

10 June 2021

Dear Academic Affairs Colleagues,

We continue to prepare to repopulate campus for the fall. This planning comes with great optimism and enthusiasm that we will return to a degree of normalcy while maintaining health and safety standards. While we expect that most staff will be on campus most of the time, RIT also recognizes and supports the national and local move towards greater flexibility in work arrangements.

The President has asked each RIT divisional leader to evaluate and implement a staffing model that most effectively meets this overall goal as well as divisional objectives and needs. In developing such a staffing model within Academic Affairs, the deans and I, in collaboration with Human Resources, have developed a set of principles that will be used as we assess our staffing needs and the opportunities for flexible work.

Principles

- We are committed to providing a vibrant, high quality in-person campus experience that emphasizes our institutional values and supports our unique culture.
- We keep responsiveness to students at the core of all work arrangements.
- As a leading institution of higher education with a complex portfolio, we are also committed to maintaining responsiveness to all internal and external stakeholders.
- We are committed to a productive, collaborative, and cooperative work environment that is flexible and receptive to the professional and personal needs of staff.
- We acknowledge that not all jobs can be performed remotely due to role, function and variability by department and that flexible work arrangements may need to be adjusted periodically or temporarily given the needs of the university and the academic unit.
- We balance principles of equity and stakeholder needs in making flexible work decisions.
- We comply with health and safety protocols set by New York State, Monroe County Department of Health, and RIT as well as federal and state regulations including ADA and state employment laws.

Building a Staffing Plan

I have asked each Academic Affairs divisional leader to implement the following process in their units. In the colleges, GIS, and SOIS, this is the dean. In the central Academic Affairs units, it is the assistant/associate vice presidents, assistant/associate provosts, vice provost, or director. This process is focused on staff roles only. These plans will be

predicated on the overarching expectation that a consistent level of in-office staffing is required. This means every department/office is open each day during business hours and has the appropriate staff to meet the needs of stakeholders requesting in person services, including walk-ins. Importantly, 100% presence each day does not always equal 100% of staff in the office each day, but this is dependent on the function.

The wide-spread application of flexible work is a new experiment for Academic Affairs. Because of this, it is difficult to predict what the needs of our stakeholders will be. For this reason, we are starting with a conservative approach. **For most eligible positions, this will likely mean a maximum of one day working from home per week during the fall semester.** Flexible work arrangements in place pre-COVID can continue, if deemed appropriate.

In arriving at the final plan, the leadership of each academic or administrative unit will work with supervisors to review their permanent staff positions and identify those that will be eligible for remote work in the fall semester. Employees in positions eligible for remote work this fall will be notified and have the opportunity to apply by completing RIT's [flexible work arrangements](#) application form. Completion of an application does not guarantee approval. RIT's process requires that the department head/manager evaluate the employee's position, her/his/their potential to work independently, as well as other performance factors. The supervisor will make a recommendation to the dean (or dean equivalent) who makes the final decision. For administrative units within Academic Affairs, the directors will make recommendations to their supervisors.

Deans and dean equivalents as well as administrative unit directors are charged with responsibility for ensuring equity in flexible work decisions across their unit. Importantly however, equity does not mean the same decision for every occupant of a given job title. Individual work settings, records of past performance, and other factors can produce justifiable differences in flexible work decisions. Some units may also determine flexible work arrangements are not appropriate.

I have asked that this process be completed by July 19, 2021, with implementation to begin as early as August 2, 2021.

It should be noted that resources for a home office will be provided only in those cases where a job is defined as predominately remote in nature. Employees who make a request for flexible work arrangements will be expected to provide the necessary home office.

We will continue to assess this approach and its effectiveness and solicit input from students, faculty, and staff. This feedback and assessment will guide changes moving forward.

Additional guidance on other campus repopulation and staffing questions will be provided in the near future.

Thank you for your help and understanding as we enter into this planning stage. Your leadership, director, or supervisor will be in touch with you about the specific next steps.

Sincerely,

Ellen Granberg, Ph.D.
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs