Introduction

Per UWSP’s strategy, our institution will continue to have in-person presence for students, families, and the community. We are expecting campus activity to increase substantially and this activity requires a much greater level of direct, in-person support. To provide this to one another, it is expected that all offices will be staffed to a level to permit their being open during Standard Office Hours (as prescribed in UWSA SYS 1227 - Standard Office Hours, Legal Holidays and Other UW System Institution Closures by June 1, 2021. Exceptions to Standard Office Hours may be made by the vice chancellor of that department or office. To serve one another and to ensure a dynamic, in-person experience for our students, we will be returning all employees to their regular, contracted work locations by August 1, 2021.

You may have faculty and staff who request to continue to work partially (which includes intermittent remote work) or fully remote until August 1, 2021. Any identified need to work partially (which includes intermittent remote work) or fully during this transition back to campuses will be done through the ADA accommodation process or through the approval of the work unit’s divisional vice chancellor.

If you are considering a request made to work remotely partially or fully, please use this guide to support review and decision making. Please note that this guide will be updated or replaced once the UW System telecommuting policy and additional resources are available.

Possible Benefits and Challenges for Remote Work

Research indicates some benefits and challenges may occur from working remotely. Benefits and challenges are influenced by individual preferences and needs, specific position needs, manager skills and abilities, and the organizational culture. Below is the list of possible benefits and challenges for remote work that you or your team member may experience.

Possible benefits of working remotely include, but are not limited to:
- May increase employment retention and improve recruitment
- Increased life-work balance for individuals who work remotely
- Expanded recruitment pools which increase diverse applicant pools
- Expanded recruitment pools for positions suited for remote work that may increase diversity within the institution
- May reduce workspace needed for workers which can be reallocated for other uses

Possible challenges include, but are not limited to:
- Technology issues for hardware, software, or utilities
- Requires a variety of effective management techniques
- Individual feelings of isolation and/or loneliness
- Individual feelings of inequity due to not having the exact same expectations
• Mixed results for inclusivity and belonging (research shows remote work inclusivity challenges increase or decrease based on personality types and ethnicity)
• Remote location may not be the safest work location due to physical layout or even the possibility of hostility or physical/emotional abuse that could exist in some home situations

Overcoming the Challenges*

• Conduct daily or weekly check-ins.
  o Address questions, issues, provide and receive feedback timely, and maintain interpersonal relationships.
  o Discuss challenges and support with resources or remove barriers for all employees.
  o Support and/or clarify meaning, value, and purpose in work; ensure the work performed is connected to UWSP mission and vision.
• Build in time for social/networking and team building to support belonging.
• Appreciate all employees for their contributions and accomplishments in the manner they prefer to be appreciated/acknowledged.
• Give employees who have demonstrated the ability to successfully work remotely some autonomy for how work gets done and trust your employees’ expertise. You building this trust will facilitate their growing trust of you.
  o Coach and provide professional development as needed.
    ▪ Refer employees to LinkedIn Learning training to ensure success, including:
      • Managing Up Virtually as an Employee
      • Staying Organized While Working Remotely or On-Site
      • Organizing Your Remote Office for Maximum Productivity
      • Time Management: Working from Home
• Empathize and support all your employees’ wellbeing.
  o Ask them how they are doing, in general, take time to talk about non-work-related items, and/or encourage self-care activities. Refer them to life-work balance and wellness resources.
• Provide synchronous and asynchronous opportunities for information sharing and communication so that you, your team, and each employee feel connected to the work of the department.
• Communicate changes and communicate/reassure what isn’t changing to support stability and reduce uncertainty.
• Reference the UWS Compensation Policy for hourly University Staff differential pay for nights or weekends to aid in alternative schedule decisions, if applicable.
• Ensure equity.
  o Equity does not mean the exact same for all. In this case it means acknowledging individual preferences and/or needs and working with each individual as much as possible to meet their needs and preferences.
  o It doesn’t mean giving an individual everything they may want; the department must continue to function effectively and, of course, productivity and meeting performance are still expected.
  o Be prepared to respond to equity concerns regarding your decisions.
• Also see Work Modification versus Accommodation Considerations section of the Return to UW-Stevens Point Locations Supervisor Guide Phase II. The guide is located on the Human Resources Coronavirus webpage under the Returning to UW-Stevens Point for Work – For Manager and Supervisor section.

*Many of these items are applicable even when in-person.

Technology Considerations

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<th>UWSP Policy/Expectation</th>
<th>Discussion Topics</th>
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| UWSP provides one device (a.k.a. computer) per employee. | • Can the person work effectively with the device provided? (i.e., do they have a UWSP laptop or a home device to “remote in” to their work PC?  
• The department should not be purchasing replacement equipment only because someone is working from home.  
• Can work be done completely via UWSP Office 365? |
| UWSP does not cover utilities, including internet. | • Does the individual have sufficient utilities at home to work remotely effectively? |

Decision to Approve/Deny a Request to Work Remotely and Telecommuting Agreement

Once you have reviewed a request for some/all remote work, if you plan to support the employee’s (faculty, staff, or student employee) request to continue to work remotely (either on a temporary basis or permanently) beyond August 1, 2021, speak with your supervisor and Vice Chancellor. A telecommuting agreement for fully remote work or partial ongoing remote work will be needed and can be obtained from Human Resources. A request for intermittent remote work can be approved through the Vice Chancellor via email and does not need a telecommuting agreement. The UWS telecommuting policy is being updated; some changes may occur to the UWSP telecommuting agreement and process once the UWS policy is finalized.
If you are not in support of the telecommuting request, plan to discuss the reasons for the decision. Factors may include, but not limited to, the position requiring an in-person presence at the UWSP location, technology considerations, an employee’s current performance, or risk to the department’s mission. At this time, there is not a formal appeal process beyond the open-door policies our people enjoy.

References

For references see Return to UW-Stevens Point Locations Supervisor Guide Phase II located on the Human Resources Coronavirus webpage under the Returning to UW-Stevens Point for Work – For Manager and Supervisor section.