

Alternative Work Arrangements: CIO Statement of Support

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As Information Technology leaders at the premier research and learning institutions in the United States, we endorse alternative work arrangements for UC IT. We ask that the University of California (UC) system recognize the recruiting and retention challenges for IT, and adopt flexible and remote work practices for all of the UC.

The CIOs endorsing this document believe that flexible work location and schedules — enabled by high-quality performance management practices, collaborative technologies, and a social understanding of how to use the technology to its fullest — allow our communities to thrive in new and interesting ways while benefiting our mission, society, and the environment.

CIO ENDORSEMENTS

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BACKGROUND

The Industrial Revolution's legacy imprinted upon us that work happens at a particular time, synchronizing labor to a specific purpose, in one location. This made sense through the mass industrialization era when repetitive work yielded industrial output at an enormous scale.

Advances in collaboration tools, network capabilities, and personal telepresence tools, such as Zoom, enable information and data-processing personnel to align their work from a different location(s) at a different time(s).

In 2012, Microsoft debuted a telework program called "The New World of Work." It highlighted how Microsoft used its IT tools to enable a more effective and flexible workforce, and how employees and the employer benefitted along the way.

This [BBC article from 2012](#) highlights opportunities that could also be realized by the University of California:

"By offering all employees full flexibility, and providing them with the right collaboration tools, organisations can more effectively manage the diverse range of talent at their disposal, ensuring every employee is empowered to perform to their maximum capability and allowing everyone to contribute equally. Genuine flexibility requires a different mind-set — a cultural shift.

It's as much about understanding human behaviour as it is about investment in IT. To influence behaviour, we must first understand how to create an environment in which the desired behaviour can flourish. Creating a flexible working culture is about trust. How much can your employees rely on each other to get the job done without the benefit of supervision? The stigma that many attach to home and remote working means that just under half of employees don't trust colleagues to work productively outside the office.

Furthermore, remote working tends to expose poor management, making under-performing managers less likely to grant employees permission to work remotely. True flexibility is a symbiotic partnership between employer and employee and between technology and culture."

Since the early 1990s, many contemporary corporations, small businesses, and IT startups have adopted and benefitted from flexible work locations and schedules.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Attracting and retaining qualified IT staff poses a challenge for all UC campuses.

UCB, UCOP, and UCSF reside in perhaps *the* most competitive IT employment market in the US, if not the world. Other locations, such as UCM and UCR, struggle to attract and retain staff *because* of their locations. The cost of living in many campus communities (e.g., Berkeley, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz) — coupled with the UC's public sector payscale — exacerbate recruiting challenges.

Consequently, the UC needs to tip the recruiting and retention “scale” in our favor. The UC *does* have a better work-life balance, especially in geographic areas concentrated with commercial high-tech firms. While we cannot compete with the Googles/Facebooks/Ubbers/SalesForces of the world on salaries, we can provide employees a more balanced work week.

National and international trends see employers embracing workplace and work-time flexibility. If we don’t acknowledge and adopt greater flexibility for IT, we risk continuing to erode the UC’s competitive position for recruiting and retention.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

- **Work/life balance**
 - increases opportunities to live in more affordable and/or desirable areas
 - increases flexibility to serve personal family needs
 - reduces commute-related stress
 - offers flexibility for employees in long-term leave or relocation situations
- **Employee expenses**
 - reduces vehicle maintenance costs
 - decreases meal costs by preparing food at home
 - lowers dry cleaning and other sartorial expenses
 - reduces work-related fuel and parking costs
- **Personal/individual needs**
 - allows for accommodations for certain disabilities
 - improves communication and collaboration among introverted IT employees (i.e., they may be more comfortable raising ideas in Slack)
 - optimizes environments to suit work needs, (e.g., team interaction versus quiet focus)

EMPLOYER BENEFITS

- **Space/real estate**
 - opens up campus office and parking space
 - provides opportunities for hoteling and sharing conference facilities with IT workers from other campuses
 - offers the option to convert classes to online in urgent situations, due to remote infrastructure investments

- **Recruiting and retention**
 - expands “surface area” for desirable, competitive skill sets
 - increases retention of valued employees, especially in high-cost locations
 - provides an employee-valued perk at minimal cost, which improves morale via implied employer support of work/life balance
- **Mission-continuity planning**
 - increases agility during crunch times or crises since staff already operates remotely
 - allows employees to work during a disaster or site disruption
 - enables work in situations in which staff might be unavailable
- **Increased security**
 - reduces risk of computers in transit being stolen or lost
- **Improved productivity**
 - provides more time for “deep thinking” work, e.g., writing or coding (a [Stanford survey found that remote employees are 13% more productive](#) than their in-office counterparts)
- **Increased diversity**
 - expands accommodation options for disabilities
 - provides flexibility for employees with specialized scheduling or workplace well-being needs
- **Societal benefits**
 - reduces carbon emissions, exhaust, and traffic congestion
 - aligns with the UC’s initiatives to address climate change ([Climate Lab](#) and [Carbon Neutrality](#))

CURRENT STATE

Programs have grown organically to help address the growing challenges of attracting and retaining qualified staff.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

Appropriateness

Alternative work arrangements are not appropriate for every position. Computer operators, classroom support staff, and certain telecom roles need physical proximity to a campus location. Workstation,

classroom, or help desk support staff, and telephone operators, require time-of-day considerations, such as 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or Monday through Friday.

Successful remote and flexible work situations also require experienced, effective supervisors to identify the jobs that truly require on-site or time-specific workers, and tie these restrictions to those jobs.

Conferencing and Real-Time Communications Tools

Standardized tools across UC campuses facilitate efficient operations, communication, and collaboration. Using audio/visual conferencing tools reduces the perception of absence or concern about whether a person is actually “working.”

Remote workforce success depends upon workers being available to their managers, coworkers, or other internal clients. Many tools support this availability, from launching a Zoom session, instantly contacting someone with Chat, or using Slack for instant team communications.

As these tools’ usage spreads, we may need to provide auxiliary items: headphones, cameras, and social protocols to manage remote interactions and meetings, and to provide quality experiences for attendees in conference rooms, offices, or remote and flexible work locations.

Practices

Successful remote and flexible work requires more than tools. UC leaders and managers must standardize how tools are used, including for onboarding new employees or those beginning to work remotely. We may need to partner with other universities or organizations for onboarding processes that require in-person work, e.g., checking SSN cards, Livescan.

We need to create and document telecommuting policies and streamlined processes in web-enabled forms that we update annually.

Staff should be trained on audio-visual/communication best practices, microphone techniques for effective telepresence, and on-site support and staff awareness for troubleshooting during meetings and presentations. Employees and teams need agreement on how to use communication channels to avoid misuse that could make a tool less effective, e.g., long paragraphs sent in an email instead of Slack, or discussing a complex subject over email instead of at a meeting.

We also need to consider remote office environments, including ergonomics, space, and environment, as well as security guidelines to protect data and the employee.

PERCEPTION & CULTURE MANAGEMENT

For remote and flexible work at the UC to succeed, we need to manage perception and culture. Consistency and equity between departments, units, and jobs require consideration. Remote work should not be used as an incentive or reward.

We need to maintain team interaction and cohesiveness, as well as facilitate remote employee attendance at non IT meetings on campus (town halls, HR information sessions, etc.).

We must also socialize remote participation when working with non IT personnel, i.e., customers.

Outcome-centric managers should adapt to their team's needs, and not force the team to adapt. Meetings should be effective and not replace other, more efficient communications or to take attendance.

Effective performance management resists hyper-tracking employee output-to-outcome achievement. Instead, adopt supportive practices that reward teams for reaching goals. De-emphasize busy work and "digital noise" that doesn't further the mission.

Executives need support from their peers and leaders to risk new paradigms in pilot tests without overcorrecting. They need to model work-life balance and digital boundaries so that their subordinates can model and align them with stated policies and practices to employees. For example, using "snooze" on Slack after business hours, or respecting vacation or sick days.

DEPARTURE FROM TRADITION

Since the days of management information system (MIS) departments (the predecessor to IT), talent and performance management have challenged IT.

Remaining competitive via remote-work arrangements comes down to trust. If employees do not trust their coworkers or managers, and managers don't trust their people, it doesn't matter whether they sit nearby or if they sit in New Mexico — outcomes will not be effective. Someone being present in a campus office does not mean that they are happy or productive.

"Exposing poor management" refers to protocols and practices, not individual managers. A flourishing, active performance management program requires effort and initial setup and focuses on the outcomes that drive success. Once deployed, it builds trust between the manager-employee and peers who rely on each other when the work occurs across different times and locations.

Everyone — including employees "in the office," the UC, and society at large — benefits from allowing for remote and flexible work opportunities that drive discussions of concrete roles, expectations, metrics, digital boundaries, and procedures.

APPENDIX

Below is a list of the various remote work policies that other UC campuses have implemented as a result of the challenges facing IT in higher education.

UCB:

Some central IT staff work remotely full time, but no more than 5%. However, many staff may telecommute on Fridays.

UCD:

[Review the telework policy on the UCD HR page.](#)

UCD Health:

IT employees may have flexible work arrangements at their manager's or supervisor's discretion, and in compliance with UC Davis Human Resources policies, and without negative impact on coworkers and customers. Many jobs require on-site, full-time or regularly scheduled times. Managers are not obligated to grant requests.

UCI:

Remote work and modern telecommunication technologies enable one employee to support their department's ongoing mission and efforts while undergoing treatment for Stage IV kidney cancer.

UCI Health:

UCLA:

[Review UCLA's Staff Telecommuting Guidelines.](#)

UCLA 2018 Conference:

[View the UCLA BruinTech conference event details, titled "Hybrid Work Communities."](#)

UCLA Health:

Per the manager's discretion and based on job duties, UCLA Health allows up to three days per week of telework privileges and remote work opportunities. Final approval by the UCLA Health Sciences CIO is required for all telework and remote work agreements.

UCM:

Over one-third of staff telecommute, we have several staff hired as fully remote staff, and we allow three remote days per month (additional days require a telecommute agreement). [Review our campus-level policy.](#)

UCOP:

Some hard-to-fill positions are 100% remote, some have the UCPath Center as their designated location. Flexible work arrangements allow for four remote days out of 10.

UCR:

Four UCR staff work remotely full time in Georgia, Michigan, and Texas — one employee needed to work remotely so he could follow his spouse to a new job. UCR struggled to find local talent experienced with the Banner Student ERP suite, but found exceptional employees to work remotely from Georgia and Michigan. With remote and flexible work opportunities, UCR can compete nationally with Orange County for technology sector salaries.

UCSB:

UCSB set a policy goal of 30% of IT staff working remotely at least three days a week. Employees who cross that threshold return their office assignments to a telecommuter pool.

UCSD:

Nearly 50% of central IT staff telecommute. The arrangement assists with caregiver duties, helping those staff with work and family-care balance. UCSD will observe how this and other practices may increase our diversity.

UCSD Health:

Staff may work remote three days per week of remote work for staff, two days for managers, and one day per week for directors. We have over 100 staff in the program. However, just a couple of staff work fully remote, as each one requires vice chancellor approval.

UCSF Health:

The employee and their manager sign an agreement outlining the terms and limitations for each alternative work instance as part of the telecommuting policy. Managers are generally not eligible. For staff, the manager decides if the nature of the role and needs of the customer align with remote work. UCSF also supports remote employees who work primarily off-site and from their homes.