

Faculty access to offices: Encouragement of expanded local exceptions

Goal: To increase faculty access to individual offices for research and teaching preparation for those faculty *with the greatest need* for whom access will allow necessary work to be done especially when 100% remote work is limiting progress toward goals.

This process and guidance applies to faculty only at this time due to concerns that research and teaching goals are being significantly hindered by extended remote work and the individual nature of much of this work. We recognize staff are also managing challenges. Given their diverse roles, staff should continue working in the manner deemed appropriate with their supervisors and units.

Assumptions - Rationale:

- Work that can be done at home must continue to be done at home. However, what can be done remotely for 2 months is not always sustainable and possible for 6-12 months remotely.
- Some faculty need increased access to offices to meaningfully proceed with their research and or scholarship for the foreseeable future as well as some enhanced preparation for teaching.

Assumptions - Limitations:

- As a primary control measure against COVID-19, we must continue operating under reduced density for several more months at a minimum. It is therefore essential that increased access to faculty office space is coordinated at the unit (dean/department) level.
- We must accommodate this need for some increased access without providing a blanket approval of all faculty to be in their offices, or for individual faculty to have access to their office all the time.
- This must be accomplished without increasing density substantially, and in a manner that follows other COVID-19 precautions.
- This process applies to *individual faculty*. At this time, this process is not for support staff for faculty, project staff or teams of researchers. Thus, faculty can request increased access to their office for themselves only to do work toward teaching and research but can not create work that would increase the need for others to be in the office.
- At no time should shared offices be occupied by more than one faculty member.
- Access to offices for faculty will require a (brief) written justification including approximate time estimates per week for the activity, and local unit leadership approval. This process is vital to continue to manage density and address multiple requests but should be managed to mitigate administrative burden.
- High priority for faculty office use should go to junior faculty (across research and pre-tenure tracks) and those with children or home caregiving needs.
- Use of space should be within buildings and areas that are already in use as to not increase a need for Custodial services, increase need for staff to be on site, or alter existing building fan and HVAC settings.

- As with all guidelines during COVID-19, such access and changes will be assessed over the subsequent weeks and may be reversed if community, building or campus transmission rates increase. Additionally, given the changing legal and regulatory landscape regarding stay-at-home orders, changes to this process may be necessitated by developments in those areas.

Examples of encouraged exceptions to the current state. Schools, colleges, and units should develop an approval process at the local level for granting such requests.

1. A junior faculty member with caregiving responsibilities at home and a paper, book, or grant deadline who requests access to their office a few days a week for a few months to meet their deadline in a conducive environment to clear thinking and sustained access to their research or scholarship materials.
2. Faculty who have offices near their wet labs that already are approved and within the allowed 60% density of the lab and their access will improve supervision and monitoring of the lab that cannot be done remotely.

Examples of what this proposed process is not intended to do.

1. This is intended for **individual faculty** members. Not teams of faculty, research teams, project staff, and should not be seen as justification for requests for support staff to return to offices to support the faculty occasional time in office.
2. This is not intended to address the need for community building among research teams and faculty. Although this is very important, this exception process is meant to manage individual faculty members' needs. While community building remains an important priority, density restrictions and other factors limit flexibility for this purpose.
3. Although we recognize it is frustrating that data science, policy scholarship and other dry laboratory research teams remain remote, this is **not** intended to bring back those teams and open those labs. These teams of researchers are being thoughtfully considered in terms of best practice and guidance, and will be addressed in the future.

Guidance for Schools, Colleges, and Units

- Units should take care to not provide blanket access to all faculty that will cause floors of offices to be open and increase density. Local discretion is encouraged. Instead, some units have suggested (for example) that they know there are 10 faculty in a department or school that are struggling substantially with no office access and that a few days or afternoons a week would provide an outlet and relief from the pressures at hand with progress toward their needed goals.
- Units should use discretion to *Prioritize* the occasional or limited need for office access.
- Consideration should be given to not opening buildings or wings that were not currently open.
- Units should monitor the implementation of office access to ensure it does not result in crowded common areas, elevators, and floors, noting that we are entering winter and virus transmission may rise. This can be done through walk throughs, visual observations, and/or aggregate building access data

- Any faculty approved to return must complete EHS training and daily ResponsiBlue tracking.
- Units should be able to provide a list of approvals, if requested, to the Office of the Vice President for Research and/or Provost's Office.