

To: Montgomery College Employees
From: Dr. Charlene M. Dukes, Interim President
Subject: **Returning to Regular Operations and Telework Guidance**
Date: February 18, 2022

Last October, I wrote that our November 8 return-to-campus plans included phasing in telework with a maximum of one day per week for employees in eligible positions. Unfortunately, the spike in omicron infections after the holiday season changed conditions. Following the College's winter break, administrators and supervisors were encouraged to use flexible strategies in staggering onsite employee service schedules to keep employees safe and healthy, while providing full on-site services. As health and safety conditions in the county have continued to improve, it is time to return to regularly working together on campuses and worksites.

In this moment, the College is redoubling its efforts to substantially increase student enrollment and provide high-quality services and supports. To this end, we must re-establish in-person workplace and learning community norms and routines. With over 60 percent of classes being offered in-person, the visible and accessible presence of college employees is vital to provide students with timely supports and services. Faculty and staff also benefit from in-person interactions with colleagues during this re-acclimation. Ensuring that students thrive, and that the College is financially sustainable are high priorities.

I appreciate the deliberate discussions that have been held about telework and our flexible work arrangements. The outcome of those discussions has been essential as each one of us thinks about Montgomery College's commitment to its critical mission of serving students and as we adjust to the new or next normal. We must be both tactical in outlining the implementation of telework and understanding that configurations may differ from unit to unit, depending on several factors, inclusive of but not limited to workload type, public interfacing offices, student needs and expectations, and department needs.

The College will consider requests for regular [telework agreements](#) beginning Monday, February 21. Such agreements are only for employees in eligible positions, and can be for up to three days per week. During the pandemic the College's emergency remote status compelled many employees to work from home, whether they were in telework-eligible positions or not. Now that the College has shifted out of emergency remote operations, employees must be in telework-eligible positions to be granted telework. Additionally, employees who are in telework-eligible positions should not expect that their telework requests

will be granted automatically based on how frequently they worked from home earlier in the pandemic. As outlined in the [Flexible Work Arrangements Procedure](#), approval of all telework agreements must be based on the operational and service needs of a unit and the essential job duties of a position. It is even more critical now that conditions are improving that we have employees physically present to educate and serve students and engage with the College community. A few additional points of guidance for teams:

- Supervisors and teams should collaborate in advance to establish appropriate coverage and service plans before any telework requests are approved.
- Supervisors must review team member requests collectively to ensure appropriate operational coverage and access to services for internal and external customers.
- Immediate supervisors will coordinate with their supervisor, area administrator, and the responsible senior vice president or chief of staff to approve or deny requests.
- If a telework request is denied, the employee should be provided with the reason for the decision by the direct supervisor or next level supervisor who made the decision to deny the employee's request.
- Requests for remote work remain suspended until further notice. Remote work is that which allows an employee "to perform the duties and responsibilities of the employee's position at a remote work site as their primary work location on a routine basis."

The College has been a leader in supporting flexible work arrangements, as existing policy and procedures demonstrate. Appropriately planned and managed flexible work arrangements, including teleworking, are an effective way to recruit and retain excellent employees. They can also improve productivity, reduce commuting time, and promote a healthy balance between work and home. The College remains committed to flexible work arrangements as we move forward and will intentionally re-examine operating assumptions in order to more systemically integrate flexible work arrangements where appropriate. We appreciate that opportunities to telework, work remotely, and leverage alternative work schedules make the College a more competitive employer.

In the coming weeks, several proposed revisions to the Flexible Work Arrangements Procedure will be shared with the College community for comment. We look forward to your input on those proposed changes, and your further feedback as we work to redefine flexible work arrangements and their role in our strategic workforce planning. Further information on this planning will be coming from HRSTM.

Thank you for all you do for Montgomery College, for our students, and for your dedication to the College's mission as we work to chart our path beyond the coronavirus pandemic.