HYBRID WORK GROUP FINAL REPORT

December 17, 2021

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF THE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF THE GROUP'S WORK

Background

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bowdoin had no formal hybrid, remote, or flexible work policies, although a small number of employees had approval for alternative work arrangements. When the COVID-19 pandemic forced the College to close its campus in March 2020, Bowdoin moved quickly to a fully remote work model and remained primarily remote until August 2020, when many student-facing and operational staff returned to working on campus. From August 2020 through July 2021, many non-student-facing and operational staff continued to work remotely, with a planned return to on-campus work for August.

In July, President Rose sent a <u>message to the community</u> announcing that the College would allow some remote work to continue for the fall as a "placeholder" structure while the hybrid work group developed its recommendations for a long-term plan. The decisions about what hybrid work options would be available to staff were left to senior officers based on the ideas described above and the operational needs of each unit.

Original work group charter

The hybrid work group was asked to look carefully at whether a hybrid work model would be valuable and feasible for Bowdoin going forward. The group's analysis was informed by a survey of staff and examined a variety of factors, including eligibility among positions, equity, professional development, cultural implications, attracting talent, and technology needs.

Committee membership

- Rebecca Banks – Academic Affairs

- Mary Baumgartner – Communications (joined in August 2021)

- Jim Caton – Communications

- Jeff Doring – Information Technology

- Carmen Greenlee – Library

- Eduardo Pazos – Student Affairs, Diversity, and Inclusion

- Amber Scott – Development and Alumni Relations

- Lynne Toussaint – Controller's Office

Note: We are also grateful for the contributions of Bryce Ervin (Admissions), Stephanie Patterson (Student Affairs), and Brian Robinson (Human Resources) who left the College prior to the completion of the final report.

Definitions

The definitions below are used for this report:

- *Hybrid work*: Any work arrangement that includes a combination of working at an on-campus location and an off-campus location, including:

    o a set number of specific days each week designated for on-campus work;

    o a set number of days per month available for remote work; or

    o on-campus workdays that are determined by the need to be on campus with no set number or day(s) designated.

- *Remote work*: Work that is performed almost entirely off campus by an employee who may or may not live within commuting distance from Bowdoin.

- *Flextime*: An approved, regular work schedule that includes hours that are different from the standard Bowdoin workday for that function, most commonly altering the start and/or end time of the workday.

Information gathering

The hybrid work group used a variety of inputs to understand how other organizations are approaching more flexible work models and what the experiences and perspectives are of Bowdoin's staff on hybrid, remote, and flextime work, specifically:

- What kinds of work arrangements have been explored or implemented at other institutions of higher education?
- What kinds of work arrangements are being offered by businesses locally and nationally that Bowdoin might compete with for talent?
- The experiences of Bowdoin staff with hybrid and remote work arrangements since March 2020.
- The experiences of Bowdoin students with Bowdoin staff working remotely or in a hybrid work arrangement since March 2020.

 A list of consulted resources, although not exhaustive, is included in the appendix.

Guiding principles for recommendations

The work group used the following guiding principles to develop its recommendations for remote, hybrid, and flextime work options:
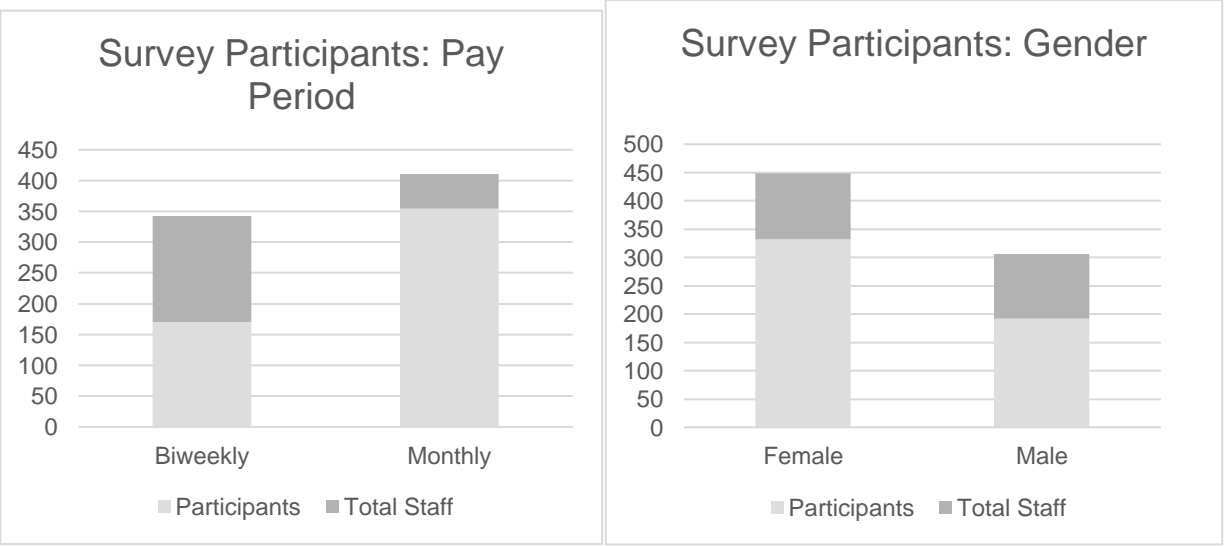
- the College is intentionally designed to provide our students with intense personal learning and broadly defined educational experiences with substantial amounts of human contact across everything we do (the power of this model has been strongly reinforced by the pandemic);
- we value and count on community, collegiality, collaboration, and engagement with the life of the College from every employee, and
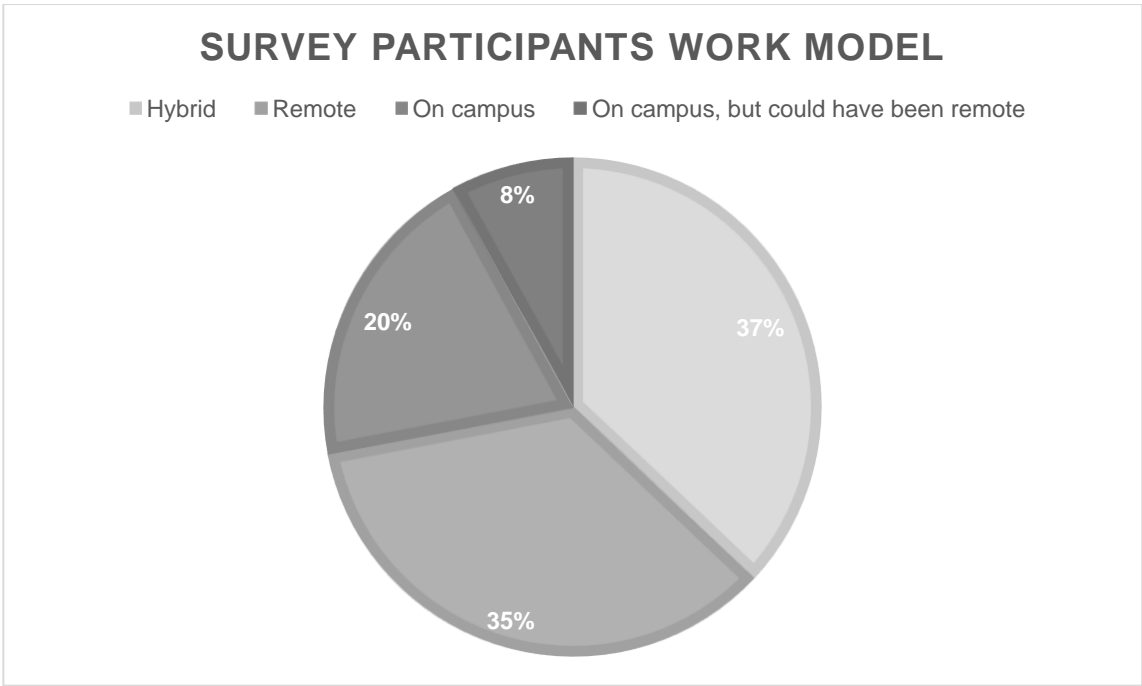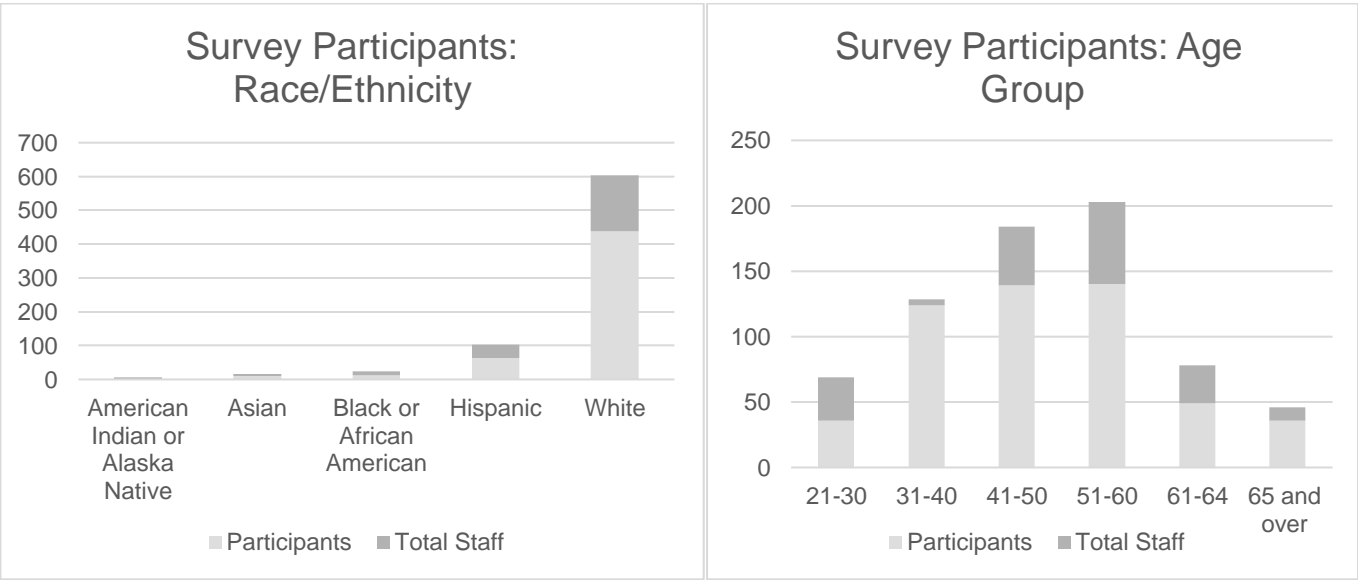
- flexibility in work arrangements should enhance productivity, be equitable (but not necessarily equal), and support overall employee well-being.
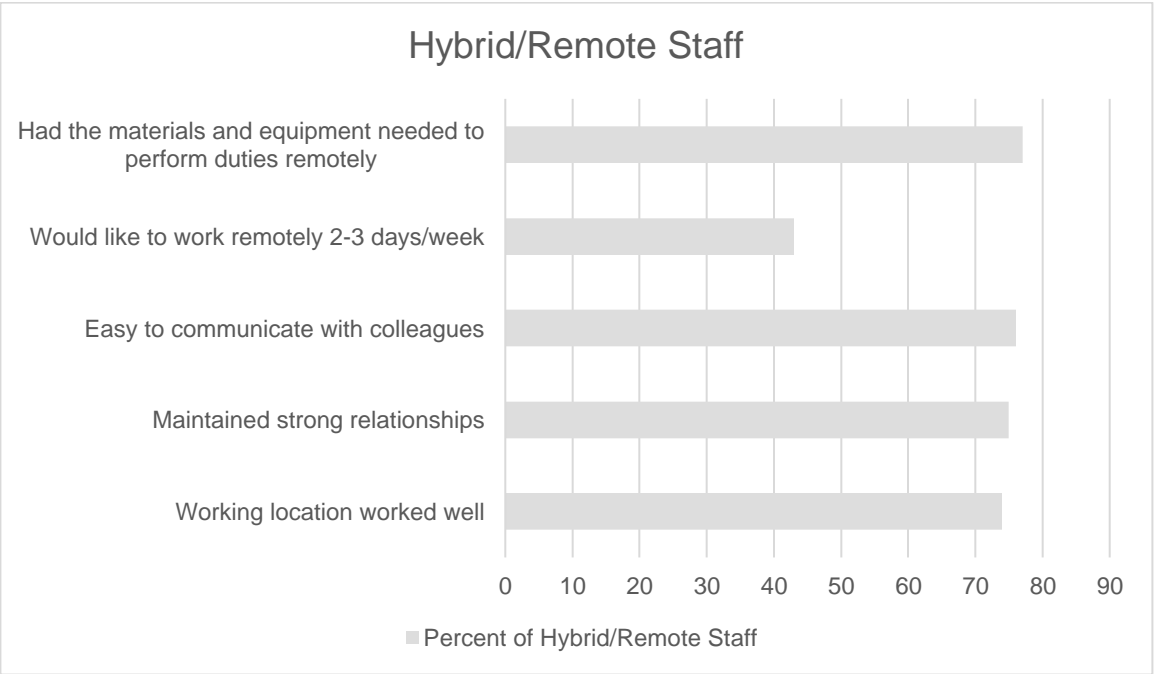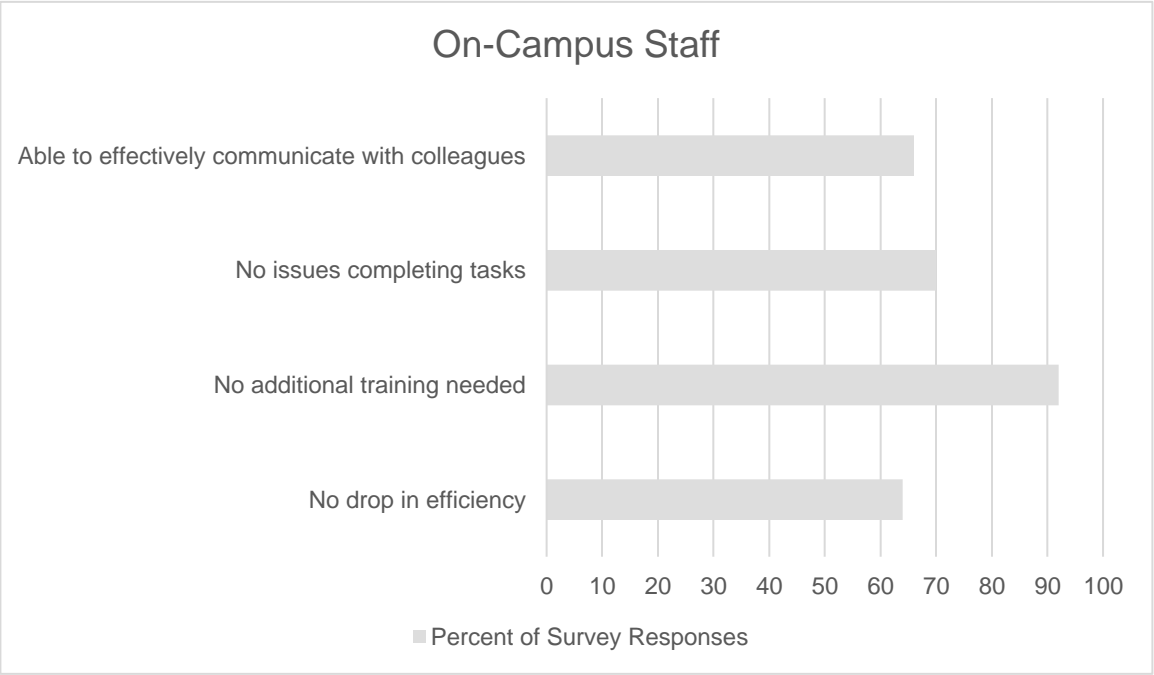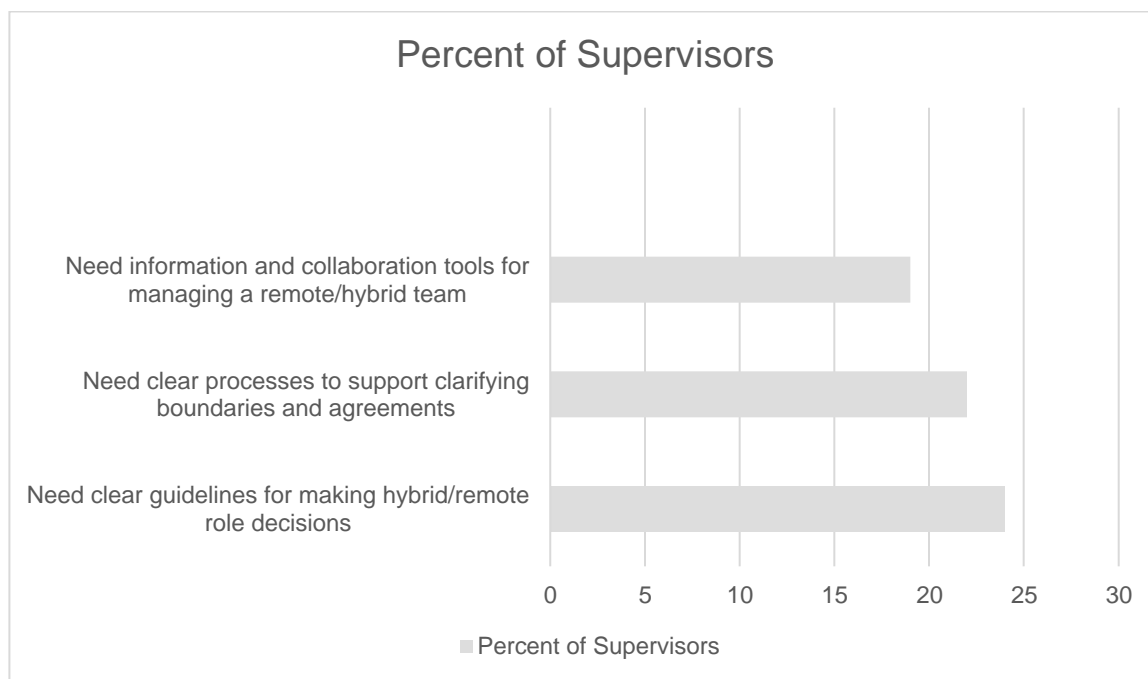
RESEARCH SUMMARY

Background

Survey Participation

Survey Participants: Race/Ethnicity

Survey Participants: Age Group

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS WORK MODEL

■ Hybrid ■ Remote ■ On campus ■ On campus, but could have been remote

	On-Campus Staff	Hybrid/Remote Staff	Supervisors	All Staff
Anticipate Benefits	85%	99%	96%	99%
Biggest Benefit	Improved parking (40%)	Work and life balance (21%)	Enhanced staff morale (23%)	Talent recruitment (20%)
2nd Biggest Benefit	Fewer office distractions (13%)	More likely to use collaboration tools (17%)	Talent recruitment (23%)	Staff diversity (19%)
3rd Biggest Benefit	Less office space to maintain (10%)	Shorter commuting time (17%)	Staff diversity (21%)	Enhanced staff morale (19%)
Anticipate Challenges	86%	88%	97%	98%
Biggest Challenge	Fewer 1:1 conversations (21%)	Tech/equipment issues (17%)	Fewer informal conversations (15%)	Questions of "fairness" (24%)
2nd Biggest Challenge	No opportunity to work remotely/equity (18%)	Less collaboration (15%)	Managing staff, who can/can't work hybrid/remote (12%)	Balancing expectations of various staff groups (23%)
3rd biggest challenge	More effort required to perform duties (11%)	Equity (11%)	Performance management (11%)	Preserving sense of community (21%)

Additional Learnings

On-Campus Staff

Category	Percent of Survey Responses
Able to effectively communicate with colleagues	~67
No issues completing tasks	~70
No additional training needed	~92
No drop in efficiency	~65

■ Percent of Survey Responses

Hybrid/Remote Staff

Category	Percent of Hybrid/Remote Staff
Had the materials and equipment needed to perform duties remotely	~76
Would like to work remotely 2-3 days/week	~43
Easy to communicate with colleagues	~75
Maintained strong relationships	~74
Working location worked well	~73

■ Percent of Hybrid/Remote Staff

8

Percent of Supervisors

- Some of the additional **benefits** of a hybrid work option shared through survey comments include:

    o **Improved health and wellness and work/life balance**

    o **Environmental benefits**

    o Fewer distractions/**better ability to focus**

    o **More flexibility** to meet with students and hold programs outside of the traditional workday

- Some of the additional **challenges** of a hybrid work option shared through survey comments:

    o **Maintaining campus culture**

    o Interdepartmental **interaction and relationships**

    o **Hybrid meetings**

- o **Equity**

- o **Less opportunity for career growth**

- o **Additional costs** of being completely operational from home (increase in cell phone and internet service fees, appropriate chair, lighting, etc.)

- The most **common suggestions** for things the College should continue doing post-pandemic:

  - o **Greater flexibility** with working arrangements (location, hours)

  - o **Frequent, open, and transparent communications**

  - o **Campus-wide use of Teams**, and the use of Teams and Zoom for meetings that involve people from various areas of campus

  - o **Virtual events** and more streamed/recorded public lectures

  - o More **campus-wide gatherings** for faculty and staff (e.g., summer picnic)

- The most common themes for "**one piece of advice**" shared were:

  - o pay attention to **equity;**

  - o be **flexible;**

  - o stay focused on **employee mental health and wellness; and**

  - o **trust** employees to do their work well and make good choices.

RECOMMENDATION

The hybrid work group strongly recommends that Bowdoin adopt a formal policy that supports hybrid, remote, and flextime work options for staff.

Rationale

- Hybrid/remote learnings and successes since March 2022
  - Bowdoin staff overwhelmingly reported that, based on their experiences from March 2020 through mid-August 2021, they believe a hybrid work model will deliver benefits to the College without sacrificing the efficiency or effectiveness of their work—including managers and staff who were required to work on campus during that time.
  - Three-quarters of staff who worked remotely reported that their working location worked well and that they were able to maintain strong connections with colleagues and communicate effectively, and a further 24 percent reported that their working location worked somewhat well.
- Employee morale
  - Bowdoin staff have appreciated the College's work flexibility and have reported greater job satisfaction, better work/life balance, and higher productivity with flexible work arrangements.
- Employee retention and recruitment
  - Thirty-four percent of staff reported that they would look for work elsewhere if Bowdoin doesn't continue to offer remote, hybrid, or flextime work options. Based on the overwhelming number of employers offering hybrid, remote, and flextime work options, the work group believes that this will become a critical employee retention issue in the coming months and years.

- o The current challenges around housing availability and affordability in Brunswick and the surrounding area make hybrid/remote particularly appealing/helpful for staff recruitment.
  - o Anecdotally, the College's lack of a formal hybrid, remote, or flextime option/policy has impacted prospective job candidates from considering Bowdoin.
- Increase staff diversity
  - o The opportunity to broaden talent searches beyond candidates willing to relocate to Maine should make it less challenging to increase the diversity of candidate pools for open positions.
- Environmental benefits
  - o Commuting to the office for fewer days contributes to fewer cars on the road— meaning a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions and a reduction in fossil fuel consumption.

Specific recommendations

The College should formally endorse hybrid, remote, and flextime work options for all suitable job functions.

Survey responses made clear that the staff believes the College needs to adopt an institutional policy for allowing hybrid, remote, and flextime work arrangements rather than relying on the discretion of individual managers or departments.

Additionally, while the original scope of consideration for the remote work group was defined as hybrid work only, survey feedback and suggestions provided by the community about flexible work options were clear that remote and flextime should be included. The work group was unanimous that they would be remiss if they did not include recommendations for remote and flextime options in their report.

Suitability of specific roles for remote, hybrid, and flextime work options should be determined based on a College-wide, standard set of criteria (rubric) to ensure decisions are made equitably and without bias or favoritism and be incorporated into job descriptions.

To support the College's commitment to equity in determining the suitability for specific roles for hybrid, remote, and flextime work options, the work group recommends transparency about hybrid, remote, and flextime work options available and that a standard rubric be used across the College (i.e., a standard set of criteria for identifying if a job is suitable for a hybrid or remote work option). Factors to consider include:

- Can the responsibilities and job functions for the position be performed remotely without diminishing the quality of the work or disrupting the productivity of a division (this includes ensuring that there is sufficient in-person coverage in public or student-facing offices)?
- Can the position be effectively supervised remotely?
- Does the position have a minimal or flexible need for specialized materials or equipment that are only available at the College work location?
- Does the position have job functions that require significant in-person interaction, or can necessary interactions be scheduled for specific days?
- Can the confidentiality, privacy, and security of the work be maintained without compromise while working remotely?

In addition to a role being determined suitable for hybrid, remote, or flextime options, the individual staff member must demonstrate that they can meet the requirements of the job working in a hybrid, remote, or flextime arrangement.

The approvals required for hybrid, remote, and flextime work arrangements should be consistent across the College.

The following approvals are recommended for individual employees to adopt a hybrid, remote, or flextime working arrangement for a role that has been determined to be suitable:

- Hybrid: department head approval, direct manager approval
- Remote: senior officer approval, department head approval, direct manager approval, vice president for human resources consultation
- Flextime: senior officer approval, department head approval, direct manager approval

Manager expectations for employees working in hybrid, remote, or flextime arrangements (performance, on-campus time, work hours, etc.) must be clear, transparent, documented in the job description and in a work agreement, and reviewed annually.

All staff working in a hybrid, remote, or flextime arrangement must have documented agreements in place that outline the performance and workplace expectations, including topics such as:

- How many days the employee is expected to be on campus, and if it is a set or flexible schedule
- What hours the employee is expected to be working and available for meetings, calls, etc.
- A commitment to transparency about the specific days and hours an employee is working and where they are working—this could include a requirement that employees use a College-wide tool such as Teams to share that information
- Any additional times that employees may need to be on campus outside of the regular schedule or work hours
- Any equipment and tools necessary in a hybrid or remote work environment for an employee to successfully execute their job functions (broadband, laptop, etc.)
- A process and agreement for reimbursement of travel expenses related to trips to campus for fully remote employees
- Any implications related to workers' compensation, payroll taxes (state and local income, unemployment), state revenue and unemployment registrations, wage and hour compliance, leave requirements, benefits offerings, use of college equipment, insurance, business travel expenses, maintaining a safe environment, cybersecurity, and confidentiality, etc.

The College should create a new role(s) or group focused on supporting hybrid, remote, and flextime work operations, logistics, compliance, training, and College culture.

The work group recognizes that hybrid, remote, and flextime work arrangements add complexity to Bowdoin's workplace in many areas, and it will require additional resources and expertise to:

- Establish the specific criteria for determining whether jobs are suitable for hybrid, remote, or flextime work options;
- Establish a formal process for reviewing decisions about the suitability of individual jobs and the kind of flexibility offered for hybrid, remote, or flextime work options (e.g., number of days required to be on campus, workday hours);
- Develop recommendations and programming for onboarding new hybrid, remote, and flextime employees, including how much and what should be done on campus;
- Work with divisions and individual managers to document work agreements;
- Identify and socialize best practices for successful hybrid, remote, and flextime work;
- Consider state-by-state tax and employment law implications of employees' hybrid and/or remote work locations;
- Develop and offer robust manager training on how to successfully lead hybrid, remote, and flextime individuals and teams;
- Identify and offer professional development opportunities specifically for hybrid, remote, and flextime staff; and
- Develop and champion the new hybrid, remote, and flextime work culture and initiatives.

All work policies adopted by the College will need to be reviewed regularly and will continue to evolve based on additional learning and experiences and the needs of the College and employees.

Hybrid, remote, and flextime work arrangements are still new to the College, and the work group strongly recommends that the College create an open and transparent process to allow for regular review and updating of policies to ensure they are supporting the needs of the College

and having a positive impact on employee satisfaction, retention, equity, and support efforts to diversify our workforce.

- A task force consisting of representatives from BAS, SSAC, and students could be established to review hybrid, remote, and flextime work policies annually and recommend any changes needed to better support the guiding principles.
- In addition to annual reviews, the College should field an annual staff survey—with a set of supervisor-specific questions—to assess what is working and what isn't working with hybrid, remote, and flextime work arrangements.

THINGS NOT ADDRESSED

- What is the impact on office space needed and recommendations for dedicated space on campus vs. hoteling for staff not on campus full time and how to make decisions about office space equitably.
- Should the College mandate a common day each week or month that all employees are required to work on campus to allow for community-wide activities and events (e.g., picnics, celebrations).
- How can we assess the potential impact and implications of a reduced in-person workforce on the businesses and opportunities for economic development in Brunswick.
- How to manage specific circumstances that advantage remote employees or on-campus employees—such as weather emergencies, where remote employees are still expected to work but most on-campus employees receive a paid day off.
- What specific professional development and training programs are needed to support managers supervising hybrid, remote, and flextime staff.

APPENDIX

Consulted Resources

Reports and Policies from Institutions of Higher Education

Amherst College, Guidelines for Remote Work Arrangements

Bates College, Working Remotely

Boston University, Remote Work Guidelines

Brown University, Alternative Work Assignments Policy

Carleton College, FlexWork at Carleton

Colby College, Remote Work Request Form

Columbia University, Flexible Work Arrangements

Cornell University, Remote Work

Duke University, Remote Work, Managers

Georgetown University, Telework Policy

Harvard University, Flexwork at Harvard

Kenyon College, Remote Work Policy

University of Iowa, Future of Work Report

University of Michigan, Remote Work Options

University of Utah, Telecommuting Guidelines

Virginia Tech University, Flexible Work Options

Wellesley College, Future of Work Initiative

Williams College, Remote Work Policy

Reports and Newsletters from Consulting Groups

Microsoft: The New Future of Work

PwC: Future of Work

IBM: What Employees Expect in 2021

EAB: Untethering the Admin Workforce

Gartner: 7 Myths Standing Between You and the Hybrid Future of Work

McKinsey & Company: It's Time for Leaders to Get Real About Hybrid

Built In: Going Hybrid? How to Create an Effective Work-at-Home Policy

Focus Groups and Interviews

Interview with Maureen Lafferty, HR Director – Talent, LLBean, August 27, 2021

Interview with Melissa Hudson Howard '05, Senior Manager, Deloitte Consulting, July 6, 2021

Interview with Graham Buck, Applications Deployment/Integration Analyst, Bowdoin Information
        Technology, July 26, 2021

Interview with Sherrie Braxton, Senior Director for Digital Information, Bowdoin Information
        Technology, July 26, 2021

Interview with Chloe Qian, Research Analyst, Bowdoin Institutional Research, July 26, 2021

Student Focus Group, August 19, 2021

Articles

Castellanos, Sara. "Less Meeting, More Meditation; Finding the Right (Remote) Work-Life Balance Takes Work, CIOs Find." *Wall Street Journal* (Online), Dec 21, 2020. https://www.proquest.com/docview/2471410294?accountid=9681

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Mayer, Kathryn. "Requiring employees to return to the office? Get ready for them to quit." *HR Executive,* April 27, 2021. https://hrexecutive.com/requiring-employees-to-return-to-the-office-get-ready-for-them-to-quit/

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Pohle, Allison. "How to Improve Your Work-Life Balance." *Wall Street Journal* (Online)*,* Mar 31, 2021. https://www.proquest.com/docview/2507147327?accountid=9681.

Roberts, Laura Morgan, and Courtney L. McCluney. "Working from Home while Black." *Harvard Business Review,* June 17., 2020. https://hbr.org/2020/06/working-from-home-while-black

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