Temporary Telecommuting Arrangements

The University’s goal is to have its employees perform their jobs in the most productive work environment possible. At times, specific jobs or tasks may be accomplished more productively by the use of flexible work arrangements such as telecommuting. At other times, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, telecommuting can de-densify the campus and provide temporary work arrangements that meet multiple needs.

Telecommuting is an arrangement that allows staff and administrative employees to work from home or an alternate work site using telecommunications and computer technology. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the temporary telecommuting policy will also be used for faculty members requesting work modifications when the faculty member doesn’t personally qualify for ADA, FMLA or other leaves of absence.

The University defines telecommuting as an employment arrangement in which work delegated from the department head is regularly scheduled and conducted during the employee’s normal work hours from a remote location, such as their home. Telecommuting is not intended to permit staff to have time to work at other jobs, provide dependent care during work hours, or run their own businesses.

For some job titles, work may be done at odd hours and not necessarily at any specific time of the day or night. Telecommuting may result in benefits to employees through increased morale and retention to the University, through decreased office space costs and overhead, and to the community at large through decreased traffic congestion.

If you or your department head would like to consider a telecommuting arrangement, please contact the Director of Employee Relations and Engagement. Permanent and temporary telecommuting arrangements are subject to the approval of the department head, dean and the vice president or provost. Each telecommuting employee will be required to sign a Telecommuting Agreement. Not all positions are amenable to a telecommuting relationship. Telecommuting requirements, permission, expectations and procedures must otherwise be communicated formally in writing by your department head. Where the University requires telecommuting in a job position, all equipment required for performing the work of the position while telecommuting will be provided by the University.

Eligibility Criteria

The determination of whether a position is appropriate for a telecommuting arrangement is made on a case-by-case basis at the department, dean, and vice president or provost level. Evaluation suitability is based largely on the nature of the work being performed and the needs of the University.

Generally, requests to telecommute should be considered when:

- the employee (including those who supervise other employees) has demonstrated sustained high performance and the manager believes the employee can maintain the expected quantity and quality of work while telecommuting.
- the department can maintain excellent, expected quality of service for students, faculty, and other members of the University community.
• the telecommuting option is appropriate based on the nature of the job and specific responsibilities.

Generally, requests to telecommute should not be considered when:

• the job requires the employee’s physical presence or telecommuting would disrupt the University or department’s efficiency or the effective delivery of expected services.

• the employee’s current assignment requires frequent supervision, direction, or input from others who are onsite or requires that the employee provide frequent supervision, direction, or input from other employees who are onsite.

• the employee’s performance evaluations do not indicate sustained high performance or the ability to work independently.

• the employee’s observed productivity levels are problematic or inconsistent or when tracking and confirming work hours is difficult (as in the case of non-exempt employees).

• the employee has received disciplinary action within the past year or has a demonstrated attendance problem.

• the employee has less than six months of service with the University, although an exception would be considered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**General Expectations**

Even if you telecommute, you may still be required to attend meetings at the office or other designated location. Telecommuting does not change your University work location and you are still responsible for all costs associated with travel to and from the office, when required to report onsite. Employees who telecommute are not to conduct in-person business meetings in their home nor are they to perform any unauthorized work at home.

You are responsible for any costs of obtaining tax advice about a tax deduction for a home office. All employees are responsible for any tax liability should they claim such an expense and it is later disallowed by the Internal Revenue Service.

All employees who telecommute must maintain the security of all confidential and/or sensitive information and other proprietary information, as if they were working in the office. All security procedures apply, regardless of whether the employee is in the workplace or telecommuting. All employees who telecommute are responsible for following all safety rules. To ensure that safe work conditions exist and that University policies are met, telecommuters must allow University representatives to inspect their designated workplace for purposes of determining whether the designated workplace is safe. The University’s Workers’ Compensation benefits do not cover accidents or injuries that occur at your home worksite that are unrelated to performing your work for the University.

The ability to telecommute does not change the performance level expected of you. Non-exempt employees who are subject to overtime laws still are required to adhere to their beginning and ending work times, break times, and meal breaks, and to obtain prior approval to work any overtime.
Non-exempt employees must continue to record time as required by applicable law and University rules. Telecommuting employees must continue to maintain required time records where appropriate.

**Duration of Telecommuting Arrangements**

Telecommuting arrangements end at the employee’s termination from the University. Telecommuting agreements will be reviewed at least on an annual basis. A telecommuting arrangement may be revoked at any time if it is determined to be in the best interest of the department or University. Temporary telecommuting agreements are in effect for the dates defined in the temporary agreement.

For staff and administration, regardless of telecommuting privileges, the University continues to retain the right to terminate the telecommuting arrangement or your employment at any time, with or without notice. For tenure-track faculty members, a temporary telework agreement does not change the employment relationship with the University as guided by the Faculty Handbook. Violation of any telecommuting agreement may result in the loss of your telecommuting privileges and/or termination of employment (for non-tenure track employees).

**Telecommuting Agreement**

An agreement between the telecommuting employee and the employee’s department/dean is required and will be placed in the employee’s personnel file. The telecommuting agreement may be modified or terminated any time, with appropriate notice. As circumstances, business needs, and job requirements evolve over time, adjustments and modifications may become necessary. At least two weeks notice should be provided whenever possible in advance of ending or changing the agreement. In all cases, telecommuting agreements must be renewed annually.