

Public Comments received electronically for the Board of Trustees meeting held on June 9, 2021

Good afternoon, my name is CJ Olson from Lakeport; I am a Network Administrator and classified employee for the past 8 years here at Mendocino College.

I would like to take a couple of moments to advocate for keeping telecommuting a viable working option for employees of Mendocino College for the future. It's been told that the district is already showing resistance to apparently any and all telecommuting options - right now while we're still fully functional operating at the maximum amount of telecommuting possible; this seems rather absurd considering businesses the world over have proven that not only can an organization survive, but they can also thrive while fully telecommuting.

The pandemic has shown us that people throughout the world are able to telecommute and be quite productive and in some cases, more so while working remotely. This includes Mendocino College employees; this capacity is not exclusive to giant tech companies who have made headlines that they are moving their entire workforce to primarily telecommuting.

I am not advocating for moving the college to a fully remote model; what I'm advocating for is the use of intelligence and flexibility that help not only the organization itself but the employees as well. The district would be wise to retain the option and capacity for telecommuting since we have seen in the past three years regular incidents that have kept staff off campus (fires, Public Safety Power Shutdowns, snowstorms/fallen trees, and the pandemic). We do not know what will happen with COVID. There may be flare ups, variants that are not blocked by the current vaccines, etc.

I would advocate for most employees (where it makes sense - groundskeepers generally can't work remotely for example) to cycle through a remote working day now and then; maintaining that fully functional home working space which in the event of any number of cases could ease the transition back to a remote working model be it for a day, a week or a year. Should another pandemic occur, or massive fires flare up in our local community then most staff could then simply return to their home working environment without missing a beat. When the current pandemic hit there was a lengthy transition period for most workers who have not been telecommuting; personally, I already had a working setup and even still it took multiple iterations and I now have a home setup that provides me a better working environment than I have at my office.

Most of us in the past have had to stay home for a day to care for a sick child or meet an appliance repair person who gave us a lovely 4- or 8-hour service window for the 15-minute job they need to do; these would be much less of an intrusion on work and personal life if telecommuting was a regular accepted and viable option. Now instead of missing a full day of work an employee could work remotely for a day and the work that needed to get done still gets done on time.

Here at Mendocino College, there are a number of hardworking people who in the pre-pandemic world would effectively 'hide' in the former meeting area of Information Technology so that they could get some important work done that required focus and uninterrupted attention; these same people could likely use a telecommuting day to achieve similar results considering the meeting room in the back of Information Technology is no longer available for this type of refuge.

One concern that has been expressed by the district is that some employees will be jealous of employees allowed to work from home. I do not believe managing jealousy has ever been or ever will be an official task of the Human Resources department. Employee jealousy could happen just as easily now based on a different job title or classifications. Someone could easily be jealous of The Director of Centers or the maintenance & operations crew for their ability to travel between locations; yet others would HATE traveling between locations. Equally as absurd would be any given office worker

complaining that the grounds keepers get to work outdoors in the beautiful sunshine or the grounds keepers complaining that the office staff get the luxury of heating and air conditioning. There is also an easy solution as well - any given employee who is feeling jealous of another does have the ability to change jobs and notifications of openings are currently sent via email so employees can at their own will move within the organization to the positions they see as 'superior' than their current and many have moved in the past.

The important aspect is to keep our options open; with more options we have more flexibility to handle all the curves in the road ahead; no one certainly predicted the pandemic, and we did a great job with that, however we can position ourselves to be more ready for more things and react even faster with less impact on our work and personal lives.

Thank you for your time.