

## ***Campus-Wide Listening Session #17 “How do flexible and remote work impact equity at UofL?”***

**Date:** November 9, 2023

**Facilitators:** **Anita Hall**  
Chair of Work-Life Integration  
Commission on the Status of Women (COSW)  
Assistant Professor, Assessment & Analytics Librarian  
University Libraries  
**Sarah Frankel**  
Co-Vice Chair of Work Life Integration Committee  
Commission on the Status of Women (COSW)  
Open Access & Repository Coordinator  
University Libraries

### **Session Focus**

Lack of flexible and remote work is the #2 reason (behind compensation) that employees in higher education leave their jobs. The availability of flexible and remote work options can be especially beneficial to those with disabilities, caregiving responsibilities, and more. How do these policies impact you, your department, and supervisor/supervisee relationships? How can we ensure that they are implemented equitably?

### **Positive impact of more flexible/remote work options**

- Strength of trust between supervisor and direct report.
- Opportunity to dedicate more energy to work without in-office distractions.
- Alleviates stress of commute and bound to office environment.
- Provides opportunities to attend to other personal matters (ex. sick child at home) and work at the same time.
- Supports work/life balance.
- If “active work hours” are adjusted, students who have unconventional work hours (UPS students, for example) would have more options to meet professors.
- More time to focus on work duties rather than commuting time.
- Boosts morale.
- Available technology (Teams/etc.) allows for consistent interaction among coworkers.

### **Disparities in flexible/remote work at UofL; contributing factors**

- Inconsistent standards of flexible/remote work create inequality and diminishes sense of value among employees who work in similar roles.

- Those required to come to the office every day incur more travel and parking expenses than others as well as stress/anxiety about commuting.
  - Some professional capacities require full-time onsite work. How to compensate those who fall in this category?
- General unawareness that flexible/remote options are available (unaware of policy)
  - Fear that if too many people know about flexible/remote policies, too many people will request it.
  - Mistrust of senior leadership and supervisors' willingness to make employees aware of flexible/remote policies/options.
- "Must be here regardless" mentality of some supervisors erodes trust and promotes micromanagement.
- Senior Leadership must acknowledge that the lowest paid employees are those who most often do not receive flexible/remote schedules. They are the ones who face costs to commute, childcare, etc. In the face of rising inflation/cost of living.
- Demands trust for both the supervisors and the employees.

### **Supervising flexible/remote employees**

- If remote policies are non-grievable and up to supervisor discretion, equity is not possible.
- Employees need to understand that flexible/remote arrangements are not "off days" and need to be held accountable for work during office hours. Medical appointments/childcare needs/etc. need to be accounted for (personal time, sick time, vacation time) as would any absence from in-office employees.
  - Managing and accounting for leave time in the face of flexible/remote work should be the same between exempt and non-exempt employees.
- Supervisors need formal training on flexible/remote policies upon their hire to manage their employees more effectively per university guidelines.
- Allowing flexible/remote options cannot be up to the supervisor's discretion. It is either a benefit per university policy or not.
- Percentage of flexible/remote eligibility should be outlined in JDFs.
- If the capacity to offer fair compensation is strained, then flexible/remote working options could make up for some of that.

### **Negative impacts of flexible/remote options**

- Sometimes face-to-face engagement with others (students, for example) is necessary. Absent/not present faculty creates a negative learning experience for students.
- Less support/understanding of flexible/remote options now than when COVID necessitated it.
  - Rotating work schedules, as was done during COVID, may help.

- Told office space is a premium, yet supervisors hold on to empty (remote worker) offices that could be used for in-house employees who need the additional space.
- Generates assumptions about lack of work being done for remote employees.
- Not easy for supervisors to balance flexibility when employees across their departments have different capacities for remote work.
- No clarity on how OSHA policies impact home office set-ups.
- University does not pay for home Wi-Fi/electricity/etc.
- Lack of oversight on if employee has proper tech setup/capacity and access to sensitive information from home.

**How can CODRE and UofL best support its community in the face of this issue?**

- Conduct a campus-wide remote work survey.
- Laptops with docking stations rather than traditional desktops.
- Establish a grievance process for flexible/remote work denials.
- More transparency in job posting, JDF and interview process.
- Compensation for on-site employees who have to pay to commute, park, acquire professional wardrobe, etc.
- Probation period for employees before they can switch to remote.
- Policy updated to address inequity

**Relevant Resources**

[Remote Work Policy](#)

*EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021*

*POLICY NUMBER: PER 4.24*

[Hours of Work and Flexible Scheduling Guidelines](#)

*EFFECTIVE DATE: May 1, 1992*

*POLICY NUMBER: PER-4.02*