

Dear UT Community,



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First, thank you for helping the university close on another successful semester. I hope you enjoyed some well-earned rest during the Memorial Day weekend! I'm writing to share an update on the fall 2021 semester, specifically in regard to flexible work arrangements (FWA.)

In-person collaboration between faculty, students and staff has traditionally been a major part of what makes the Forty Acres such a special place. The pandemic disrupted our established rhythms and necessitated a pivot to hybrid learning and remote work. It wasn't ideal — but not only did we make it work, we discovered some advantages. Our goal with FWA is to recapture the best things about our traditional setup as of fall 2019 and combine them with what we've learned during the past few semesters. Although AY21-22 will be a pilot year for more widespread FWA, it is my hope that long term, they can help us attract and retain even more talented staff members — a critical component of our broader push for even higher levels of excellence in teaching and research.

How will FWA work in AY21-22? Your supervisors and HR reps will have more detailed information throughout the summer, and we'll be sharing further updates via internal communications, but here's a summary:

- During May, a cross-campus leadership task force developed campus-wide

guidelines that have now been shared with college, school and unit (CSU) leadership.

- In June, CSUs will develop their own specific plans based on these guidelines.
- In July, units will determine whether and how they might implement FWA following their CSU's guidelines.
- In August, our “near normal” will be in full swing.

The rollout of FWA coincides with broad availability of vaccines, updated masking guidance (effective since May 18) and our phased return to full density, which is already in process across some CSUs. Just as we have during the past year and a half, we'll be learning as we go and making adjustments as necessary. I encourage staff members to discuss their questions and concerns with their supervisors so that together, we can chart the best path forward.

Ultimately, I know we'll meet the challenges, opportunities and excitement of a near-normal AY21-22 with the same professionalism, energy and compassion with which we tackled the pandemic at its peak. And on a personal level, I'm really looking forward to seeing more of you in person, rather than on screens!

Hook 'em!



Jay Hartzell

President



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