always late, etc

#### **Remote work policy needs improvement**

- the rules imposed are obsolete, the policy is not written in a creative, forward-thinking way
- Some of the differences are because the remote policy is largely left up to supervisors, rather than it being purely based on role needs
- I believe that people should be able to have the option to work in the environment where they can be more productive
- It feels like our policy right now is written for a time back before we had the ability to work remotely, and people didn't know how to do it. Now we know how to do it. I don't know why the policy isn't allowing people to be flexible. The pandemic doesn't have to be negative. This can be an opportunity to grow and learn from it but the policy is written in a way like let's go back to normal.
- I think managing for remote is just different- and I don't know if the university taught supervisors HOW to manage remote.
- Too much dept./supervisor personal opinions or thoughts on policies.

#### **Vacations/ Taking breaks can be a hassle**

- a lot of times it feels like more of a hassle to take vacation, because when I come back, it's to a mountain of work that could have been avoided if I was there.
- Time management 101 says to delegate. But everyone is overworked and no one to delegate too for some tasks. Other tasks are so specialized that they are hard to pass off for a vacation.
- I see people that I love working because they do not have time until retirement. I think we live in a high priority of work, work, work.
- There are so many beautiful spots on campus, I wish I could enjoy that more without that "immediate need" to be found or to answer someone's question. I work with a call center, so there's always this feeling of having to be on-call to answer questions, especially in the summer.
- I feel penalized when I take vacation, must work hard to get ahead before leave, then I come back to a mountain of emails.
- Too many noon meetings or development activities. So, you must eat early or late.

#### **Empathy/Encouragement**

- I totally agree about some people wearing NOT taking vacation as a badge of honor and we need to encourage people to take time off
- I encourage those I manage to take vacation as much as you can - work will be here when you get back, it isn't going anywhere.
- There's an expectation that students have of faculty that they don't or shouldn't have a work life balance. We all need to think about each other needing and requiring that work life balance irrespective of our positions. I think that consideration is essential in creating a work life balance. Raise awareness that we all have a lot on our plates and that will be helpful in that we should all expect to have a work life balance.

- As a supervisor, I understand the important of empathy. I do not have small children. But I can be empathetic with a co-worker who has children. This is something nobody was expected. We really need to have empathy. Specially for people who take care of other.

#### **Health concerns/ Selfcare**

- it's a mix of things for me.... working from home gave me the chance to work in a way that let me also take care of my physical health. I have disabilities and I've seen my illnesses decline over the pandemic, both when I'm in the office and in general when I'm at home.
- The opportunity for remote work has made some space for me to take care of my body. but it's very hard not to overwork when I'm at home. I feel guilty for working from home so I try to do as much as I can, even if working extra overtime or taking on more tasks still hurts my body.
- The pandemic has adversely affected mental health for single people more than anything else. For almost a year and a half I hardly saw anyone else, the most was outside for a little bit on a run. As men it's looked down upon to ask and seek for help with mental health.
- I block out lunch on my calendar every day because skipping meals just doesn't work.
- that feeling of judgment is real! I have learned to take breaks while working AND take a dedicated "disconnected" hour. I've just decided that "this is what I need to do, I have to take care of myself, work will have to take care of itself"

#### **Not taking breaks/vacations a generational thing?**

- As a supervisor, when I receive notice of staff that need to use vacation or lose vacation, they are always the oldest staff in our organization. So, I think this is a generation issue to some degree.
- I think it's a mix of generation and culture. some cultures prioritize efficiency and still make room for rest and celebration. the US feels like it's built as a machine that continually expects (the appearance of) work in a very inefficient system. Some cultures have different ways of celebrating or having that "down" time---we find it at meals or doing other errands. it's an approach to the "life" part of things that varies in your home communities.
- I'm curious about whether people think they would feel less overworked if their departments had more staff. Is it a matter of not enough people to do the work? Or the historical "work ethic" that has made people feel like they must demonstrate they are working hard.
- I believe many of us have been taught and encouraged to work, but not necessarily taught how to take time for ourselves or learned to take vacations.

#### **Policy Not Equal**

- if you're not white and able body-minded, then there's so much you must fight against. and other people don't see that oppressed/ marginalized individuals are expected to do the work for the oppressor. "Tell us how to fix it, tell us what we can do, hold us accountable" marginalized people do not have the opportunity for reaching or working for that work/life balance, because they are constantly being used to repair the grievances of those in power.
- There are some jobs that are very essential, and you must have someone there to staff those positions. There are other positions we found out people can work from home. It isn't fair. We must try to figure out how we can make it fair for all people.
- We don't pay folks enough so they can have opportunities to take time off. and I think it's an equity fairness issue that we need to pay attention to. I think there's a lot we could do, I'm not saying it's not possible, but not in our current structure.

- As a supervisor, I feel a little bit "broken" after this pandemic. Supervisors are experiencing the same issues as employees (illness, death, mental health issues, childcare, etc.) but we don't have the luxury to say, "I can't do this" or "I need to step back a little". We are expected to support our staff while at the same time being intentional in moving the organization forward. I am very dedicated to my work as a supervisor...but I also think we are going to lose very talented supervisors because the expectations to do it all are not reasonable....and we are not often given a safe place to talk through these challenges. We are told, "support your employees and make sure you still meet organizational goals...and grow too." I don't think supervisors feel that they are given "grace" like some of employees are given grace.
- I am faculty support; I must be in contact with students. I have read several articles about moving forward. the policy was written when we did not know how to work from home
- "If you're single, you can do extra work" Single means that you time is less value, you can take more work you have more time, you do not have family.
- Being single and a non-white male, I feel we must take on more work. I need to step in when married folks with responsibilities must take time off. I also, feel the need to prove that I am working, getting work done while working from home and not taking time off to chill or go out, I feel single people have had to face a unique challenge with covid and increased work responsibilities more

#### **Positive feedback**

- In my office, we are trying to separate work time and lunch. This is another way to create community.
- I appreciate having a supervisor and director who manage top down and stress that the expectation isn't to work 24/7. We all have lives outside of work and they live that and understand that.
- I was impressed by the amount of vacation days we get here at UofL. I also received mine vacation time right away rather than having to wait for it to accrue which I've never experienced in a job before.
- The SRC is a wonderful gym with several afternoon classes
- I haven't had a chance to get involved yet. But I do want to find some volunteer opportunities. I feel energized for the opportunity to volunteer.
- I am so thankful that the university gives us a day a year to give back to the community. The office of Community engagement (before the pandemic) set up a full day of volunteering. I took advantage of that every year and got to meet new people from across the campus. I hope that when we get through this pandemic, they will resume this.
- The university is a great place to work as far as our vacation and sick time. That can help for work life balance, but you must manage that and take that time
- Thank you so much for providing this session. As a supervisor, I wanted to learn as much as I could so I can be intentional in how I address work-life-balance among employees.

#### **Recommendations for the president**

- The pandemic could be a great opportunity; instead of saying “return to normal.”
- There's NOT a lot of space in work for people to be human. that's one part of the listening circles that I've really appreciated
- I would LOVE to see a bonus considered with a discount travel voucher etc- so that folks can afford a vacation
- I didn't know we have a day to volunteer! Could we market that so more people know?
- Supervisor training about work/life balance and the importance it plays for employees
- Push for more creative policies, that are forward thinking, across the entire campus
- Don't rely on committees who will talk all day and not get stuff done. good intentions, thoughts and prayers, and recommendations don't mean jack if action isn't put in motion
- Allocate resources for paid full-time staff to help manage/ carry-out/ coordinate that committee work. make it someone's day job, don't just make it a committee. if you mean it, PAY IT..
- Recognize that the people are still growing/learning and still need help. A lot of things come with this sense of "committee member are the experts"---but on the committees I'm on, the committee members themselves still need structure or mentorship or help with their own personal growth
- Work with the campus environment committee to develop the appropriate types of Interventions to recommend to the university.
- I don't know if people know the differentiation between work from home and flex schedule. There's a difference in working from home and flex schedule. There's a lot of education that is needed for everyone because we are all growing and trying to change in this together.
- The students have different expectations about faculty. We need to create student awareness of balance between work and life.