

USA Board endorses statement of support for flexible work options and intends to bargain flexible work assignments!

After reading the Chancellor's reopening email, the USA Board developed a statement of formal support for bargaining fair, humane, and flexible work options for staff, including flexible locations and schedules, given our experiences over the past year. Here is our statement:

The USA Board endorses the idea that the University and the Union shall work together to make flexible work options available to employees without prejudice. This includes options beyond traditional work locations and schedules. This flexibility must meet the needs of the employee's business unit and the employee.

The USA Board commits to negotiating appropriate contract language and working in concert with other campus unions to achieve an appropriate, humane flexible work policy. Policy proposals shall take into account the extensive experience of remote work our unit members have gained during the pandemic and recognizes the high degree of skill and responsibility our members have displayed during the past year of non-traditional work.

Additional information:

USA's current language on flexible work (Article 8, section D):

"Upon request of a bargaining unit member, the supervisor may grant, for a specific period of time, a flexible personal work schedule, so long as the bargaining unit member can demonstrate that the proposed schedule will not interfere with or detract from the delivery of services provided or the day-to-day operation of the department. Request for a flexible work schedule shall not be unreasonably denied."

Note: The Chancellor's Fall 2021 Operation Plan message stated "...employees will be considered on-site, and only hybrid or remote if approved by a unit's vice chancellor..." that is NOT what our contract states! Our contract clearly states that the supervisor has that authority.

Why we need flexible work options:

- Flexible/hybrid work options are the "new normal" for many occupations
 - Other universities are exploring the shift for staff right now
- Is UMass serious about mitigating our carbon impact?
 - PSU/USA commutes = over 5,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year
- Disability access
 - Visual/audio aids, communication options, transportation access
- Reduce childcare costs, increase gender equity
 - More than half of US families spend over \$10,000 on childcare a year
 - Mothers bear the brunt of child care issues impacting careers

- Less exposure to illness for everyone
- Equity between staff

Interim & Main Table Bargaining:

USA and PSU will be advocating for expanded contract language around flexible and remote work not only at the campus level but also within the entire UMass system, including the President's Office, which already has approved language around flexible and remote schedules.

Our intentions are to equalize this benefit across all units by putting new language on the table in our main bargaining sessions for our new contracts. We are working together as we are stronger together. This affects all of us.

On a side note: The bargaining team is waiting on dates from the administration to enter bargaining.

In Solidarity,
USA Board