

Guiding Principles and Remote Work Policy for the Division of Undergraduate Education (UE)

Historical Context:

On March 13, 2020, the campus, as well as the rest of the world, faced an unprecedented public health crisis with the emergence of the Covid-19 virus that ultimately evolved into a worldwide pandemic. At that time, staff, faculty members, and students impressively underwent a “pivot” to remote work to fulfill each unit’s mission while the effects of the virus subsided. Initially, it was hoped that the campus would be able to return to normal operations by Fall 2020. However, the recurrent appearance of Covid-19 variants made this impossible. It was not until Spring 2022 when it was deemed safe to partially come back to campus with a full return of most operations occurring in Fall 2022. During this challenging time, UE staff, in collaboration with their supervisors, continued to work remotely or through a hybrid arrangement until appropriate final work arrangements could be made. Amid these challenges, students have struggled to adjust. Many students report an increase of equity issues due to the loss of a supportive community, among many other challenges. Through consultation with numerous individuals, partner organizations, and UE senior leadership, we believe that our core mission will be best achieved through face-to-face interactions with each other, our students, and our partner organizations across campus. In order to facilitate a cohesive cohort of staff and administrators, focused on our core values and goals, we believe we need to establish a uniform and equitable standard for work expectations across the UE division. This plan, with full endorsement of the UE executive leadership (the VPDUE and the senior leads in Student Success, UWP, Honors, XCITE, and FAST), will put UE in alignment with several other units on campus such as Student Affairs, International Affairs, Health, Well-being, and Safety (HWS), and the School of Medicine. We look forward to this next chapter in UE history.

Undergraduate Education (UE) Mission:

At its core, the Division of Undergraduate Education at UCR is committed to collaboration, opportunity-building, equity, and student success. In addition to our core mission, we are the only Division on campus that has a UCOP-driven outcome metric—boost UCR graduation rates. We, as a Division, have a significant responsibility to the campus and our students, staff, and faculty, to work toward our stated goals.

In addition to boosting student graduation rates at UCR, UE is also committed to reducing equity gaps, increasing participation in high-impact practices, strengthening students’ sense of belonging, and increasing student satisfaction. While the formula to meet our goals requires significant collaboration with our various University partners, it is vital that UE remains mindful of our student success goals as we consider the future of employee engagement. Based on UE’s existing identity, role on campus, and strategic 2030 goals, our four principles are:

- Mission-driven
- Goal-oriented
- Equity-focused
- Student success

It is within this context that the guidelines outlined in this document determine the mode of our engagement with students, faculty, and one another, especially as we operate in a post-pandemic context. The ultimate purpose is to ensure that UE delivers the highest quality of service possible. In addition to UE’s guiding principles, other considerations need to be kept in mind. These considerations include:

- 1) **Community:** Employee engagement is rooted in a desire to build community and maximize opportunities for UE staff, faculty, and leadership, all in the service of meeting our goals, and ultimately, serving UCR students. We do our best work when we prioritize the people we serve which necessitates being present on campus and in-person, ready to serve.
- 2) **Campus Context:** The public health emergency was officially declared over on May 11, 2023. Even though the pandemic is officially “over,” the effects of the pandemic will continue to persist into the future. This means that the students we serve are likely to depend on us to provide the support and opportunities needed to thrive on campus. In addition, a vast majority of students and faculty are here on campus therefore it is vital that UE meets our students, faculty, and one another where we are—in person—and in our offices, classrooms, and hallways. If employees have existing accommodations, those will be honored in accordance with campus policy.
- 3) **Shared Commitment, Shared Expectations:** This document aims to communicate clear expectations to all UE employees. Supervisors in the respective UE areas will weigh individual circumstances that are deemed reasonable, in alignment with campus policy, and based on the employee’s job responsibilities and unit goals. We all want to deliver the highest quality of services possible, and we do this through our in-person commitment to one another, our students, and the faculty.
- 4) **Flexibility:** We must all remain flexible. A high degree of flexibility was exercised during the height of the pandemic, and rightfully so. Now that students and faculty are back in person, it is vital that we prioritize our in-person service to the campus. While flexibility remains a priority, the ways in which we individually and collectively carry out our mission to the campus should always remain a top priority.
- 5) **Timing:** Keep the time of the year in mind. You’re in-person presence may be required for student- and faculty-facing events along with UE business-related meetings/events. Our campus mission and unit goals should drive these decisions and you are encouraged to plan ahead to fully participate in unit and campus activities as needed.
- 6) **People-centered:** Your work arrangement should be based on your job responsibilities and communities you serve at UCR. Remain mindful of your service to students, other staff, and if you are in a leadership role.

Undergraduate Education (UE) Remote Work Expectations

Effective, Thursday, September 7, 2023, all Undergraduate Education (UE) employees will be eligible for a maximum of two (2) remote workdays per month. The following guidelines apply:

1. If an employee is unable to work remotely on their scheduled remote days due to Undergraduate Education (UE) business operational needs or scheduled personal time off, those prescheduled remote days cannot be combined at the end of the month if unused as originally planned (if applicable). In addition, unused monthly allotted remote workdays will not carry over to the following month.
2. An employee must consult with their direct supervisor, in advance, to schedule their two (2) monthly allotted remote workdays. Remote workdays are to be scheduled solely based on the operational needs of the unit.
3. The current work arrangements (via the telecommuting agreements) will continue through September 6, 2023. If the current arrangement is not working to keep up with the operational needs of the units, supervisors will work with employees in their respective areas to make the necessary adjustments.