

Telecommuting Space Considerations

During our work to study the impacts of the global pandemic on higher education facility design, the Post Pandemic Facilities Subcommittee (PPFS) reviewed the impacts of telecommuting on campus space. This fact sheet was developed to provide campus leadership with additional information when considering telecommuting policy and direction and its relationship to campus space.

Reduction in campus space demand

Faculty and administrative office space have traditionally been in short supply on both the San Bernardino and Palm Desert campuses. With implementation of a telecommuting policy the amount and type of office space may be impacted; however, the PPFS had the following concerns about simply reducing office space for those working remotely.

- Hybrid models of telecommuting have varying degrees of impact on available space.
 - Telecommuting only results in available space if employees work opposite schedules using a shared workstation. If all employees are required to report in-person on specific day(s) any space savings may be limited.
 - Consider if there are functional units that could work completely remotely. If so, these areas could be converted to transitory or shared workstations for others that come to campus only a few days a week.
- Campus culture may have significant impact on potential for space savings through telecommuting.
 - Campus functional areas are currently location specific. Having an available workstation in one area may not be practical for someone needing a workstation from another area. (e.g. If telecommuting freed up one workstation in Pfau Library two days a week this may not be useful for an employee from the College of Education who requires a workstation on those two days).
 - Campus culture assigns identity and status to office space. Bigger offices with a door or window for example are associated with position. Hoteling workstations that are not assigned but reserved may not be appealing to employees accustomed to personalizing their office space.
 - Consider providing higher quality furnishings and finishes in shared workspaces to attract use by employees
 - In many cases space is dictated by SUAM, CBAs and other administrative and policy documents. (e.g. Contractually, tenured track faculty are required to have an office on campus) These policies could limit the space saving benefit of telecommuting.
 - If in-person work is intended to allow for connection and meeting, is there a greater need for small group spaces or work rooms as computer workstation centered work would be better done remotely. This would be a shift in how employees schedule their time on campus.

- Would employees consider work schedules beyond 8a-5p to allow for more sharing of workspace? This is particularly interesting since our students are typically on campus until 10p.
- Office space management tools or reservation software may be required to fully implement a shared workstation model and to optimize space savings. Tools are commercially available similar to software used now for classroom scheduling.
- A survey of telecommuting eligible employees may be required to understand how many would be able to utilize a shared on-campus workstation. Consider making shared on-campus workstations part of the telecommuting agreement.

Reduction in Carbon Footprint

There is a case to be made that telecommuting can save energy and reduce the impact on the environment from campus activities.

- Since most employees drive personal vehicles to campus, telecommuting would reduce daily trips to campus and ultimately reduce the campus carbon footprint associated with commuting.
 - This would also reduce the demand for parking on campus and ease traffic congestion in the immediate vicinity of the campus
- Unless the campus was completely closed on a specific day(s) of the week, energy savings from reduced activities in campus buildings would be minimal. Building systems are not currently designed to allow for management at the individual office level. In most cases HVAC systems control a zone or section of the building. If all offices are to be staffed in person daily the potential energy savings would be limited.

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