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Building Consensus Around the Future Remote Work: One Library's Study

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Building a Consensus Around the Future of Remote Work: One Library's Study

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OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand employee perceptions of remote work as a potential option after the library returns to "normal" operations. This survey was used to develop the library's telecommuting and remote work guideline.

METHODS

An 8-question, web-based survey was sent to all library faculty and staff, asking their opinions about working remotely after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was declared minimal risk by our institutional IRB.

The questions included multiple choice and free-text responses about how often employees wanted to work remotely; what tasks they believed could be done productively from home; what equipment they needed at home; and what challenges they believed the library faced with employees working remotely. Summary results from the survey were presented to all faculty and staff for additional discussion.

RESULTS

85% of staff and faculty responded. All wanted to continue to work remotely part time after the pandemic. 65% (11 respondents) preferred working from home 2-3 days per week. 23% (4 respondents) preferred working from home more than 3 days a week, and 12% (2 respondents) preferred working from home 1 day a week.

Tasks respondents found more productive doing remotely

Meetings	6
Required training	5
Administrative responsibilities	4
Professional development	4
Other	4
Literature searching	3
Database management	3
Reference consultations	3
Writing projects	3
Troubleshooting links/online content	2
Virtual reference	2
Project work	2

The challenges identified included staffing the building and the demand for in-person

services. The data were used to, in concert with university policies, to develop a departmental guideline.

Challenges to remote work

Staffing the building and schedules	12
Demand for in-person services	8
Technological barriers, including internet access and difficulties accessing enterprise services from off-campus	5
Difficulties hosting hybrid meetings with in-person and remote participants	5
Equity/fairness/compensation between those on campus and those remote	5
Other issues	3
Difficulties working with team members working both on-site and remote	2

CONCLUSION

Overall, survey responses were very consistent, indicating a broad consensus among faculty and staff about continued remote work. Future work will include periodic reviews of the developed guidelines.





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HIGHLIGHTS FROM HSLIC'S REMOTE & TELECOMMUTING GUIDELINES

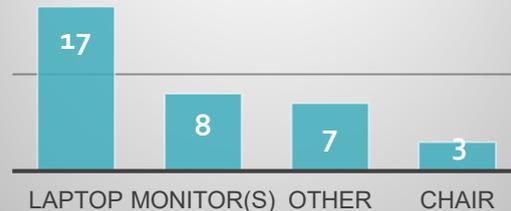
COMPLEMENTS UNIVERSITY POLICY

- Supplements the University of New Mexico (UNM) Remote and Telecommuting Guidelines for Staff
 - Broad university support for remote work and telecommuting, when feasible
 - <https://hr.unm.edu/remote-work>
 - UNM defines remote work as working full-time off-site, and telecommuting as working part time off-site
 - All staff must sign an agreement, placed on file with the UNM HR
- Faculty are not required to sign an agreement
 - Supervisors are encouraged to keep documentation outlining expectations

HSLIC GUIDELINES

- Employees within a division are not guaranteed equal telecommuting time due to different job duties
- Supervisors have the right to reduce or revoke telecommuting privileges due to change in duties, abuse or performance issues
- Positions engaged in full-time remote work must have it included on the position's departmental job description
- Remote work does not change applicability of UNM or library policies

Equipment employees expect library to provide for remote work



THE DETAILS

- Employees required to use library's official communications platforms
- Video conferencing the standard means for HSLIC meetings
 - Employees may be required to come on-site during regularly scheduled telecommuting for special in-person meetings/ events
- Telecommuting employees assigned individual cubicle/office; remote workers provided temporary "touch down" space
- Standard equipment for checkout includes laptop, laptop stand, keyboard, mouse
 - Additional items by approval
 - Non-approved equipment includes UNM purchased furniture, printers, scanners, and phones
- Remote workers not issued keys
- Single-day parking passes not provided

