

Quarterly Review of Work-Life Policy and Practice

Winter 2022

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AUTHOR, CONSULTANT

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From the Board

Happy New Year! As we look at the road ahead for 2022, we see that the path before us is not entirely clear. The pandemic continues to alter our assumptions about the way things should be and challenges us to re-examine our work and the support that we provide. However, throughout all of the uncertainty, one thing that has remained a constant has been our CUWFA community. Our members have consistently and generously shared new ideas, experiences, and best practices to help strengthen all of the work that we do.

The CUWFA Board and Working Groups are also actively working to develop and enhance CUWFA member experiences, create opportunities for connection and education,

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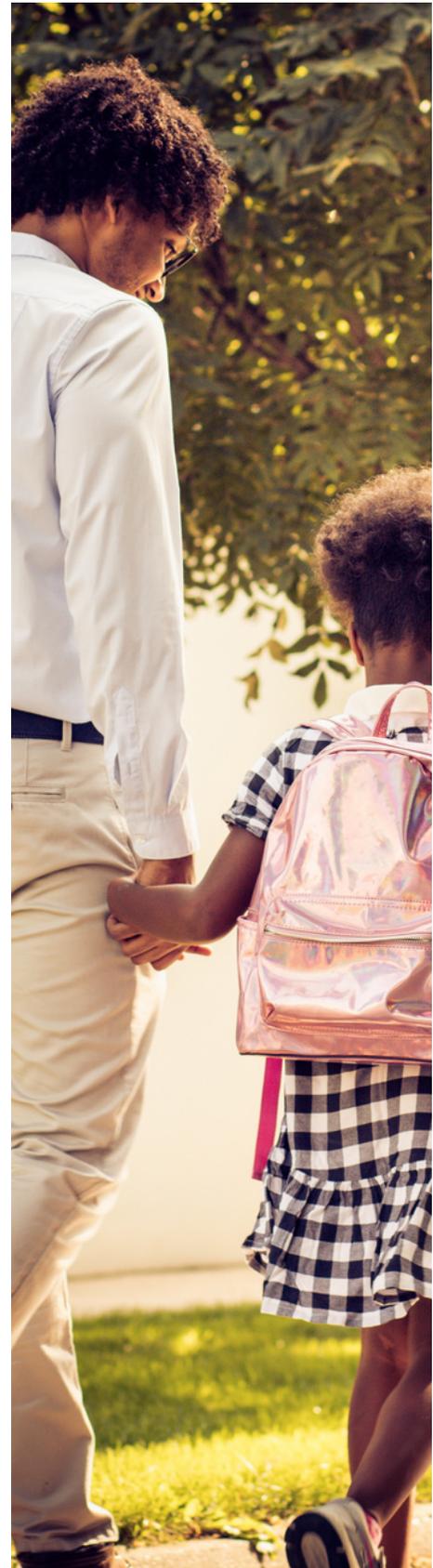
Message from the Board

and expand the membership base. In the coming months we are looking forward to offering opportunities for work/life mentorship, deep discussions of our Quarterly Review, and more.

Though we will not be hosting our own in-person conference this year, we are very excited to share with you a wonderful opportunity to attend the upcoming [Work and Family Researchers Network conference](#) this June in NYC. WFRN has generously offered CUWFA members a deeply discounted rate of \$195 for the event. The registration deadline is March 1, 2022. [Click here for more information and to register.](#) CUWFA will organize a small gathering for any members who attend. Wishing you all of the best in 2022.

Sincerely,

The CUWFA Board



The Whole Person Workplace

An Interview with [Scott Behson](#)
Professor of Management
Silberman Global Faculty Fellow,
Management and Entrepreneurship
Silberman College of Business
Fairleigh Dickinson University



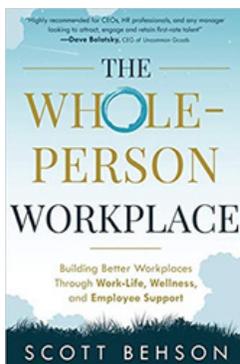
What is a Whole-Person Workplace?

Employers can value their employees in different ways. Bad employers only value them as a part of the machine. Many employers view employees as valuable assets, which is good, but that's still investing in people only to the extent that we get a return on the investment. I propose that the best employers value their employees as whole people, which means they recognize, appreciate, and try to help employees with their challenges, responsibilities, priorities and passions outside of work.

If we can do that, it opens up a whole host of ways that we can support our employees ranging from small accommodations, changing meeting times, just listening to employees, and making short term informal decisions to, larger efforts like building world class wellness programs, and everything in between.

People are a physical body, you need to make sure people are physically safe, psychologically feel safe - particularly those who work with the bodies. Next, people's minds and hearts, the things that are important to them, their professional development, their personal development, the caretaking that they do, and their other priorities in life need to be recognized.

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“We have to recognize and get the whole person to the door, get their hands and their backs and their minds and their hearts and that they’re all at different places in their life”

Scott addressed that he started the book pre-pandemic and he had to toss that and start over because the pandemic changed things about the way we view work, the way we engage in work, and our relationship with work:

We recognized that the pre-pandemic assumption that—work is work, and the rest of your life you take care of on your own time—is a fiction. We learned we need to recognize how work and life affect each other and if someone is really struggling, say with inconsistent childcare, how much can they really concentrate or be present at work when they have challenges like these hanging over their heads? The pandemic makes it really clear that struggles at life affect work, and struggles at work can affect life.

Can you discuss the concept of identity and how it fits in the whole person workplace? What are steps we can take to acknowledge identity in employees?

Right, so the other side of the whole person workplace is that people need to be valued and respected for all of who they are and everyone needs to be welcomed and feel included in the workplace and everyone needs to be put in a situation where they can do their best work. The

“Valuing someone as a whole person, as an employer, means that you take on some of the responsibility for care of our employees, in ways that maybe workplaces didn’t feel the need to consider before.”

second part of that is that we need to address diversity and inclusion and part of that is to include into the decision making process, people from different backgrounds and different life experiences. Because, even people with good intentions have blind spots. If we do that, we’re going to make decisions that have fewer blind spots that have fewer people left out of solutions, and fewer negative impacts that may have not been foreseen. If we have lots of diversity in our decision making processes and teams, that is what will really advance diversity and inclusion, I think, more than a training program.

For example, not to stereotype, but the fact is, a lot of sixty-something male leaders have not experienced the same type of work-family challenges and juggling that the thirty-somethings in their organization encounter. If only leadership is making the decisions, they’re not going to have the same range of considerations if they involved people of different

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generations, different types of family situations, even different race, gender identity or gender expression. They might even wind up making decisions that affect these groups negatively.

What are some of the remote work lessons we can use moving forward?

*In **The Whole Person Workplace**, I profile some organizations that went remote or extremely flexible well before COVID. I think most places aren't going to 100% back in the office or 100% remote, most are going to be in the middle and now the trick is, it takes a little more work to figure that out because you need to balance a lot of different priorities: How does the work get done here? What does my work look like? What is the culture? What do my employees want? Fundamentally what I'm saying is, in any decision we make about our employees, part of that decision making process is... how does this support the whole person workplace, how do we value employees?*

It doesn't necessarily mean you have to add big extra workplace programs and benefits, it could be smaller or more informal, like how you design work. For instance, one place I profiled used to have a 9:00 am all-hands meeting which was stressful for parents who were trying to get multiple kids out the door in the morning. Finally, someone just said, "you know, it's really hard for me to get here without really stressing out, is there anything we can do about it?" So they did. Simply shifting the meeting to 10:00 am cost zero dollars, and think about the collective weight that was taken off for dozens of employees.

What are some alternatives to WFH for those workers who cannot do so?

There is going to be some level of hybridization showing up whether that's a set schedule (MWF office, TR home) or the type that involves real choice, which is working with your team and manager to figure out when set times should be, what to do when we are all together, etc., but other than that it is up to you. So there are two hybrid models, hybrid set and hybrid choice.

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Even for workplaces that really do want to get most people back, and I think now, most organizations have the capacity and the understanding to at least do ad-hoc and informal flexibility. This could be people needing to be home early for a school event, scheduling a work from home day for home service calls, scheduling health appointments, perhaps someone who has to drive to the next state to take care of their mom who just had a fall, but can bring their laptop and still work....that type of flexibility is here to stay even in organizations that profess to be fully back at the workplace. And I think that type of flexibility is great, because that was literally going to be the big takeaway from the first version of my book, before the pandemic, was to let people do that....it's nice that the world actually got beyond my ambitions.

What are the top needs and wants of employees moving forward and how can organizations respond?

Fundamentally, the best way to support everybody, because I think this is a universal want, is more autonomy and control over one's time. That unlocks many things, and if there is one intervention, that this is probably it, because it gives people the opportunity to construct a custom fit solution to their challenges. If we allow more flexibility on how, where, when, work gets done, that solves a lot of problems for

people. The fact is however, it's not as simple as "what do employees want?" Different employees want and need different things. What we need to do is first listen really well to our employees. Then based on listening, build a variety of programming that people can plug into. Listen, be flexible, and creative.

What does all this mean for Higher Education?

I think there will be a little bit of back and forth. For example, this semester I'm teaching in person, which is great, but most of my meetings are now on zoom, which, for me, is also great—that's fewer days a week that I have to be on campus which saves me a fair amount of driving time. Now, leadership really wanted all our professional staff, like advisors, leadership back in the office because we needed to 'show our students we're here for them'. But, we found that they work pretty well remotely, and now with the students back, the best way for them to work in the end was hybrid. Some of the students are commuters, or may not have classes on particular days, or whatever reason, it was better for them to zoom to their appointments.

By next year, I'm guessing my University will figure it all out, and maybe have specific in-person and zoom days. We'll continue to oscillate and course correct

to a point that embraces the lessons we learned because it would be a shame to live through everything the past 22 months and go back to 2018.

Universities are deceptively complex organizations, you have unions, different roles, different considerations, colleges, schools, departments, units etc. The way you value employees as whole people, in such an environment, with such a diversity of organizational structure, mission, etc. means that no one size solution is going to fit all these groups. Consider pushing some decisions down the organization so you can get customized solutions around certain things depending on the type of work. Don't just look to the Board, President, and Provost for direction, consider more local input, decisions and management.

As a professor, I have about 15-20 hours a week where I have to be somewhere. Otherwise, I just need to get my work done, whether on campus, at home or on the road. This autonomy has helped me have a wonderful life, to be a present parent, and to really partner with my wife. I've been able to make this work thanks to my job and my flexibility and I just think that if we think a little more flexibly about lots of people's jobs, they can experience this too. Maybe this means giving people some choice over their time, maybe in a hybrid solution.

What about the inherent hierarchical environment in academia?

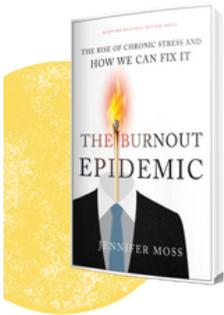
I think academics lends itself a little more to a political environment than others. So this means we need to redouble our efforts to make sure we are valuing and supporting everybody, the frontline employees, people without offices, people who don't get to work from home, because ultimately this translates to benefitting our students.

Personally, I have been thinking more about how this applies to my students...I'm a little more mindful about what's going on in their lives....a lot of our students are first generation, are working 20, 30, 40 hours a week, and a lot of students have had a really hard time this past year and a half. I used to be more strict about deadlines and stuff and now, it's not that I'm lowering standards, I'm just a little more considerate of the fact that students have a lot to manage. Writing a book that is values-based has changed my perspective and challenged me to try live these values in my life too.

This interview took place, November 2021, before some of the changes Omicron brought.
Thank you Scott, we appreciate you sharing your time and knowledge with CUWFA!

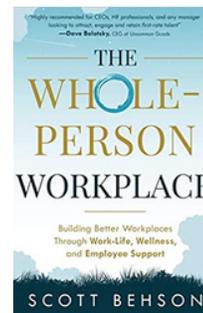
"It's a set of values first, but the decisions that flow from those values are very specific to your situation, your employees and your organization"

WHAT WE'RE READING



[The Burnout Epidemic: The Rise of Chronic Stress and How We Can Fix It](#). Jennifer Moss argues our current strategies are getting it all wrong – that self-care won't cure burnout and organizations need to entirely rethink their approach to wellness. Leveraging her latest research and evidence-based solutions, this book will help leaders and individuals prevent burnout for healthier, happier, and more productive workplaces.

[The Whole Person Workplace](#) by Scott Behson, Read an excerpt [HERE](#). View the [Whole Person Workplace Videos](#): two minutes of advice from the book to help build a better workplace that works for everyone. Scott is also the author of the Working Dad's Survival Guide.



News from the Field

[Hybrid Work and Mental Well-Being: Challenges and Opportunities in 2022](#)
Workspan WorldatWork article

[Don't Let Returning to the Office Burn Out Your Team](#) HBR

[1 In 3 working families is struggling to find the child care they desperately need](#) NPR Morning Edition

"The proportion of the American working population that is at high risk for mental health issues rose from 14% in 2019 to 27% in 2021."

"As employees are still reeling from the shock and disruption of the pandemic, organizations can offer support by creating opportunities for workers to share their experiences and reflect on the past several months."

"36% of adults in households with children say they experienced serious problems meeting both their work and family responsibilities in the past few months."



CUWFA on the Cutting Edge

Flexible work schedules take hold at Virginia Tech

Submitted by Ana Agud, MPH, CWWS Manager, Work/Life Program, Virginia Tech

Flexible work schedules have become a part of what universities and colleges are working through now that Covid-19 and its variants are part of our lives.

At Virginia Tech, whose main campus is located in Blacksburg, Va., flexible work is not only where you work – remotely or on-site – but it also looks at different work schedules, and allows people the flexibility to work at different times, according to Bryan Garey, vice-president for Human Resources at Virginia Tech.

That flexibility came quickly when the pandemic hit, and within just a few weeks, Virginia Tech went from a mostly in-person environment to a remote environment. Flexible work options have since evolved, particularly telework.

“After March, 2020, we had the realization that this is something that’s not going to end in a couple of months,” said Steve Filipiak, senior divisional Human Resources director. “We had to thoughtfully and strategically look at telework. How do we help managers with a new normal?”

That was the catalyst for an 8-person committee, which Filipiak coordinated, to develop and implement a Telework and Remote Work Suitability Guide that would help managers and employees determine which roles were appropriate for telework. The committee

included representation from the university’s provost office who helped them understand the distinctions between teaching, research faculty and administrative/professional faculty.

The first iteration of the guide was made available summer, 2020. There have since been two more iterations of the guide – the most recent being released November, 2021.

“The updates came as we learned more about what was relevant regarding telework,” Filipiak said. Those relevant topics included working with different subgroups of employees, dealing with the expenses of 100 percent remote work, and determining how policy and guidelines would change.

Another step in the process was reworking the flexible work agreement form. The original form, created several years ago, combined with an outdated approval process, was not suitable for the current environment. “The process of completing the forms was becoming more important to manage,” Filipiak said. The new agreement is a combination form – with employees having the option to select either telework, alternate work schedule or combined flexibility.

The approval process is now between employees and their managers. “But we added awareness

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for the human resources representative,” added Marie Bliss, assistant vice president human resources administration. “There is now built in awareness for human resources representatives who didn’t have this knowledge before.” This agreement also allows employees to select between being fully remote, having a hybrid agreement or using telework sporadically (less than 32 hours a month.)

The improved agreement form provided a new process that allows Virginia Tech to capture who is working outside Virginia, and better management of telework agreements. “If the employee is working outside of the state, the human resources representative has to get approval from human resources and finance,” Bliss said. “There are currently 120 flexible work arrangements for employees in other states – a small percentage of the employee base.”

It also opened the door to enhancing communication between managers and their employees. “It is an automated process for a manager and employee theoretically to talk, then to document their work plans for an interval that they put into the agreement. And then it’s automated to remind them when the agreement’s expiring, and then we can pull data from the agreement,” added Garey. “Not everybody’s adopted the agreement, but of the 5,500 in this pool, we’ve got over 2,000 agreements filed. A third of those are 100 percent remote. So, we have probably close to 10 percent of the entire workforce 100 percent remote, probably 40 to 50 percent have some kind of flexible work agreement. And many have yet to document it.”

The numbers are up significantly from pre-pandemic days when there were only 186 agreements on record. “It’s radically different. We all sort of did lip service to the idea of flexible work, where, you know, the state would come out and say, “We support remote work,” and then nobody would do it, Garey said. “Or you’d feel really good if maybe one day every month you got to work from home, and then people thought, you know, you weren’t working at all. I mean, it was all these stereotypes and sentiments about it.”

Virginia Tech is testing the waters with pilot projects. The university’s IT organization is approximately 85 percent remote. Advancement, which was entirely in-person prior to the pandemic, is exploring “hoteling spaces,” and changing how they schedule time together.

There are savings associated with the remote work – office space savings. Bliss shared the story of one of the colleges on campus whose student advising saw a 200 percent increase in requests for advising appointments during the pandemic. This particular college was also running out of office space. With remote work in place, the college has freed up five offices, advising is done remotely, and advisors now rotate in on a regular basis.

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Others will be looking at the results of these pilots for next year," Bliss said, "so they can see what they want to try." These flexible work options have proven to be feasible practices for many Virginia Tech employees, helping them balance work and personal responsibilities while meeting business needs and objectives. These options may also help supervisors promote productivity as well as improve employee job satisfaction and retention. Additionally, flexible work options remove geographic barriers, increasing the size and scope of candidate pools.

"This falls under the umbrella of Future of Work," Bliss said. "We are looking at this as a benefit for retention and for attracting new Talent. How do you have more flexibility for your employees with an eye on the two Rs – retention and recruitment."

What is the future of work at Virginia Tech then? "How do we leverage telework for the university," Filipiak said. "It is constantly evolving as we ride the roller coaster of the pandemic."

And essential, Garey added. "We had a year of working remotely and we were able to, by and large, keep operations going, and you can't just unwind all of that, and say, "OK, we're done. Crisis is over. Let's get back to the way it was before the pandemic. Because all the studies you see out there... say faculty and staff want more flexibility. They want to preserve some of what they've enjoyed and learned through working from home. So I don't think we have the choice to retreat."

CUWFA Mentoring Program



CUWFA now offers a mentoring program to CUWFA members. The program began last fall and we are now opening it up again to anyone interested in meeting with other CUWFA members and a seasoned CUWFA work/life professional. The participants to date have found it so helpful to discuss current and burning issues with their peers, with added input from a very experienced colleague.

The zoom meetings are scheduled for one Friday each month during this quarter/semester, from 11 - 12:30 eastern time. The next meeting is January 21, and the February, March, and April meeting schedule will be set by the group on January 21 to maximize availability. If you are interested in attending January 21 or unable to attend January 21, but are interested in future meetings, contact Mary Ellen Eady mary.ellen.eady@emory.edu



Call for CUWFA on the Cutting Edge Submissions

This year we are taking a new approach to submissions. We will start an alphabetical system where I will reach out to CUWFA members and simply ask for a submission--no pressure, if you can't, I'll move on to the next person on the list.

We have found that people are happy to share their great ideas but are hesitant to reach out.

2021-22 CUWFA Board

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