# Leader Guide: Employee Conversations on Returning to Campus

This guide is designed to help managers plan and engage in effective conversations with employees regarding the return to campus as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. The return to campus is based upon the lifting of all public health safety restrictions. Granting flexible work options to employees is at the managers' discretion; operational needs of the role and the team must be met. Leadership decisions are best informed by employee and team input.



# **Key Messages**

- The university is returning to a largely in-person learning environment this fall.
- The decision to move forward with returning to campus this fall is grounded in the latest health guidelines and scientific research.
- By early September, we expect faculty and staff will return to campus in some capacity, appropriate for the nature of their work and position.
- Guidelines for the interim period are determined by your SLT member and further refined by managers based upon operational requirements.
- We acknowledge the benefits of providing flexibility to employees; this needs to be balanced with operational needs.
- These are interim decisions and subject to change with reasonable notice to the employee.
- Supports are available for employees who are anxious about the return to campus.
- Employees will have a voice in the design of a longer-term remote program.

### **Timeline**

#### June 2021

• Senior Leadership Team to provide leaders in their units with principles and guidelines on return to campus.

## June/July 2021

- Reports-to-managers meet with their team as a group to discuss the guidelines and proposed implementation planning.
- Reports-to-managers meet with individual team members to discuss the operational requirements associated with a return to campus and specific flexibility requests.
- Should an employee request a <u>Workplace Accommodation</u> based on a Protected Ground (e.g.,
  disability or family status), we may have a legal obligation to do so. Contact Staff Wellness (disability
  accommodations) or your HR Partner (non-disability accommodations).

# July/August 2021

- Commencement of gradual return to campus, as appropriate for your team.
- Decision-making on requests for remote/hybrid work arrangements.

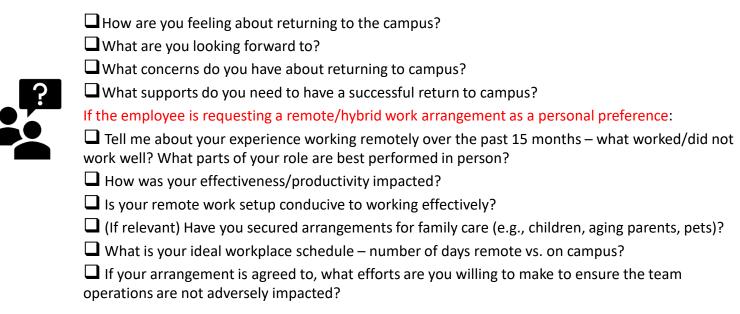
### September 2021

- Employees to return to campus in some capacity, appropriate for the nature of their work and position.
- Adjust leadership approaches and team norms to align with work mode of team.

## **Preparing for the Conversation**

- Give employees advance notice of the meeting and let them know what you want to discuss.
- Ensure the meeting is in a confidential and physically safe setting.
- Give advance thought to the feasibility of remote/hybrid work for each employee on your team.
- Assess the effectiveness of each employee during remote work periods (were they highly productive, did they struggle, was isolation an issue, etc.).
- Prepare questions to ask employees.

### **Questions to Guide the Conversation**



### DO

- ✓ Be proactive and create an opportunity to meet with individual employees 1:1 to discuss their perspectives about returning to campus.
- Listen attentively during the meeting; be curious and open to ideas for how work can be performed in new and different ways.
- Be transparent with your team about the guidelines and principles governing flexible arrangements.
- Remind your employees that these are interim arrangements and are subject to change.
- If relevant, confirm the employee has secured arrangements for family care (e.g., children, aging parents, pets).
- Apply the decision-making criteria for flexibility consistently.

#### DON'T

- Make assumptions.
- Decline requests for flexible arrangements without careful consideration.
- Be prescriptive about work locations/schedules without fully understanding the implications.
- Forget to keep a pulse on how things are playing out.

Get Support: Contact your HR Partner for advice and support on decision-making

Resources: <u>COVID-19 Website</u>, <u>FAQs Staff Wellness</u>
Workshops: Leader Workshops offered in July 2021