

Remote Work Survey: Summary

December 2021

The Remote Work survey was intended to gauge employee satisfaction with the policy and give a place for staff to anonymously voice concerns. Traditionally, the disenfranchised are more likely to respond, but in this instance, the majority of the results were positive.

After sending the survey to Staff Senators, we asked they share with their constituent lists. We did receive feedback from non-senators that they did not receive the survey link, which is another concern that needs to be addressed separately.

In addition to improved morale for some, PED recognizes that remote work offers additional benefits to the institution. Markedly, it creates more locations for student learning. Since the university lacks classroom space, offices that are working remote could be converted into classrooms. Further, remote work supports the university's sustainability efforts and reduces carbon emissions.

Upon review, PED has identified concerns that apply outside the Remote Work Policy:

- 1) **Communication:** As an institution, we struggle not only with how and what is communicated but also the level from which it is communicated. Clear, consistent communication is essential to success of implementation of a new policy. FAQs are helpful for employees/supervisors who need more detailed information and scenarios to properly apply policies.
- 2) **Delegation and accountability:** If an initiative is important enough for administration to participate in and support, then there should be active participation in the outcome. This is true regardless of if policy is new or a change in current policy. When leadership delegates decision making to the various Deans and Vice Presidents, that delegation should continue to delegate down to the supervisory level. In this instance, the decision making occurred at the administrative level without any accountability or assessment at any level.
- 3) **Standardized application:** Conversely, when the decision making and interpretation of policy is left to deans and VPs it often results in an inequity of application across university and inequity within individual units.

Specifically, with regards to Remote Work policy:

POSITIVE:

- Work/Life balance and flexibility have improved
- Most staff who received any portion of flex or remote appear very thankful
- Productivity has increased as a result

NEUTRAL:

- Employees commented that was not a well-defined explanation between “emergency” remote work and the tele-work policy that was communicated. Many do not understand the emergency policy allowed for a broader range of remote work that does not apply when there is an on-campus presence of students.
- Hybrid seems to be the compromise. There is no supervisor reasoning for why if an employee can work remotely 1-2 days a week, they cannot work 5 days.
- Flex time also seems to have gotten folded into “remote work” definition. There is misinformation about when each applies.

NEGATIVE:

- Repercussions of challenging decisions is real. Staff doesn’t feel safe to have open dialogue with their supervisors. This is complicated when a Dean or VP has made a top-down decision and supervisors disagree. Lots of complaints about a “one size fits all” policy rather than considering actual job duties
- Blanket decisions for entire units are not in the spirit of the policy.
- Lack of sufficient or acceptable office space on campus. Described as dungeon locations, environmental concerns, etc.
- It is more difficult for staff to work in a hybrid situation depending on the technology available at home, since they often don’t have laptops to bring back and forth.

Additional concerns raised in survey: The environment where people work (basements, wet/damp, mold, no windows, bugs) are not conducive to a healthy physical environment.

Recommendations:

-Share the results and concerns with HR and the provost to raise awareness, thus allowing staff voices to be heard. Emphasize the concern that delegating to units ends in inequities in application.

-Ask Provost follow-up with Deans and VPs about their remote work vision and if it is working or not

-Include a remote survey question as part of the employee satisfaction survey.

-Require supervisors to explain a denial.

-Shift from Dean/VP decision making to having decisions made first within the department. There is a wide variety of applications, which leads PED to believe there was no consistent messaging given.

-Identify positions as remote work/hybrid eligible. This can be done at the department level when new positions are posted by adding a check box to job posting process. Current jobs can be reviewed with employees during evaluation period and remote/hybrid can be added as discussed and determined eligible or not.