TO: Senior Leadership Team

FROM: Sabrina Ellis, Vice President and CHRO
      Gigi Dopico, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Provost Designate

RE: Final Report of the Executive Committee on Hybrid/Remote Work

DATE: June 8, 2022

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**Charge**

The charge of the Executive Steering Committee on Hybrid/Remote Work is to review and recommend the scope and range of services currently offered by the university that would be most optimal for hybrid/remote operations, as well as making recommendations as it relates to job characteristics, operating principles, or changes that would accompany hybrid/remote work for administrative and clerical roles. Review of the location of faculty work, researchers or recommendations regarding the delivery of courses by remote or in person modalities, is not within the scope of this charge.

The Executive Steering Committee will also identify space saving as well as sustainability opportunities. Recommendations shall be made to the Executive Vice President. Committee members shall be asked to represent their respective unit or school within the university with the aim of developing consistent practices that can be implemented university-wide.

Committee Members:

- Lynne Brown, Senior Vice President for University Relations & Public Affairs
- Bob Cashion, Senior Vice President, Development & Alumni Relations
- Linda Chiarelli, Senior Vice President, Capital Projects and Facilities
- Lisa Coleman, Senior Vice President for Global Inclusion, Diversity, and Strategic Innovation
- Kristen Day, Vice Provost
- Gigi Dopico, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Provost Designate (Co-Chair)
- Sabrina Ellis, Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer (Co-Chair)
- Tracey Gardner, Deputy Chief of Staff to the President
- MJ Knoll Finn, Senior Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success
- Jelena Kovacevic, Dean, Tandon
- Antonio Merlo, Dean, Faculty Arts & Science
Karen Nercessian, Associate Vice Provost- Strategy and Implementation
Michael O’Connor, Executive Vice Dean, College of Dentistry
Stephanie Pianka, Senior Vice President for Finance and Budget/CFO
Jason Pina, Vice President for University Life and Global Engagement
Neil Rader, Chief Operations Officer, Stern School of Business
Cecil Scheib, Assistant Vice President and Chief Sustainability Officer
Fountain Walker, Vice President, Global Campus Safety
Don Welch, Vice President, Information Technology and Global University Chief Information Officer (CIO)

Executive Summary

Immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, NYU, like most higher educational institutions, made an immediate pivot to hybrid and remote work for almost all teaching, research and administrative functions. The Executive Steering Committee on Hybrid/Remote Work, which was convened in the Spring of 2022, sought to explore longer term solutions to evaluate and leverage hybrid/remote work beyond the pandemic and to identify important institutional considerations that would inform our unified approach to offering hybrid/remote work options.

Like any large institution with multiple stakeholders, there are a number of factors that need to be assessed in decisions or policy related to a continuation of hybrid/remote work. While it has been proven that many of our activities and services can be offered and performed remotely, the presence of NYU community members, inclusive of students, faculty, administrators and support staff, contributes significantly to the vitality of our campus spaces and surrounding areas where NYU class space, research facilities and offices are located. And the presence on campus, or the absence, of some members of the community, may affect the work and learning of other community members.

As such, two foundational principles emerged in reaching consensus in our recommendations:

- The first is, NYU as a preeminent research and academic institution, is in large part a location-based organization whereby many of our core services and activities are offered or performed in-person.

- The second is, there is a balance that we should strive to achieve in offering flexible work options while at the same time continuing to provide an authentic NYU campus experience for those who study and work at NYU.
Therefore, our recommendations are as follows:

1. **Hybrid/Remote Classification Structure.** We recommend that NYU adopt a classification structure to define the hybrid/remote parameters for administrative and clerical jobs (positions within the 3882 and Local 153 unions). **Job duties would be the primary consideration in establishing the hybrid/remote designation for any job.** This classification structure would ideally be used in posting new positions, and in evaluating hybrid/remote options for current positions. We strongly recommend that similar jobs with similar duties carry consistent hybrid/remote classifications.

Principles of equity and inclusion are central to this recommendation. As is the case in the current process for drafting position descriptions, school and unit supervisors would be consulted in the final drafting of position attributes pending final approval by University Human Resources. Some jobs at NYU would be excluded from being either hybrid or remote given the nature of the work performed. While University Human Resources further explores more definitive language related to the classification of positions, we recommend the following broad categories:

   a. **Fully On-Site:** Job duties are highly local in nature and require on-site presence to be performed. Not eligible for hybrid or remote classification. Employees are expected to reside within commuting distance to their assigned NYU work location.

   b. **Hybrid Eligible (on-site 60-80% of the time, assigned work space):** Job duties are conducive to being performed either in person, or remotely at least part of the time. Hybrid positions carry an expectation to be on-site a minimum of 60-80% of the time. Greater flexibility with hybrid/remote arrangements (as appropriate) may be provided during the summer and other student break periods. Circumstances may necessitate a greater on-site presence for some positions, in such instances, the unit or department shall retain final decision making authority. Issues related to performance may impact eligibility. Probationary employees may be asked to be on-site to a greater extent as determined by each school or
unit. Departmental staffing levels may be a consideration in determining the extent of hybrid options made available.

Employees are expected to reside within commuting distance to their assigned NYU work location. (Examples of jobs categorized as hybrid eligible include administrative or clerical positions whereby the duties can be performed both in-person and remotely for part of the time without disruption or reduction in service/work quality).

c. Mostly Remote (Occasional onsite presence; remote more than 60% of time, no assigned desk):

   i. Job duties require minimal in-person interactions or,
   ii. Job duties may be predominantly related to programs that are administered online, such as online degree programs or,
   iii. Other similar or related jobs as appropriate for this category or,
   iv. The unit, in consultation with the appropriate NYU space planning and real estate offices, have received approval to reduce their space allocation which necessitates the classification of some or all jobs within the unit as mostly remote or fully remote.

   All positions classified as mostly remote should require advance review and approval by University Human Resources. It is also our recommendation that University Human Resources conduct an annual review of these positions to ensure that principles of equity and fairness are being applied. Given the ever evolving nature of university work, we also recommend that it continues to be the case that any hybrid or remote arrangement can be modified with 30 days of advance notice. Finally, we recommend that University Human Resources designate a Hybrid/Remote Liaison who would be responsible for fielding inquiries or concerns that may arise in the application of these recommendations across NYU.

   Employees in the mostly remote category should be expected to reside within commuting distance to their assigned NYU work location, exceptions to work outside of the tri-state area should be
requested through University Human Resources. Where employees in such positions reside outside of the New York tri-State area, commuting costs to their departmental office locations shall be considered as commuting expenses and generally not reimbursable. Managerial positions, hourly and clerical employees would generally be ineligible for this category. Issues related to performance may impact eligibility. Probationary employees may be asked to be on-site to a greater extent as determined by each school or unit.

2. **Reduction in Space Utilization and Sustainability.** For units and schools that wish to reduce their space requirements by exploring hybrid and remote options that exceed the 60% threshold, it is our recommendation that such exploration be limited to only those functions that require minimal person-to-person interactions (regardless of whether such interactions can be performed remotely) and that individuals holding these roles utilize shared spaces when on-site. Schools and units seeking to explore this option would do so in consultation with the Office of Strategic Assessment, Planning & Design as well as the Office of Real Estate.

   Additionally, the Committee recommends that NYU seek to incorporate strategies to reduce its carbon footprint through the availability of hybrid/remote work, where appropriate, in keeping with the overall mission of the university.

3. **Meetings.** We recommend that meetings continue to be offered both in person and through zoom (hybrid format) to accommodate colleagues who are able to attend in person and those located in different campus buildings and to accommodate differences in the on-site schedules of hybrid employees. This does not apply to meetings or events where there is a requirement for in-person attendance.

4. **Telecommuting Policy.** We recommend that the university’s Telecommuting Policy be updated to reflect this new guidance and that employees be required to abide by NYU policies including any policies specific to hybrid/remote options such as NYU’s data privacy requirements, installation of VPN on laptop computers, as well as meeting requirements that may be set forth by each school, unit or department as appropriate. Such requirements may include but
are not limited to requirements to activate zoom cameras, expectations around meeting times, etc.

5. **Timing of Implementation.** We recommend that these recommendations take effect at the start of the 2022-2023 Academic Year (Fall 2022).

6. **Annual review of recommendations.** Finally, as the needs of the university are dynamic and may change, we recommend that the university review these recommendations on an annual basis to determine if modifications are appropriate. The Hybrid/Remote Liaison as mentioned in Recommendation 1 would convene a Hybrid/Remote Operating Group to assess the effectiveness of the university’s current practices, make recommendations where necessary, and modify existing policy to ensure clarity for all university employees and offices.

**Background**

The Executive Steering Committee convened in the Spring 2022 semester in preparing recommendations on hybrid/remote work. A primary consideration in committee discussions was the need to maintain the quality of various campus interactions whether they be with students, faculty, administrators, staff, or other members of the NYU community. A number of factors were assessed in the committee’s discussions; among these were:

- The NYU Campus Experience
- Employee Retention and Work/Life Integration
- Equity and Inclusion
- Commuting to Campus
- Space Planning and Sustainability

**The NYU Campus Experience**

As a residential campus with more than 11,000 students who live in NYU’s residential housing, NYU as a “dream school” destination for many students offers an unparalleled experience with the backdrop of New York City as an extension of each student’s learning environment. The connection between New York City and New York University is inseparable. Considerations related to hybrid/remote work would need to address basic elements of the student and employee experience which include the availability of
In-person services to address community needs, as well as maintaining the vibrancy of our campus culture which emerges as a unique strength of our community.

At the start of the COVID pandemic, the university transitioned to a fully remote learning environment which was later modified when the university returned to a fully in-person learning format. While we have since moved beyond pandemic operating parameters, we appreciate the benefits that greater work flexibility provided to our administrators and staff. It is also worth noting that the external marketplace has shifted and many employers continue to offer hybrid and remote options as a way of attracting employees. The wider availability of hybrid and remote jobs that mirror the work performed by our administrative teams create challenges in recruiting and retaining these employees, for which NYU must continue to be forward thinking and competitive in offering desirable employment benefits and options.

While recognizing the need to be responsive to emerging trends, it is also important to maintain the unique character and authenticity of the NYU experience. Students and their families rely upon our employees to create a campus environment of warmth and connection. In addition, providing a high quality in-person experience for our faculty, administrators and staff who interact with one another is also an important factor.

**Employee Retention and Work-Life Integration**

Many who were able to be hybrid/remote during the pandemic came to find that there were benefits in having added flexibility. In addition, many employers, like NYU, have continued to offer flexible work options and in the committee’s view, doing so makes sense to support our employee retention and recruitment efforts. In such instances, and in keeping with the overall nature of our mission as an academic institution, offering hybrid arrangements should align with the goal of providing an authentic experience for NYU students and employees.

As such, it is our recommendation that those positions classified as hybrid eligible maintain a 60-80% on-site presence as the minimum threshold for this classification. This can be achieved by offering additional flexibility during off peak periods.

In offering flexibility, it is expected that employees ensure that they are available and accessible to facilitate their job responsibilities consistently regardless of whether the work is being performed on-site or remotely. As we continue to evolve in our approach to hybrid/remote work, norms related to the use of remote based tools such as zoom would be appropriate such as expectation setting around activating cameras when participating in zoom meetings, and ensuring that employee presence in a remote setting is of the same quality as what would be expected in-person. Understanding that
circumstances may arise that make occasional departures from these norms appropriate, by and large, the expectation would be that interactions with our administrator and staff populations be of the highest quality in keeping with our overall mission in pursuing excellence across teaching, research and administrative services.

To ensure equity across similar jobs, we recommend that NYU seek to maintain a consistent approach to hybrid work for jobs with similar duties. University Human Resources in partnership with each school and unit’s HR Officer, would support university-wide efforts on hybrid/remote classifications.

Overall, it is our view that employers will continue to offer hybrid/remote options to their employees. As we have learned from our own experience at NYU, “Employers and workers have created a new workplace that is hybrid, agile, and interdependent. Those changes, began in years of crisis, are here to stay for a simple business reason: they confer competitive advantage on organizations that embrace them.”

**Equity and Inclusion**

In our effort to recruit and retain a diverse workforce, offering hybrid/remote work can offer NYU a competitive advantage. Hybrid/remote work can be an effective means of retaining administrative and clerical employees while also increasing mobility and access for those employees for whom these options would be transformative- financially and otherwise. And it is for these reasons, that we recommend a continuance of hybrid/remote options. Equity, fairness, and inclusion should always be a desired outcome of any NYU policy or program. This should certainly be the case, in the university’s adoption of a classification framework on hybrid/remote attributes.

“Studies of 10,000 office workers conducted last year by Future Forum, a research group backed by Slack, suggest that women and people of color were more likely to see working remotely as beneficial than their white male colleagues. In the United States, 86 percent of Hispanic and 81 percent of Black knowledge workers, those who do non-manual work, said that they preferred hybrid or remote work, compared with 75 percent of white knowledge workers. And globally, 50 percent of working mothers who participated in the studies reported wanting to work remotely most or all the time, compared with 43 percent of fathers. A sense of belonging at work increased [with

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remote work] for 24 percent of Black knowledge workers surveyed, compared with 5 percent of white knowledge workers, since May 2021.”

Additionally, hybrid and remote work options greatly increase access for employees with disabilities. Embracing the hybrid/remote work model provides the opportunity to engage a broader and more diverse talent pool.

Finally, as it relates to equity, it is important that job duties be the primary factor in identifying the appropriate hybrid/remote classification and that jobs with similar duties be treated consistently to the extent that it is feasible to do so.

**Commuting to Campus and Campus Safety**

As of May 2022, subway ridership continues to fall below pre-pandemic numbers in large part due to persistent crime and fear for safety. “A Quinnipiac University poll released May 4 found that 49% of city residents say crime is the most urgent issue facing the city.” In February 2022, New York City Mayor Eric Adams announced the Subway Safety Plan which outlines steps to ensure rider safety which includes increased patrols of New York City Police Officers on subway cars and platforms. Over the course of several months, employees have expressed concerns about subway safety; these concerns have increased in light of recent incidents, some of which have been categorized as targeted assaults based on an individual’s identity. In response to elevated levels of anxiety related to commuting, the self-service NYU Commuter Buddy Program was developed in Fall 2020 for employees from within the tri-state area to link up and coordinate travel to and from campus.

In addition, NYU Campus Safety has increased exterior foot patrols, added cameras to scaffolding around NYU buildings and works closely with local law enforcement and city agencies to address quality of life issues. Campus Safety has increased transportation services and with community input, enhanced routes based on user feedback. NYU is now part of a New York City Higher Education Consortium working directly with the Mayor’s Office of Public Safety sharing concerns around safety on and off campuses.

It is important to the safety of our community that buildings be sufficiently populated, including administrative offices, to avoid the deserted campus feeling for on-site

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employees, our students and all members of the community. Maintaining sufficient in-person staffing is an important consideration in this regard. An increase in foot traffic is also an important deterrent to crime. As tourism to New York City, work and school commuting, and pedestrian traffic increase in areas like Washington Square Park, Union Square Park, and other locations around NYU, the presence of our community members will also make a significant impact in the overall character and population of the surrounding areas.

**Space Utilization & Sustainability**

Some units and schools have started to evaluate their space planning needs as priorities continue to emerge to allocate additional space for student purposes. In these cases, hybrid/remote work options may be appropriate to reduce the amount of space required for existing teams. The Education Advisory Board (EAB), convened a group of campus leaders to discuss ways to discuss space optimization. While viewpoints were mixed, “campus leaders were most interested in renovating or building more shared workstations as well as prioritizing investments in multi-purpose spaces that can be used by multiple stakeholder groups. Both of these strategies encourage efficient space usage by promoting more mixed-use workspaces on campus while eliminating underutilized spaces reserved for select stakeholders.”

In making decisions regarding the use of hybrid or remote options that fall below the 60-80% onsite threshold for space planning purposes, generally only those positions with minimal in-person interactions should be classified as eligible for shared workstation arrangements.

Under all circumstances, the committee discussed the need for management presence to be high even as options are explored for hybrid/remote options for administrators and staff more generally.

NYU continually seeks to identify strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions towards our 2025 and 2040 goals. When aligned with space planning efforts, durable emissions reductions may be achieved cost-effectively. This is especially true if there is a reduction in the amount of total NYU space (especially leased space), as partially occupied buildings tend to experience only modest reductions in energy use. There may be opportunities for further savings through building service reductions if hybrid schedules naturally result in buildings that are essentially unoccupied according to a predictable schedule (so that heating and cooling can be limited in the building at those

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times). In addition, hybrid and remote work may create additional reductions from emissions due to travel through daily commuting and other travel.

Overall in the last two years, NYU’s reduction in air travel continues to provide significant reductions in emissions through the use of virtual attendance at various meetings and conferences that would otherwise include travel. We will continue to encourage community members to utilize alternatives to air travel when feasible in accordance with the Expense and Travel Policy, including especially the use of ground travel within the Northeast corridor.

The Committee recommends that a group be convened with a specific focus on reducing our reliance on leased space but with emphasis on only those positions or functions with minimal in-person interactions.

**Special Thanks**

The Committee wishes to thank the administrators and staff who provided research and support in the completion of these recommendations. These include:

Kate Gaffney, Director, NYU Employee Experience
Scott Harlow, Director, Budget Planning & Strategic Projects
Marina Kartanos, Deputy and Senior Associate Vice President for Human Resources
Grace Cosachov Protos, Executive Director, Work Life
Mirta Salomon, Chief of Staff to the Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer
Leonard Tjondro, HR Analyst, Special Projects