

## 2020 University Climate Survey Focus Group Results

### OVERVIEW OF THE FOCUS GROUPS

During the Summer of 2020, we conducted focus groups, each with of up to 20 participants, to gather information to supplement the specific issues raised by respondents in the 2020 University Climate Survey.

We conducted four student focus groups, on the topic of accessibility concerns, and on issues experienced by international students, LGBTQ+ students, and students of color.

We conducted four faculty/staff focus groups, on the topic of policy consistency, and on issues experienced by international faculty/staff, faculty/staff who are women of color, and faculty/staff who are women.

Each focus group was conducted during a weekday afternoon and lasted up to two hours.

#### Moderator Information and Opening Script:

Donald A. Saucier, Ph.D., conducted each of the focus groups. Dr. Saucier is a Professor of Psychological Sciences and the Faculty Associate Director of the Teaching & Learning Center at Kansas State University. He was invited to conduct the focus groups by Dr. Bryan Samuel, Kansas State University's Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer because the Climate Survey Team wanted one moderator to provide consistency and structure to the conversations. Dr. Saucier has been active in K-State's diversity and inclusion initiatives, deeply involved and invested in K-State's teaching mission, and has conducted and published research on processes and expressions of discrimination related to gender, race, sexual orientation, and disability.

Dr. Saucier (a middle-aged, straight, cisgender White man) acknowledged his majority group membership to the focus group participants, and further stated:

*"I may not have had your experiences, but I am deeply interested to hear about them. We are here today because the voices at K-State have identified our theme today as an issue. The voices at K-State have compelled our administration to explore our theme through our discussion today. Our administration is listening, and I am committed to take our discussion today to our administration to make K-State a better place to work and learn. I am honored to work toward that goal with you today.*

*I want to address with you why I am moderating these focus groups rather than a member of our upper administration, such as Dr. Bryan Samuel. It was our concern that having an upper administrator attend the focus groups would potentially hinder our ability to have an open and honest conversation about these issues.*

*We want you to provide your honest comments and reactions during this focus group today. To allow you to do that anonymously, before we begin I am asking that you stop your videos during*

*our discussion. I am also offering you the opportunity to select a name other than your own to use as an alias during our discussion. When you stop your video and change your name, we can better protect your anonymity during our discussion. Even your comments in the chat will be associated with your alias and not your real name. We will be recording this focus group's discussion to help with our analysis of our conversation, but we will not start the recording until you have had the opportunity to stop your videos and select aliases. Further, no one beyond the analysis team will have access to this recording, and no one on the analysis team will associate any comment with any individual person.*

*Our goal today is to identify patterns and trends in the discussion, not to identify any individual. As such, the questions will be phrased to get at types of issues that K-Staters face, how these issues impact K-Staters, and how to address these issues in the future through specific actions at K-State.*

*I do have to note that if anyone shares an experience in specific detail that is an instance of discrimination, harassment, sexual violence, etc., we do have to make a mandatory report to our Office of Institutional Equity.*

*You may make your comments and responses verbally during our discussion and/or by writing them into the chat. We have a list of questions that will guide our conversation today.*

*Are there any questions about our procedures today?*

*Now please stop your videos and select your aliases. We will start recording the focus group in a minute as we consider our first question for discussion."*

### **Question Schedule:**

The moderator asked the following questions to engage the participants in discussions during each of the focus groups:

***How do challenges related to \_\_\_\_\_ typically manifest at K-State?***

***How do these challenges hinder the success of K-Staters?*** (as a follow-up if needed)

***What are actionable steps that K-State can take to address these challenges?***

***Are there any other experiences, comments, or suggestions that you would like to share today before we conclude our discussion?***

### **Debriefing**

Dr. Saucier debriefed the participants and thanked them at the end of each focus group using the script below:

*“Thank you so much for sharing your experiences, comments, and suggestions this afternoon. I am so grateful that you participated today to help make K-State a better place. I will be summarizing our conversation and sharing it with the Climate Survey team. These results will be presented to our administration. They are listening – thank you for sharing your voices with me so that I can share your voices with them. If you need to reach out to me for any reason after this session, please feel free to do so. My email address is in the chat. Thank you again for contributing your voices today. It is now our job to use your voices to take meaningful action at K-State. We will publicize what these actions and outcomes are to the K-State community over this coming year. We may not be able to do everything that you suggested, but we are committed to working on this issue. Thank you so much for helping us make K-State a better place.”*

## **OVERVIEW OF FOCUS GROUP RESULTS**

Below is a summary of the major themes that emerged in each focus group in identifying the major challenges related to the issue or target group and the actionable steps suggested to resolve the issue at Kansas State University. Some participants provided additional information (e.g., by email) after the conclusion of their focus group, and their comments are summarized in the focus group reports as well. As indicated above, the objective was to collect general experiences, and this report is written so that the experiences and comments summarized do not reveal the identities of the participants.

### **Focus Group: International Faculty**

#### ***Challenges***

**General experiences of hostility and discrimination.** Comments discussed that “international faculty” are a large, diverse group that cannot easily be categorized, and have variable experiences. Comments discussed that the achievements and performances of international faculty are unknown or discounted (e.g. as “good for a foreign teacher”), that international faculty do more than do other faculty because they are international (without credit or recognition), and that international faculty face issues of stigma due to their accents (with one participant noting they were uncomfortable speaking in the focus group, preferring to write comments in the chat, due to their accent making them identifiable). Comments discussed that awards are a political matter, and that international faculty generally do not win them. Comments also discussed issues with research awards being systematically biased to favor those in STEM disciplines. Comments also discussed intersectional issues, such as when female international faculty are the only women in their department, and the compounding difficulties of being an international female faculty member in a STEM discipline. Comments also discussed general issues with the climate at K-State allowing for hostility, discussing how individuals behave badly toward each other (e.g., faculty yell at students and each other, administrators yell at faculty) and have trouble treating others in respectful ways. Comments discussed issues of discrimination by faculty who are not international who “don’t want to be told what to do by a foreigner”, who are resistant to perceived efforts of international faculty to change the existing culture, who mistrust international faculty, and who create barriers to the

success of international faculty. Comments discussed that, while we have policy to prevent and protect against this behavior, there is not much faculty can do when they are mistreated and not much happens when they do report mistreatment.

**Experiences of discrimination from students.** Comments discussed that international faculty have more issues with students than with faculty colleagues, and indicated that most international faculty have had negative interactions with students. Comments discussed that there are relatively few international students at K-State (and noted that being in Kansas is particularly challenging), and that international faculty's experiences with American students are variable. Comments discussed the challenges that international faculty face when teaching. Comments discussed that some American students engage well in courses, but others are reluctant, and international faculty are not sure if the issue is due to accents, content matter, etc. Comments discussed issues with many students not being majors or having experience with the content previously in the courses taught by international faculty, and that international faculty consequently had to adjust to accommodate the students, and that many students failed. Comments discussed that K-State has a broader problem with diversity that is inspiring student disrespect toward international faculty, such as from students having little contact or exposure to others who are different from them or have different accents, and that students are impatient and not generous when working with international faculty (e.g., not willing to work to understand an accent). Comments discussed that K-State's land grant mission should compel K-State to want to expose its students (and Kansas students by outreach) to diversity, but that K-State seems uninterested in doing this well (with one comment describing "horrible outreach" that would be improved by including international faculty in extension and community engagement efforts) and that the "university doesn't seem to care." Comments discussed that international faculty experience harassment, but that the policies are structured to protect students from faculty, but not vice versa.

**Specific experiences of bias in teaching evaluations.** Comments discussed several issues that international faculty face in the teaching evaluation process (i.e., TEVALs) at K-State. Comments discussed that the TEVAL form and process comprise a biased and uninformative approach to assess teaching effectiveness, that is more a "popularity contest," assesses how happy students are with their grade, that the comments are unhelpful (and even cruel), and allow students to troll behind their anonymity because they are not held accountable for their comments. Comments discussed other limitations of the TEVALs, including that the responses tend to be bimodal. Comments generally expressed strong negative feelings about TEVALs, calling them needlessly expensive, "worthless", and "a disservice to the teaching mission" at K-State. Comments also discussed that administrators and department heads either do not really care about teaching evaluations (e.g., do TEVALs just to do them), believe in them too much, or create the potential for discrimination by administrators and department heads who can use them inconsistently or inappropriately to target international faculty when they have "an ax to grind."

**Issues with administration.** Comments discussed several challenges that international faculty face from the administration at K-State. Comments discussed how there are not enough international faculty in administrative positions, and that international faculty are not given

enough opportunities to achieve higher positions at the university. Comments stated that K-State has too many administrators; that our administration is too costly, ineffective, causes rather than anticipates or solves problems; and that this is “the biggest problem” K-State has. Comments discussed that some of these problems with administration may stem from their not having been faculty themselves, and that this limits their perspective in leading our institution.

**Consequences.** Comments discussed several tangible consequences for international faculty due to these issues, including difficulties in earning promotion and tenure, salary disparities and inequities (e.g., such as that produced due to delayed or denied promotions or professorial awards). Comments discussed the connection of these consequences to negative student evaluations. Comments also discussed that these issues converge to create a climate for international faculty at K-State that is “not a healthy situation” that causes international faculty to feel hurt by and disappointed in the climate at K-State, to fear their chances for promotion and tenure, and to want to leave K-State (i.e., are hard to retain) because they do not feel valued here. Comments discussed the difficulty international faculty face in having to achieve at high levels while being silent about the issues and mistreatment they face. Comments discussed that it is difficult to identify the motivation for others’ inappropriate behavior and unfair actions, making it difficult to do anything about it. Comments discussed the additional cognitive and emotional burden that international faculty carry in educating others about their experiences as international faculty. Comments discussed that international faculty have to rise to the challenge of being better than other faculty to succeed, but face issues if they make others look bad as a result of their success. Comments discussed how these consequences combine to “depress you massively” and inspire disengagement because it is “hard to make the effort through an unhappy environment and hostility” as the contributions of international faculty are not valued or recognized. Comments also discussed how these challenges and their consequences are not apparent when international faculty are hired, and they are not prepared to deal with them when they come to K-State. Comments discussed that these issues and concerns can create stress and mental health issues for international faculty.

### ***Actionable Steps***

**Recognize and reward the contributions of international faculty.** Comments stated that there should be salary equity for all faculty. Comments suggested that more awards be given and more incentives be offered (e.g., monetary awards, fellowships, plaques) to international faculty for their performances (e.g., making sure the winners include international faculty such as by a rotation; or by creating awards specifically for international faculty such as international faculty member of the year, in research, teaching, community engagement, etc.). Comments suggested that a committee be designated to nominate international faculty for awards (to ensure representative pools of nominees), to help international faculty with the time and efforts that applying for awards requires (and acknowledgement that these expenditures in time and effort may dissuade international faculty from applying given their belief that there are low chances of winning). It should be noted that comments suggested some ambivalence for awards for international faculty being a special award that could be discounted and motivated as “box checking” rather than true recognition. Comment discussed a need for K-State to recognize the international recognition achieved by international faculty (e.g., by

professional associations) in awards, promotion, and tenure. Comments acknowledged the scarcity of resources that may be an obstacle to these rewards and incentives, and suggested the possibility of cutting administration to free up funds for these rewards and incentives.

**Increase support and protection for international faculty.** Comments discussed the need for guidance and mentoring to help international faculty succeed initially and continuously at K-State (e.g., helping them understand University, college, and department policies and procedures; the resources for faculty, staff, and students available and not available at their specific campus; TEVAL procedures; the demographics and experiences of the students they will be teaching and the issues they may face in doing so). Comments indicated that the Manhattan campus resources may be needed to help support international faculty and students at the other K-State campuses. Comments also discussed the need to protect international faculty against mistreatment. One comment suggested having an ombud devoted specifically to concerns brought forth by international faculty. Comments discussed how Human Capital Services needs to play an important role in educating administrators (and department heads especially) in how to support international faculty and take seriously the concerns experienced by and challenges faced by international faculty. Comments discussed that Human Capital Services have been too passive in addressing these concerns in the past, and should be empowered to compel fair treatment and evaluation of international faculty, to investigate and resolve the concerns brought forth by international faculty, and to have “teeth” in doing so. Comments discussed a need to create, clarify, and implement policies to compel students to behave appropriately toward international faculty. Comments discussed the even the honor and integrity policy creates little accountability for students who violate it, that the policy is not a deterrent, that cheating is widespread, and it is often not worth it to report cheating given the weak consequences for students but negative reactions from students.

**Increase support for a community of international faculty.** Comments discussed the need to create opportunities for international faculty to meet and to foster a community at K-State of international faculty to allow them to create social connections through shared experiences and contexts.

**Revise the teaching evaluation process.** Comments discussed that the issues with TEVALs at K-State compel a revision to how teaching is evaluated. Comments discussed other ways that TEVAL responses may be analyzed, such as by using artificial intelligence to evaluate TEVAL open responses and discount them from TEVAL scores, or administered, such as being used as a “double-blind indicator” earlier in the semester when students cannot yet anticipate their final grades and use their TEVAL ratings to retaliate against instructors when they do not earn the grades they wanted. Other comments discussed that TEVALs should be “abolished.” Comments discussed how teaching observations, for example, may be more informative and appropriate.

**Revise the evaluation process of administrators.** Comments discussed a need to provide international faculty (and other faculty) with the opportunity to evaluate their supervisors (e.g., department heads). Comments also discussed a need for external evaluation of administrators (e.g., department heads). Comments discussed that department heads have

too much autonomous control and have too much opportunity to retaliate against negative feedback from their faculty, consequently rendering yearly evaluations of department heads by their faculty meaningless because faculty are scared to be candid in these evaluations. Comments discussed the lack of transparency in the evaluations of administrators, and discussed how faculty assume risk in raising issues; see no action, consequences, or follow up; and thus have no expectations for change. Comments stated that evaluation is essentially one-sided (i.e., administrators evaluate faculty, but not vice versa). Comments discussed that retaliation is real, and that administrators can minimize or dismiss accusations of retaliation easily.

**Change the structure of administration.** Comments discussed a need to hire administrators who are accomplished teachers and researchers (who will empathize better with the faculty perspective), and the advantages of hiring administrators internally (although other comments discussed a preference for hiring administrators externally), and of hiring international faculty into administrative positions. Comments discussed a lack of representation of international faculty in upper administration (with notable exceptions) and a general lack of diversity in K-State administration. Comments discussed that without representation, administrators (e.g., department heads) may not legitimize the challenges faced by international faculty and leave them “to fend for themselves.” Comments also discussed the utility of rotating administrators (including department heads) out after serving their terms (e.g., of three years) or after having reached term limits. Comments also indicated a need for representation in Faculty Senate by international faculty as well as for a Faculty Senate committee designated to addressing the experience of international faculty and our international community more broadly.

**Provide and mandate diversity training.** Comments discussed the need to train all faculty, staff, and administrators (including department heads) to understand and deal with issues of diversity and inclusion, and their own unconscious biases. Comments stated this training should be mandatory and continually updated. Comments also discussed a need to educate students about the contributions made by and the value at K-State added by international faculty.

**Do something.** Comments indicated a need for this process to result in change, to make K-State a better place for international faculty, to do more than “lip service” to the issues and concerns articulate by international faculty, and to “break the trend” of inaction (highlighted by one comment that “nothing changes”). Comments expressed indignation toward the tagline that statement that “K-State is a family”, stating that there has been commitment or loyalty to international faculty by the University. Comments indicated a need to talk to “regular Kansans” in the community to educate them about the contributions and value of international faculty. Comments indicated that an external review or external consultants may be needed to identify the issues and actions needed at K-State. One comment stated a desire “to see at least one concrete action” to improve the climate for international faculty at K-State as a result of these focus groups.

### **Focus Group: Policy Consistency**

## **Challenges**

**Inconsistencies across colleges and units.** Comments discussed that people talk across the University and discover inconsistencies that manifest in several ways. These inconsistencies occur both between and within colleges, departments, units, and offices. Comments indicated that even when the policies are the same (such as those dictated by HCS), the interpretations and implementations (such as by individual supervisors) of the policies are often inconsistent. Comments indicated that these inconsistencies in policy interpretation and implementation occur in several areas (and are more common than policy violations), including support for professional development opportunities, flex policies, being classified or reclassified as having “regular” versus “term” appointments, sick leave, vacation leave, tuition benefits, access to benefits, pay grades, promotions, conference opportunities and travel possibilities, overload and summer teaching opportunities (with preference for the latter often given to the most senior faculty who already make higher salaries). Comments indicated that policies may be vague or people may have different business practices, and that the comparison across units may be an issue because what works for one may not work for all, that policy implementation is difficult, and there is no place right now to even discuss inconsistencies. Comments noted inconsistencies may be biased against University Support Staff, included their lacking opportunities to use professional development benefits because of an inability to have someone cover their leave if the benefits would be used during regular business hours – comments indicated the benefit may only be used if doing so does not create a detriment in the office. Comments indicated this latter issue is greatest in offices with fewer staff members (especially in the extreme case of a one-person office) because they are less able to cover an individual taking a course, for instance. Comments also discussed inconsistencies in the work schedules that are allowed for faculty versus staff (with staff having less flexibility available to them, and therefore staff may be forced to work standard hours while faculty can choose to work when they are most productive), with the allowance of flex time (which comments indicated administration claims to support, but this message has either not been conveyed to or has been ignored by supervisors). Comments also indicated that, when there are conflicts, staff (e.g., administrative assistants) have to conform to faculty’s preferred schedules. Comments indicated that some units remain remote due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while others are brought back to campus for the same jobs. One comment also stated that there are consistency issues with who is allowed/invited and not allowed/not invited to attend First Tuesdays. Comments indicated issues in that there are defined salary benefits for moving up the ranks as tenured/tenure-track faculty, but not for the teaching faculty ranks, that raises are not consistent for these ranks/positions across departments, and that some definition for these ranks, positions, and benefits would be helpful.

**Issues with communication and lack of transparency.** Comments discussed issues with communication about policies and a lack of transparency in their interpretation and implementation. Comments indicated that communication is not consistent; not everyone knows the same things; there are rumors, gossip, and hearsay that make people unhappy; and policies are not communicated clearly and accurately. Comments indicated that access to benefits is inconsistent, and that the benefits one will receive are not made clear when the

individual is hired. Comments indicated that it is not made clear if the individual being hired is “regular” or “term”, or what that distinction will mean in terms of the benefits and support the individual will receive. Comments indicated that there is little explanation for policy discrepancies and lack of transparency. Comments indicated that administrators reply to concerns about inconsistencies that is it up to the supervisors. Comments indicated that there is a lack of responsibility at any level taken for the inconsistencies, and that everyone says it is someone else’s issues. Comments indicated that administration needs to take control because there are too many cheat zones and siloes, and that local control and decisions create issues and unfairness.

**Issues with Human Capital Services (HCS).** Comments indicated that HCS has stated that is it not their job to enforce policy, leaving little opportunity for communication, reporting, or resolution when policy inconsistencies are experienced. Comments indicated dissatisfaction with HCS for not sharing information with campus about competencies, not sharing the information that they are paid to gather and share, and not setting or implementing career ladders and employee growth appropriately based on competencies. Comments also indicated that some of these issues are because HCS claims to be overworked and understaffed, but so is everyone.

**Issues with the evaluation of administration, supervisors, and employees.** Comments indicated that while much of the issues of inconsistencies in policy interpretation and implementation may be attributed to individual supervisors, the evaluation process to provide feedback to them is either not available or is not safe. Comments indicated that despite having “a lot of bosses”, employees are not able to regularly or safely evaluate their supervisors’ performance. Comments discussed how evaluations are not always frequent (occurring every five years for some administrators), that the comments on the evaluations are not secure and may be connected back to the individual, and that the comments may not be submitted anonymously. Comments indicated that the evaluation process itself is inconsistently applied across the university, and that evaluation may be meaningless because there is not enough time or investment devoted to the process, the criteria for evaluation may not be applicable, meaningful feedback is not provided in the feedback to employees, there is enough time to digest the feedback that is provided, administrators are not trained to supervise, supervisors are not trained to evaluate, and not all employees are evaluated.

**Issues with teaching evaluations.** Comments discussed issues with how teaching evaluations (i.e., TEVALs) are used. Comments indicated inconsistencies in the evaluation of instructors using their TEVALs, including that senior faculty (who vote on contract renewal, tenure, and promotion of junior faculty) evaluate TEVALs subjectively and inconsistently in these processes. Comments a need for objective metrics to evaluate TEVAL scores and also teaching in general. Comments indicated that despite TEVALs supposedly being the “property” of individual instructors, some instructors are pressured to sign waivers allowing their TEVALs to be sent directly to their department heads before they even see the TEVALs themselves.

**Consequences of these inconsistencies.** Comments indicated that these inconsistencies affect individuals’ general levels of morale and their levels of subjective well-being, making

them unhappy, and their mental health. Comments indicated that the inconsistencies related to flex time do not allow people to work when they are most productive hindering their success and the success of their unit. Comments indicated that these issues result in less job satisfaction, result in less retention of employees generally, and promote job hopping to another unit at the University that applies policies differently. Comments indicated that having to hire new people is time-intensive and expensive, and it may be hard to hire new people if the people leaving are unhappy, making K-State look uninviting and unsupportive to potential hires. Comments indicated that these searches exhaust time, effort, and money. Comments expressed that there is the belief that “A move is the only way to get a raise”, with few existing career ladders or opportunities for advancement (but also noted inconsistencies here, because some people do advance and get raises depending on inconsistent decision making by supervisors). Comments indicated that some supervisors fight for their people (and get them raises and opportunities), while others do not. Comments indicated a need to retain staff – they have stepped up during the pandemic.

### ***Actionable Steps***

**Increase transparency in decision-making.** Comments indicated that reclassifications of employees are inconsistent, and are not applied correctly or appropriate to what employees are doing. Comments indicated that there is no consistency or transparency in faculty searches that are allowed versus denied, that all open positions are important, and there needs to be transparency in how these positions are ranked and consequently how hiring decisions are made. Comments indicated that the University continues to hire upper-level administrators with high salaries, but not the “folks in the trenches.” Comments indicated how support positions without backups are eliminated even those could be hired more easily and plentifully than upper-level administrators. Comments indicated the HCS allows units to have discretion in how to make hires, but policies related to hiring need to be standardized and made consistent (e.g., in terms of benefits). Comments also indicated a need for greater transparency, consistency, and fairness (which is important, but not the same thing as consistency) in all decisions, but especially for how evaluations of employees are made, with the example of evaluation of instructors being informed by consistent metrics (e.g., against department averages on TEVAL scores and class grade distributions).

**Training for administrators and supervisors.** Comments indicated that training for administrators and supervisors should cover several areas, including in how to apply university policies (because the issue often is not the policies themselves, but their inconsistent interpretation and implementation); how to conduct performance evaluations; professional development in the areas of soft skills (such as listening to and relating well to others), leadership, and communication; mental health awareness (to include support for students, staff, faculty, and administrators); team building; working with people in distress; sensitivity training; and Safe Zone training. Comments indicated that current training for supervisors is very good in several ways, but should be mandatory (with penalties for noncompliance). Comments indicated that administrators and supervisors were promoted to their positions for being good at something else (perhaps because these promotions are the only way to earn pay increases), and this training is therefore appropriate and necessary. Comments indicated that

administrators should be administrators, not academics, and therefore should go to conferences for leadership and administration (but did suggest that administrators may retain some academic responsibilities in some cases, such as if they are still teaching or serve as Department Heads).

**Accountability for administrators and supervisors.** Comments indicated that administrators and supervisors should be evaluated and held accountable for being excellent. Comments indicated the need for annual evaluations as a moment for accountability and to ensure that administrators and supervisors are enacting their training. Comments indicated that evaluation procedures of administrators and supervisors need revision to allow all employees to provide the evaluations and to do so anonymously. Comments indicated a need to decide where these processes and oversights will be “housed” due to trust issues, and suggested HCS, the President’s Office, another administrative unit, or a representative group across the University. Comments also indicated the need for a space in which to air grievances about inequities as well as a committee or group to assist in the resolution of inconsistencies.

**Offer and support professional development opportunities.** Comments indicated a need to offer and support more and better professional development opportunities, especially for staff members, including in areas such as inclusion, equity, diversity, goal setting, intercultural skills (the IDI was discussed), development, soft-skills training, Excel, Qualtrics, technology, business/leadership training (Fred Pryor training was mentioned). Comments indicated that there is an expectation that every employee do professional development (for some it is listed as 10% of their job description). Comments indicated that the trainings that are offered are scattered and often inconvenient, and that a central K-State website would be helpful to provide easy access to and communication about professional development opportunities. Comments also suggested a mandatory KSU conference that would be offered when other things are shut down to allow people to attend to provide way for people to get to know people across units through planned, organized activities. Comments also indicated the employees’ work schedules and responsibilities should be reasonable to accommodate their professional development efforts.

**Offer and support flexibility and technology to improve abilities to work well.** Comments indicated that, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need to make better access to and use of technology to ensure the functioning and productivity of the University. Comments indicated that social distancing creates the need for us to be more nimble, and that we need better tools to communicate (such as options for texting with students and better phone systems for remote work). Comments indicated that the University has this technology (e.g., Echo 360, texting capabilities that come back to email so employees do not have to use their personal phones), but has not implemented this technology across all units. Comments indicated that the information given to employees during and about their remote work has been inconsistent and/or inaccurate. Comments indicated that flexibility is more possible than supervisors and administrators have indicated, that employees do not need to be in their offices physically, that departments and units can still function, and that the University needs to rethink how/when/where employees can do their jobs. Comments indicated that supervisors can/should be more flexible, need to allow more work-life balance,

do not need restrict employees to work from 8 to 5, and should allow meetings to be more flexible. Comments indicated a need for more flexible perspectives because things will be different moving forward, that our policies and procedures can be more creative and nontraditional, and that this is consistent with what students want. Comments indicated that the pandemic and the social justice issues in current times elevates this conversation about inconsistencies and inequities, and that the University needs to take immediate and serious action, and needs to be cognizant and proactive (not reactive) in addressing these issues.