

MEMORANDUM

To: Price Faculty and Staff
From: Dana P. Goldman, Dean
Date: July 19, 2021
Subject: Price School Return to Work Policies, Fall Semester

This memo clarifies guidelines and next steps for the Price School as we resume in-person campus operations. Price return to work policies will be evaluated and refined over the course of the fall semester. Our approach has been developed with guidance from USC, HR, and the Office of the Provost, and takes into account input from faculty and staff across the School.

Guiding Principles

The Provost articulated a set of priorities in June to guide [USC's workforce planning](#). These include: maintaining the excellence of USC's core mission of education, research, and service; ensuring the health and safety of our community; and complying with applicable laws and regulations. The Provost also recognized that "USC is a large and complex organization, with both extensive in-person operations and online offerings."

Price is a microcosm of that complexity. We conduct a broad array of residential and online programs, executive education, and research activities. We need a flexible policy that balances employee satisfaction and productivity, financial costs and savings, and environmental sustainability. We kept the following principles in mind as we developed our fall guidelines:

- **Focus:** We must honor the meaningful residential work of the University and the students and community members who entrust us with their education, professional development, and research.
- **Effectiveness:** Remote work can be both productive and satisfying if done well.
- **Flexibility:** Not all positions demand — or allow for — the same degree of remote work. Supervisors need discretion in determining remote agreements.
- **Fairness:** People in similar roles across similar units should face similar policies.
- **Clarity:** Supervisors should be very clear about expectations in terms of remote work communication and performance. Similar clarity holds for the School as a whole.



- **Consistency:** Work arrangements established prior to the pandemic may continue, and remote work agreements that have been approved by the Dean’s office may continue through their end date.
- **Continuous Improvement:** The Fall semester will serve as the pilot period. We will monitor and adjust our plans as public health circumstances dictate and to ensure we are meeting our obligations to the University and our constituencies. We will refine policies as warranted, perhaps on relatively short notice.

Plan for Fall Semester

Given USC priorities and our guiding principles, we have developed the following policy and submitted it to the Office of the Provost. Our policy has also been informed by 2 School-wide surveys and polling of all supervisors and teams in June. Results from these surveys will be shared at the upcoming [Town Hall](#).

Most staff will be required to phase back in to on-site work beginning in August, building up to a minimum of 3 days a week on-site by September. Examples of exceptions include:

- Staff with remote work agreements pre-dating the pandemic
- Staff hired during the pandemic with the explicit offer of ongoing remote work
- Research center staff with established agreements

Phased Approach: On August 9, staff should begin to return to their on-campus, pre-pandemic duties starting 1 or more days a week, in consultation with their supervisors. Staff may be required to come in more than 1 day a week, but should be given at least 2 weeks’ notice. By September 7, we expect that the majority of faculty and staff will be back on campus for a minimum of 3 days a week.

On-Site Requirements: Most staff will be required to work a minimum of 3 days a week on-site following the phase-in period. Price Senior Leadership and Department Chairs are all subject to this policy.

Walk-In Offices: All walk-in offices must be open and operational and have adequate in-person staffing during regular business hours. Supervisors and department heads are charged with ensuring compliance with this policy.

In-Person Activities: Based on the needs of the particular team or office, supervisors may ask staff to work on-site more than 3 days a week. Supervisors may require in-person attendance at meetings with a reasonable business purpose. Supervisors also have the discretion to require staff to work beyond the minimums stated in this policy, and may identify dates during which all team members should be on-site. Whenever possible, faculty should attend meetings in-person.

Scheduling: Departments and teams should develop schedules to ensure the appropriate staffing on-site in accordance with these policies. Each staff member will have an individualized schedule that establishes minimum expectations for time on-site. Staff should avoid structuring their hours at home in ways that will prevent them from coming to campus when needed. The minimums apply to each week, and days worked on campus may not be “banked.” It is the supervisor’s job to monitor employee activity and ensure that remote work policies and on-site requirements are being followed in accordance with guidelines.

Remote Work Agreements: Existing remote work agreements will be honored through their expiration date. As much as possible while also honoring equity concerns, supervisors retain discretion over staffing needs and work agreements. However, all agreements are subject to review by the Dean’s Office.

Space Planning: Given the likelihood of changing space needs, our goal is to increase the availability and quality of hoteling space and to establish a simple reservation system. Faculty and staff who work remotely in accordance with the above policies may be required to share or give up office space in the future. There will be no significant changes to office assignments in the fall.

Technology: We will not make investments in personal technology until the pilot period is completed. Price IT and the Office of Online Education and Digital Media will be available to offer technology support and advice as teams manage a hybrid approach.

Safety: Safety requirements as communicated by the CDC, LA County Health Department, USC and its Chief Health Officer must be adhered to all at times.

Health Accommodations: Faculty and staff requests for accommodations due to health conditions should go to Gail Uyeda who will coordinate with the Office of Institutional Accessibility and ADA Compliance.

Other Accommodations: Requests for long-term remote work accommodations based on personal reasons such as relocations or dependent care will not be considered. However, we encourage supervisors to offer flexibility within reason as we return to on-site work. To the extent that particular K-12 schools may remain remote, we will try to accommodate parental childcare needs.

Teaching Requests: Faculty requests to teach hybrid or online classes must show a clear pedagogical rationale, and should go first to the respective department chair for review. Requests for medical accommodations should go through Gail Uyeda.

Flexibility: Some positions and teams require more on-site presence. At the same time, we must be fair and avoid situations where there are notable differences in expectations across our staff. We are attentive to other return to work policies at USC, although some differences may exist

given the variety of School needs across the university. Flexible work arrangements which were allowed prior to the pandemic may be allowed to continue in consultation with HR.

Evaluation: The Price Workforce Planning Committee will help evaluate the effectiveness of our return to work over the fall semester and advise the dean on long-term remote work policies, structures, and systems. The Committee will assess the success of these policies and any unanticipated consequences which may require readjustment. All policies are subject to review, revision, and change based on evolving USC and HR guidelines, School and community needs, and evaluation of new data. The dean will review any requests for exemptions from these policies with Price HR and the Associate Dean for Administration, drawing on other leadership as needed.