


Office of Academic Affairs

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Date: September 23, 2022

To: Academic Leadership Team and Campus Partners

From: Susan Jeffords, Provost and VP for Academic Affairs 

Subject: Academic Affairs Principles for Staff Remote Work

I write today to follow up on the President's recent message about Supporting PSU Students for the 2022-23 Academic Year. I want to update the Academic Affairs Principles for Staff Remote Work.

Academic Affairs first issued Principles for Staff Remote Work on July 28, 2021, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These principles were revised on September 8, 2021, December 8, 2021, and March 18, 2022, to reflect our continuing efforts to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As I indicated in those communications, we will continue to revise these guidelines based on updated information relating to COVID-19. This document reiterates and updates those principles.

While the COVID-19 pandemic is not behind us, we have seen significant changes in hospitalization rates; in addition, the Governor removed the statewide mask mandate, except in healthcare environments. PSU's community continues to respond positively to public health guidelines for vaccines.

In support of the President's message and in light of these changing circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, I am re-stating these principles for fall term 2022. PSU remains committed to staying up-to-date on developments with the COVID-19 virus. As circumstances with the virus change, we will continue to monitor public health recommendations and make modifications as appropriate.

As a campus and within Academic Affairs, we continue to explore further the role that remote work will play at PSU. As we are seeing across the country, there is increasing interest among employees in having opportunities to incorporate remote work into their work schedules. At the same time, we have heard appreciation from students for having many services continue to be accessible remotely. These re-stated principles for remote work reflect these evolving conversations.

At the same time, our region continues to see increased in-person activities as informed by OHA guidelines. As in the past, the university will continue to follow these guidelines. While many students appreciate the flexible access to services and classes that remote access provides, we also have become aware that many students prefer in-person learning opportunities and experiences. To continue to support the most effective

learning environments for all students, we want to ensure that students who wish to have in-person experiences are able to do so.

As before, when considering requests for remote work, supervisors must comply with University policies and the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs), including agreements about how to address remote work. These principles are intended to support and be informed by these University documents in order to increase clarity and consistency of expectations for our students and employees.

We will continue to iterate these principles as the pandemic unfolds and as we evolve best practices for remote work.

Academic Affairs Principles for Staff Remote Work include:

- Sustaining consistent and effective services to students remains our highest priority;
- Continuing to work collaboratively to assess workplace options to ensure that students are able to access the services they need in the ways in which they can most effectively access them, including that students' access to in-person services not be limited to certain days of the week;
- Maintaining effective functioning of units and of the institution is a priority, including the ability to sustain quality supervision, ongoing training and job knowledge/expertise communication, and collaborative inter-dependent problem-solving among co-workers and between other units and divisions;
- Seeking to establish a balance between and among the priorities and responsibilities of the University, the effective functioning of units and teams, the duties associated with particular employee positions, and the interests of employees;
- Recognizing that it may not be possible for all employees who wish to work remotely to be able to do so or to work remotely as much as they wish;
- Support all accommodations resulting from the [ADA](#), [FMLA](#) and/or [OFLA](#) interactive process, including those that include remote work elements;
- Asking supervisors to determine, in consultation with their division head, a comprehensive approach to ensuring that services to students and colleagues are sustained and, within this context, what combination of in-person and remote services meets the priorities of student engagement and effective operations of the university. To equitably achieve this principle:
 - All employees who request to work remotely are expected to fill out the university's "Remote Work" form and renew it annually, if appropriate;

- While the decision to work remotely is a consultative process between employees and supervisors, final determinations will consider the interests of the employee alongside the priorities of the unit, the college/school/office, and OAA's overall commitments to student success and effective operational practices.
- Continuing remote work will be at the discretion of the supervisor and/or unit head in light of changing unit needs and in accordance with our CBAs;
- In order to support the successful performance of work, wherever it occurs, employees should review the Remote Work Guidelines posted at <https://www.pdx.edu/human-resources/remote-work-guidelines> and other relevant university policies before consulting with their supervisor.
- Changes to teleworking or remote work agreements must comply with applicable CBA's and/or LOA's.

I appreciate the continued support the PSU campus has shown to adapting to and learning from the changes that have resulted from the pandemic. We will continue to gather feedback as we craft a flexible path forward that prioritizes student success.

cc: Stephen Percy, President