

FUTURE OF WORK UPDATE: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

November 2021

The Future of Work@Iowa initiative aims to reimagine how and where University of Iowa employees work after COVID-19. It focuses on long-term potential for remote and hybrid work, flexible schedules, and other work arrangements that may help the university attract and retain talent and reduce costs.

University Human Resources (UHR) and campus partners developed a **pilot work arrangement project** for the fall 2021 semester. That pilot has been extended to include a spring 2022 phase. **Colleges and divisions can continue and/or modify pilot work arrangements through June 30, 2022.**

UHR, participating colleges and divisions, Campus Planning and Development, and other partners will collect pilot project data through January. A project report will be delivered to university leadership in March 2022.

Extending the pilot through June 30, 2022, will allow colleges and divisions to maintain current work arrangements while making long-term decisions based on the March report.

Background and Resources

Future of Work milestones to date include:

- Project launch in November 2020
- [Preliminary guidelines](#) released in March 2021 to help colleges and divisions manage decisions about work arrangements and establish the fall 2021 pilot
- [Full report](#) released in June 2021, expanding on the preliminary guidelines and identifying issues to address around process, university and employee responsibilities, space management, and other topics.

As a result of the project, colleges and divisions have received criteria for establishing fully remote or hybrid arrangements that blend remote and on-campus work. In addition, the university has implemented systems for reporting and evaluating work arrangements.

Initial Observations

To date, colleges and divisions have reported about 1,800 remote and hybrid work arrangements. In more than 96 percent of these arrangements, employees perform remote work from sites within the state of Iowa.

Participating colleges and divisions report that offering a greater range of work arrangement options has helped them compete in the current labor market. Regional unemployment rates are low, and competition for employees in sectors such as information technology is fierce. Retaining top talent is critical to the university's overall success.

The university has opened its first on-campus co-working workspaces for employees with hybrid work arrangements and is tracking space utilization patterns associated with remote and hybrid work. Extending the pilot and analyzing space utilization data will provide a clearer picture of potential savings from reduced demand for office space.

Future of Work project leaders have identified these priorities to address over the remainder of the Phase I Pilot (fall 2021) and the Phase II Pilot (spring 2022):

- Review data to understand how work arrangement flexibility affects employee retention
- Explore opportunities for remote and hybrid work arrangements to positively impact recruitment
- Evaluate and optimize hybrid work arrangements to strengthen business rationales and standardize options shown to be effective
- Ensure compliance with wage and employment laws for remote employees working outside Iowa
- Fully assess impacts on space utilization and project any associated savings
- Explore the impact of blended teams on workplace culture, employee well-being, and other factors
- Augment supervisor/leadership training to address hybrid and remote work arrangement options and best practices

Assessment and Reporting

UHR will assess pilot project data with campus partners, including faculty researchers in the Tippie College of Business. Assessment strategies include:

- **Employee exit interviews** to evaluate the effects of work arrangements on career decisions
- **Client/colleague feedback surveys** to assess effects on service, workloads, communication, and other factors
- **Supervisor/employee pulse surveys** to gauge satisfaction with pilot work arrangements
- **Space utilization metrics** to quantify effects on space needs and associated costs

Project leaders will complete a report by March 31, 2022, that includes data collected through early 2022. Findings will inform future work arrangement policies, best practice recommendations, and implementation decisions at the college and division level.