

From Vice President of Human Resources Bryan Garey: Workforce planning for summer and fall

It's hard to believe that spring semester has just ended. True to form, the Hokie Nation banded together to keep our academic and research missions going strong during the 2020-21 academic year, resulting in the graduation of more than 6,000 students during spring commencement.

We should be exceedingly proud of the roles we have all played toward Virginia Tech's success, despite circumstances that – at times – were really difficult, and I thank you. From receiving vaccinations to participating in testing to serving and supporting our students and each other, this year has certainly been unlike any other.

Just ahead is the start of a new academic year and a fall semester where our goal is to provide students an in-person experience. In support of that goal, we must adapt to ensure that all operations and support services are aligned consistent with our plans. With this planning in mind, we understand that employees are looking for guidance on what work looks like – for the individual, the team, and the university – this summer and fall.

Human Resources is working with leaders across campus to understand each college and department workforce plan as well as listen to the concerns employees and managers have and what support HR can provide. We are also piloting some "Future of Work" options that will help determine what flexible scheduling and remote options might work here at Virginia Tech long term. In the meantime, summer is the time to prepare for fall.

There is no "one-size-fits-all" workforce approach given the diversity of roles at Virginia Tech. Following are some recommendations to help prepare for fall:

For academic and research faculty and graduate assistants, working with your supervisors and leadership in your college or business unit, your unique roles may give you some inherent flexibility in how and where you work as you use the summer to transition to an in-person fall semester, welcoming students back to the campus and the classroom.

For staff, A/P faculty, and wage employees who have been working on-campus, thank you again for the diligent in-person service you have provided throughout the pandemic. Those who have been working on-site will continue to do so and, as fall approaches, will be joined by others who will be

planning for the return of students to campus. For staff, A/P faculty, and wage employees who have been working remotely, summer provides transition time to migrate back to on-site work – at some level and based on the needs of your team. For those who have been working 100 percent remotely, this shift will be the biggest for you. It is important that managers and employees begin working together now to discuss work options based on what the operational needs of the college or business unit will be in the fall. We recommend supervisors consider hybrid options as colleges and units assess the best work plans for the longer term.

Flexible scheduling remains an option that employees can explore with their managers and HR partners. It is important to remember that the decision to request or approve a flexible schedule be grounded in the nature of the role and the operational needs of the team. We will offer in-person support services to our students this fall, which means we will need employees on-site to provide those services.

Our commitment to exploring and experimenting with flexible work options is strong, with the understanding that these work models must and will support and complement in-person academic programs. There is balance that can be achieved that will give employees the flexibility they need while providing robust support for the university, as long as we all recognize that flexible work arrangements are fluid and must be regularly assessed and adapted to business needs.

While approval of flexible or hybrid schedules lies with supervisors and leadership for that college or business unit, the two-way conversations between employees and supervisors is an important part of creating a flexible work environment.

What may the future of work look like? It will likely be one of great flexibility that embraces in-person experiences that enrich and expand us while leveraging opportunities for hybrid and remote work, allowing for higher levels of productivity and greater levels of employee engagement.

We are optimistic about this future just as we still have some uncertainty to navigate. Virginia Tech monitors daily for shifts and changes from the CDC and federal and state governments, such as mask wearing guidance for fully vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals. We will communicate relevant information to you as it becomes available. While we are optimistic with our decline in COVID-19 cases and we are encouraged that people are getting vaccinated, we need to realize that it is up to all of

us to continue to keep our community safe for the return to normal activities.

Together, with grace, flexibility, and understanding, we are emerging stronger than before the pandemic to support our students and each other in the spirit of our motto, *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve).

Thank you and stay well,

Bryan Garey,
Vice President for Human Resources

Manage expectations for masks and face coverings in gatherings with these guidelines

In accordance with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Commonwealth of Virginia, fully vaccinated individuals on Virginia Tech campuses are not required to wear masks in most indoor settings, except on public transit, in health care facilities, and in congregate settings. A congregate setting is an environment where a number of people reside, meet, or gather in close proximity for a period of time. Examples of congregate settings include schools and workplaces.

Exceptions and special circumstances can be considered. To make a request or to ask questions, please contact us at askvt@vt.edu. Employees who need ADA accommodations due to an impairment or for medical reasons should contact adaaccess@vt.edu.

Non-vaccinated individuals should continue to wear face coverings in all settings and also make arrangements to get a vaccination. Vaccinations will help keep you from getting sick from COVID-19 and will help lower the health risks for those around you. For Blacksburg and the New River Valley, vaccinations are available through the New River Health District and local pharmacies. In other Virginia locations, vaccinations are available through your local health district and pharmacies.

Virginia Tech is following the governor's guidelines which, at this point, do not mandate the vaccine. Rather, the university thanks those who have been vaccinated and plans to provide further information for those who are still considering the vaccine.

As more and more people are vaccinated, and as guidance evolves in response, we can increasingly expect to see situations in public where some people are wearing masks and some are not. In true Hokie Spirit, we will respect these differences, acknowledging that we won't know the circumstances behind each person's decision. A masked person who is fully vaccinated might be cautious in a group setting and an unmasked person might be fully vaccinated and comfortable in public without a face covering.

Our Principles of Community and our Community Wellness Commitment rely on our individual commitment to helping our community thrive.

In the workplace it is appropriate to ask IF others have been vaccinated. It is inappropriate to ask WHY someone has chosen not to be vaccinated.

Health care providers, hospitals, and health insurers are unable to share information about an individual's vaccination status due to HIPAA privacy protections. However, individuals may share their personal information with anyone who asks. HIPAA and FERPA do not apply to information provided by individuals about themselves.

For a list of questions you may ask, visit <https://vtnews.vt.edu/notices/unirel-vaccination-faq-may1821.html>:

If current trends continue, we anticipate a full return to campus for students and information on testing and vaccination will be available in the coming weeks for the fall semester.

Faculty and staff can discuss any concerns with their manager or HR director. The HR Service Center (540-231-9331) can answer general questions and/or direct you to additional resources such as Employee Relations and Hokie Wellness.

More information will be made available through the Daily Email and online. With continued vigilance, the university will continue to move closer to the end of the pandemic and a full Virginia Tech experience on our campus and across the region.

Virginia Tech to recognize Juneteenth; paid holiday to be observed on June 18

The 2021 General Assembly established Juneteenth as a holiday for state employees (§2.2-3300, Code of Virginia, as amended). This year, the state will observe Juneteenth on Friday, June 18, 2021 because the holiday falls on a Saturday. The General Assembly's action applies to classified staff and Virginia Tech's university staff.

On March 17, President Tim Sands announced in Presidential Policy Memorandum No. 311b (<https://policies.vt.edu/assets/PPM%20311b.pdf>) that the university will be closed on June 18, 2021 and classes will be canceled in observance of Juneteenth. This will be a paid holiday for all eligible faculty and staff.

Virginia Tech joins the Commonwealth of Virginia in recognizing the significance of June 19, 1865, the day the last enslaved Americans learned that they had been freed by the Emancipation Proclamation, which had been signed more than two years earlier.

Specific information related to leave reporting will be available in the monthly notice from the Leave Team for the impacted period. For additional questions, please contact your department's HR representative or the HR Service Center at hrrservicecenter@vt.edu or 540-231-9331.