

Dear OVPR Portfolio Colleagues,

I hope you each have had a chance to read [President Hartzell's email](#) that went to all employees yesterday in which he encouraged each CSU to consider implementing flexible work arrangements as part of a new pilot program this fall.

Part of planning our return to work is acknowledging what helps us achieve our academic and research missions here at UT. We know that our daily interactions — with each other, students, and visitors — build the foundation of our campus culture. Those interactions happen in classes and office hours, labs and research spaces, break rooms and conference rooms, libraries and studios, time at the Greg, and even (especially?) any place that sells coffee. Many of us have chosen to work in academia because nothing quite compares to university life, whether that's [listening to the carillon](#) as you walk to across the South Mall or catching up with colleagues at one of the two dozen off-campus research sites across Austin.

Even so, there is no denying that these last 15 months have changed the ways we live and work, and we know there are strong benefits to workplace flexibility. That's why I'm glad to support President Hartzell's commitment to preserving the best of what on- and off-site work have to offer.

Of course, what this looks like may vary slightly from unit-to-unit. Telecommuting decisions need to be based on the business needs of each team or position. So if you haven't already, you'll be hearing from your supervisor in the coming days with more information about how this pilot program relates to your role, specifically. Some teams or employees may choose or need to work entirely in person, but most will likely opt for a hybrid approach. **Supervisors should plan to develop flexible work arrangement (FWA) plans with their teams according to the dates below.** Please note that this pilot program applies to all faculty, staff, and student workers during the 2021-2022 academic year.

- May 1 – June 3: Cross-campus leadership task force developed campus-wide guidelines that have now been shared with college, school and unit (CSU) leadership.
- June 3 – July 1: CSU-specific guidelines are developed. CSUs will solicit and compile unit and sub-unit requirements, position-specific requirements, team/project needs, and employee input for this summer and academic year '21-'22 .
- July 1 – August 1: Units will determine if and how they might implement FWA following their CSU's guidelines.
- August 16: Academic year '21-'22 is underway.

Part of this process also includes selecting dates for resuming in-person work. **Please be sure to reach out to your employees and supervisors to begin those discussions now, if you have not done so already.** The goal is a gradual return to on-site work over the summer (not to exceed established occupancy limits), with a full return after mid-August to coincide with the beginning of the fall semester. Two important things to note:

- Summer occupancy limits indicate the maximum number of people who can be on campus from any unit, but it is *not a mandate or requirement* that your teams meet those rates over the summer.

For example: on June 1st, UT will allow 50% of a unit's workforce to return to campus. On July 5th, 75% of a unit's workforce may return to campus. You may have *any percentage* on campus you wish, however, so long as it does not exceed those caps during the summer.

- Fall is different. On August 16th, that cap increases to 100%. The expectation is that employees who will be working on site (entirely or in part) return to the office around this time for the start of the semester.

For example: my OVPR team is planning a gradual return — as suits each team — over the summer, with a full return on August 25th, the first day of classes. Then, most of us will be working set days each week both on- and off-site. Each unit that is part of the OVPR portfolio should have its own plan in place according to the dates provided above.

It's very likely that many of you have been proactive and have already begun having these conversations, but know, too, that your unit's HR and business managers have all the information and documents they need to support your teams through this process.

Please use this time to establish clear policies for each person's return to campus. President Hartzell's hope — and mine, as well — is that having a flexible plan in place will alleviate concern and uncertainty and help us prepare for the start of a wonderful, new academic year. I truly am looking forward to seeing many of you in person soon!

Sincerely,
Alison R. Preston, Ph.D.
Interim Vice President for Research