

September 27, 2021

Dear President Drake and Vice President Lloyd,

The Council of UC Staff Assemblies (CUCSA) wants to ensure staff continue to choose the University of California as their place of employment, especially having seen their commitment over the past 18 months. Unfortunately, disconnected messaging and fluctuating support for work flexibility is making the choice to stay difficult for staff throughout our campuses and locations.

While systemwide and campus executive leadership have supported flexibility in return to work plans and schedules, so long as business needs continue to be met, their message does not always reach those charged with implementation. Consequently, a significant population of supervisors are unprepared and/or unwilling to extend reasonable flexibility without any accountability. This is increasingly impacting retention in an environment where almost half of survey respondents in the 2021 UCOP/CUCSA Engagement Survey were already seriously considering leaving the UC.

For these reasons, we request the following:

- A statement from President Drake on flexibility that includes a message similar to the following, “Unless your subordinate’s job duties require them to be onsite, your default course of action is allowing them to work remotely.”
 - In the near term, this lowers the density of staff onsite which lowers the **risk for our colleagues** who must be on campus to conduct their job duties. It also reduces disruption for those who need to quarantine due to possible exposure onsite or from community spread due to the Delta or other variants.
- Establishment of a process for mediation services to facilitate the conversation between the supervisor and the employee. This would increase accountability and transparency while improving working relationships between employees and supervisors regarding flexible agreements.
 - In the near and long term, these courses of action improve retention and recruitment. Furthermore, telecommuting and hybrid schedules reduce UC’s carbon footprint, which helps to achieve our neutrality goal.

As our local campuses implement fall-return plans, staff throughout the UC have watched their needs be discarded in favor of student and faculty wants. Considering the demographic and socioeconomic composition of staff, which is the most diverse of all populations in the UC, the hierarchical framing of this decision making is troubling.

CUCSA has advocated for flexible work for years. The staff have spent the past year and a half demonstrating it is not only possible, but profitable. Therefore, we urge you to create messaging that implores all levels of management to have conversations with their employees that includes an accountability option. This will better position the UC to remain an employer of choice.

Since March 2020, staff have demonstrated innovation in their job duties and have delivered new services while exceeding expectations for their customers. We encourage campuses to use data-driven decisions as campus return plans are implemented. This approach will ensure work flexibility is considered while keeping the customer in mind. We have a chance to redeem the last 18 months by learning to embrace a reimagined workplace instead of letting the inertia of past practice dictate our future direction.

Sincerely,

The Council of UC Staff Assemblies