

**University of South Carolina
Return to the Workplace Plan
March 10, 2021**

Pursuant to Governor Henry McMaster's Executive Order No. 2021-12, **the University of South Carolina has developed the following phased-in plan for expeditiously returning our staff employees to the workplace fulltime.** This plan encompasses all of the university's institutions and campuses, and it outlines the dates the various discreet employee populations will be expected to return to the workplace. Our goal is to return employees as expeditiously as possible and maintain the highest standards of academic and research excellence while continuing to be mindful of our obligation to provide a safe work environment as well as the unique challenges presented to certain employee populations by COVID-19.

During the pandemic, our focus has been to continue to operate the university efficiently to support the highest quality of educational and research **opportunities and student success** while mitigating the risks of exposure by our workforce to COVID-19 consistent with CDC and DHEC guidance. By way of background, approximately one-third of the university's workforce population of faculty and staff are in high-risk categories for COVID-19. The percentage of the university's workforce at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 increases to approximately 40% when employees over age 65 are included. Because of our efforts to allow workplace flexibility for faculty and staff in order to mitigate risks associated with the pandemic, just over 43% were working remotely, as of March 9, 2021.

The university proposes the following return-to-work plan for the consideration of the South Carolina Department of Administration:

Faculty are currently providing academic instruction in various modalities, including on-line and in-person classes. This will not change for the remainder of the Spring semester.

The university has temporary remote work agreements in place for all staff who are working remotely.

- **Effective the week of March 15, 2021**, we will require supervisors and staff employees who are assigned workspaces with private offices, or workspaces in which safety equipment such as sneeze guards/plexiglass has been installed for open spaces and in which 6 feet of spacing between employees can be maintained, to return to the workplace unless they fall into other categories as outlined below. This will allow these employees to be tested before returning to the workplace as required by the university. We estimate that 65% of our staff will be working on campus as of the end week.

- **For workplace locations that are not currently suitable for safe, in-person work** – for example, assigned workspaces in which safety equipment such as sneeze guards/plexiglass for open spaces and 6 feet of spacing between employees is not currently available – we require adequate time to assess these spaces based on current health conditions and in accordance with CDC and OSHA guidelines, and to order and install any necessary equipment and safeguards. Staff will be returned as soon as these spaces can be safely occupied with a target date of no later than April 5, 2021. On that date, we estimate that 70% of our staff will be working on campus with this addition.
- **Employees who are working remotely because of childcare responsibilities will be afforded time to make alternative arrangements.** Employees with pre-school or school age children whose daycare or school is not operating on a full-time schedule will be required to report to campus no later than April 5, 2021. On that date, we estimate that 75% to 80% of our staff will be working on campus.
- **For staff with health conditions which make them high risk for contracting COVID-19,** we will require these employees to request an accommodation, with appropriate supporting documentation, to remain working remotely. Each request will be evaluated separately to determine if the employee's request to continue to work remotely is warranted. We have set April 17, 2021, as our target date to return these employees to the workplace, at which time we estimate that 98% of our staff will be working on campus. We plan to grant extensions on an individual basis should a staff member need additional time to mitigate the risk of returning without a vaccine.

Employees who were approved to telecommute prior to February 19, 2020, pursuant to University Human Resources Policy HR 1.22 (“Telecommuting”) will be allowed to continue in that status. Unrelated to COVID-19, we further intend to utilize telecommuting, where appropriate and consistent with policy, as a cost and space saving strategy and a tool to assist with talent acquisition.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide the university's return-to-work plan to the State Division of Human Resources for review and approval. We are available if you have questions or need additional information.