

# UCEDD Directors Meeting

February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022 3-5pm ET

Breakout Room Notes

**Breakout Room Title:** “Post Covid” Transition for Staff

**Facilitator:** Susan Fox

**Notetaker:** Harpur Schwartz

Notes:

## **New hybrid work environment**

- Susan Fox
  - Developed a post COVID roadmap for how programs and services would operate in a truly post COVID context.
  - Looked at each program for strengths and weaknesses (issues); considered what technology/policies were needed for work to continue in a hybrid environment.
- Holly Hulen
  - Having project directors tailor work environment to best meet project needs.
- Rebekah Young
  - Offering a hybrid opportunity when possible, but it is “under the radar” because of mandates from administration.
- Karen Heath
  - Hired many people during COVID, but when looking to return to in person, realized that there was not enough space for everyone- hybrid model to accommodate.
- Elise McMillan
  - Once the decision is made for a hybrid work environment, will never get that physical space back- there is a formula for how much space allowed based on time in person.
- Larry Yin
  - If an employee chooses to work remote, they are going to end up sharing an office with someone else- space restrictions.
  - Workforce is tired- just want to support them by providing flexibility in this new work environment.

## **New work culture post COVID**

- Karen Heath
  - Newer staff that have never been in person are missing out on the culture.
  - Tried monthly all-staff Zoom meetings and different strategies but feel the need to see each other “sometimes” to build culture.
  - Some staff have been hired and left quickly and the belief is that they did not have a connection to the center or values.
- Beth Mineo
  - While you can schedule Zoom meetings, it is not the same as just popping into someone’s office.



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- Parthy Dinora
  - Trouble with siloes prior and now even more vulnerable to siloes in this environment.
  - Looking to technology companies for ideas. What can AUCD do to help us figure out how to create a vibrant environment in a new world when all fundamentals have changed?

**Managing equity in this new work environment** (some staff want to be back in the office, but others want to stay remote)

- Elise McMillan
  - Post COVID policy is up to each area to decide.
  - The question is how to have a policy that is both fair and equitable e.g., some employees you have known for 5-10 years and others you have yet to meet in person.
- Beth Mineo
  - Inequities based on the nature of someone's job responsibilities.
  - There are some people who really cannot do their job unless they are in person.
  - Heard it is "just not fair" and have tried to explain that they were hired to do a certain job.
- Rebekah Young/Parthy Dinora
  - Have struggled with justifying clerical positions and positions that were focused on in-person event support.
- Parthy Dinora
  - Need to take a person-centered planning approach when it comes to equity.
  - Cannot assume anything- need to work with supervisors and tailor it case-by-case.
- Karen Heath
  - Need fairness with who comes back, or does not, and also must support employees with disabilities to come back.
  - Example: Had a long-term housekeeping employee email about her mental health suffering from not having interaction. While she is at higher risk, felt strongly that not getting her back to work and providing that support would be more detrimental. The question is how to balance "the paternalistic view for employees that are more at risk".
- Holly Hulen
  - Need to make some accommodations to be flexible otherwise will lose good employees.
  - Challenge is that one or two leaders just want to go back to how it was before COVID. Need to change their leadership and mindset to be a little bit more flexible.

**Messaging, policies, and communication**

- Some institutions are not getting messaging quite right. This causes a lot of trouble when it comes to making sense of policies and communication, and it puts pressure on staff to explain decisions made.

**Financial consideration**

- The challenge is navigating a new post COVID work environment with a tight budget. We are unlikely to see more federal money or support and financially, next year will be a tough year.
- Larry Yin
  - During COVID, universities and employers (hospitals) have said they cannot match retirement contributions for a year and some departments did not give raises during this time period.
  - Universities have now reinstated the match to retirement and hospitals have realized the need to increase salaries because they are losing so many people to other places in the workforce. (Next year it will be difficult to balance budgets.)



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