Interviewer: Here we go. All right. Now we should be recording. Participant: Good.

Interviewer: Okay? Great. Okay. Just tell me briefly about the experience at your institution -- [00:00:14] institution here, but I know where you are -

- trying to rapidly implement policies from HR during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participant: It was all a little surreal, but I feel like we pivoted pretty quickly. It was fairly smooth. I was coming in every day, and then heard rumors of working from home, and working on convocation that year, actually. Then people were like, “I bet we don’t have it,” and I’m like, “No way.” And so, then just one day to the next, signed the papers to say working from home. I think we did it initially for two weeks, because that’s what we thought, and yeah. Went home.

Then we made arrangements for -- because there was mail. We had to always figure out things here, and yeah. I’m not sure how far you want me to go ahead. Do you want me to keep going, or do you have other questions?

Interviewer: Yeah. No, that’s great. Can you do me a favor? Can you just turn up the volume on your computer just a touch?

Participant: Okay. Is that better?

Interviewer: Yeah, that’s better. Great. Thank you. Yeah. Just thinking about this, and as we’re moving further down the line here, what changes were made for staff about work arrangements? You know, work from home, you have to come into the office, and some of the things you were just talking about?

Participant: Yeah. Work from home, which was new. Obviously we had all -- we were in here full-time in the office before. Suddenly switched to working from home full-time, and I don’t think most of us came into the office. We had one of our assistant deans came in to do the mail once a week. I don’t know if he did that immediately. It might have been like a month in. But we worked from home, switched to Zoom pretty -- I mean, that went fine.

Then probably -- and I can’t remember exactly, but I want to say maybe by that August, we were coming in once a week to cover the front, but it might have been longer than that. We all had a schedule where one person would cover the front office once a week, and then I think by the following summer, we were back in the office. Most of us here -- well, not

most of us. Depending on who our supervisor is. But I work for the dean, so he was in every day, I was in every day when we all came back. Then we do still have some people on staff here that work from home one day a week, so that’s changed since COVID.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Yeah. Okay. When the changes were implemented, were they appropriately timed for the issues that needed to be addressed?

Participant: I believe so. I mean, initially when they first told us we were working from home, I was -- we were all concerned, because we were hearing all these stories, and we didn’t know what was going on. And so, we had

families flying in for tours coming into the office, and I was like, “They’re bringing all their germs. What’s going to happen?” So I was a little uncomfortable. But it was fine. Then when they pivoted -- yeah, I feel like everything -- I mean, it was quick, right? It had to be. But I always felt supported here, and they were pretty good with communication, so that was helpful.

Interviewer: Who made the decisions about the policies for your college?

Participant: I mean, I think it all came down from higher up or the HR, and then the dean and [REDACTED], they would kind of implement and let everyone know what was going on.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. Were you involved in those decisions? Participant: I was not.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. All right. When the changes were -- okay. Were all of the changes that were implemented, are they all still in place? Are some of them still in place?

Participant: I would say most are not still in place. As I said, most of us are back.

There are some folks here that still work from home once a week. I guess a change would be if for some reason you can’t come into the office, unless you’re really sick, you’re assumed you can work just fine from home, which is new from before COVID. Yeah. Otherwise, honestly, in this space, I feel like we came back to previous, pre-COVID pretty quickly, at least from my perception, which honestly was welcome to me.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. Great. Thank you. What challenges did you encounter with staff as these changes were being implemented?

Participant: With other staff?

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Participant: Really not many. The difficult part was I interviewed and got a new position within the office, and then I had to train over Zoom and Facetime, and that was tricky. That was actually quite difficult, to learn a new job remotely. But with other staff, I mean, I didn’t talk to them very often.

You know? A lot of the people that I see every day, and that was more

difficult. But I didn’t really encounter any serious issues.

Interviewer: Okay. One of the things that we wanted to know more about was were there differences for men versus women staff during the pandemic?

Participant: No. No. I mean, when we had coverage up front every day, we did that for a while. It worked out that the staff that went and covered the front happened to be all women, but other than that, no. Not that I could see.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay, great. Thank you. Uh-huh. What additional work did you take on to ensure successful implementation of the policy changes?

Participant: Well, I learned Zoom real fast. I guess the tricky part was to get the home office set up on a dime, really quick, and try to figure out a spot where I could Zoom. My husband was working from home then too, so it was trying to figure that out.

Interviewer: Okay. Was there an evaluation of what staff thought about the changes, the policy changes, or the changes to the workspace, or anything like that?

Participant: Not that I recall, no.

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant: I mean, we talked. We had full staff meetings maybe once a month, where we would check in with everybody. But no, not that I recall. No.

Interviewer: Okay. When you were doing your monthly check-in, how satisfied were people with the changes?

Participant: I think the staff overall were okay with things. It was - part of our staff or some faculty that teach, clear faculty that are part of the dean’s office staff, and I think they had a more difficult time, obviously, because they were suddenly switching to teaching their classes remotely, which I know was a lot for them. So they had it harder than the staff. I know that they

had some issues. But fellow staff members that I heard didn’t really have any, that I’m aware of.

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant: Besides what we were all going through at that time.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. We’ve been asking people, what are the characteristics of employees who did well with these changes? Because some employees might not have done so well. I don’t think it sounds that way for your group, but what do you think the characteristics are of people who did particularly well during this, with all these changes?

Participant: Oh. Flexible people. People who maybe tend to be a little more positive.

People who know that you have a job, and it still needs to be -- it still needs to happen. You still need to get it done. I mean, maybe people that are a little more proactive are more successful.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. Were there staff positions that -- for who working at home worked really well?

Participant: Yeah. I think -- I mean, at the time I think -- I would venture to guess most here in the office, that worked fine. I know our advisors had a hard -- I mean, the whole goal for advisors is to be there for the students, and when we don’t see them in person, and you knew that maybe some were falling through the cracks, I think that was a lot of stress for some of the advisors.

I know one of our advisors actually came into the office during all of COVID. She was the only one, and she got permission to come in because she lived in a small condo. So she came into the office, and she was able to meet I think occasionally with students as needed, in a safe way, because they were alone, essentially. But yeah, those folks had a harder

time, I think just because they couldn’t really interact with students like

they would normally.

Interviewer: Okay. Yeah. Well, that makes sense. Okay. All right. I kind of think that’s everything we have. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience with COVID-19?

Participant: Well, it taught me that I don’t like to work remote. I like to have home be home, and office be office. I don’t like the combo. You know, and it was interesting to see how quickly we can pivot if we need to, and still get the job done. That was good to learn, so.

Interviewer: Oh, that’s great. Okay. Good. Well, thank you so much. These are relatively short discussions, okay?

Participant: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: We’re just fact-finding, as it were. But thank you so much for your time.

We really appreciate that.

Participant: You’re very welcome. Have a great Friday.

Interviewer: Okay. Yes, you have a good Friday and a lovely weekend. Participant: Thanks. You too. Take care.

Interviewer: Okay. Bye.

Participant: Bye.