Moderator: , could you let us know what you do at the University?

Participant: Yeah, I’d be happy to. So I’m . I’m in the financial aid and scholarships department. I’m technically a financial aid counselor, but my duties are mostly are in the work study area on campus now.

Moderator: Awesome. .

Participant: I started out as the as the Assistant Director of the [U3] Writing Center.

And then in 2021 I became the Graduate Writing Center Coordinator. So I coordinated an online—mostly online partly hybrid graduate writing center now.

Moderator: Great. Thanks. We have two , so .

Participant: I’m the Director of Web Services here at [U3]. So my team is in charge of the entire public facing website.

Moderator: Awesome. .

Participant: Yes. During the pandemic, I was an academic or Student Success Advisor, but of I’ve recently shifted over to the Dean of Students Office and Student Outreach and Support.

Moderator: Awesome. , is it ? Am I saying that right?

Participant: Yeah. And and I get each other emails quite a lot actually. So I run Canvas for the university and Zoom and all the things that plug into Canvas basically.

Moderator: Awesome. .

Participant: Hi. During the pandemic, I worked in the registrar’s office doing the athletic eligibility. I’ve recently shifted over to Assistant Director of Student Outreach Support.

Moderator: Awesome. .

Participant: Hi. I’m the Director of International Marketing and Recruitment for the International Affairs Office. So I cover Europe and do all of our marketing and outreach coordination.

Moderator: Great. And . Oh, you’re muted .

Participant: Whoops. I am a psychologist and the Training Director over in the Counseling and Psychological Services.

Moderator: Awesome. And , are you there?

Participant: Yeah, I am. My Wi-Fi keeps cutting out my video so I might just be audio today. Hope you guys can hear me.

Moderator: Yeah, we can hear you.

Participant: Awesome. So I might be a little bit of an outlier. I didn’t work for [U3] during the pandemic. I actually worked for [another university]. I started working at [U3] shortly after the pandemic in 2021, but I worked in the— I’m the Executive Assistant in the Regional Services Division.

Moderator: Cool. Are you the one who emailed me about that, and we determined that it was still sort of pandemic-y in 2021? Am I remembering that right?

Participant: Yeah. Yeah, definitely pandemic related, so yeah.

Moderator: [Researcher], I had checked with [Researcher] about that, and she said we should be good to go. Cool. Thank you so much. Well, we’re excited to learn from all of you. So for the rest of the questions, just feel free to jump in if you have something to share. So first of all, if you could share with us how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your work activities.

Participant: I’ll jump in. I’m usually pretty quick to jump in on things. The biggest challenge for me is that because so much work and the world had to move onto online, that meant that we had to communicate a lot more things via the website. So my workload actually increased, but my home life too was a challenge because I had a seven-year-old at home who was suddenly being homeschooled by me. And so I had to schedule all of my meetings around whenever she would have Zoom lessons for school. And she was in my office all day with me, and so I had a Zoom meeting, then she was supposed to be being quiet doing a worksheet or doing whatever next to me. And if she had a Zoom meeting, I was quiet I was doing my work next to her, but able to help with everything.

But it actually extended my work hours quite a bit because there were so many times during the day that I had to help her with things. And we were just constantly pushing out updates around-the-clock anyway it seemed like as new developments happened. I always had to be available to be jumping online and putting out new information on the website. It’s like, okay, this is now what we’re doing on campus, and everybody needs to be

aware of it. And this is the change, and this is the change. And so basically, it just increased the volume of my work a lot and the hours of my work a lot.

Participant: My experience was very similar to ’s because we also have daughters who are exactly the same age and in exactly the same grade. But running Canvas and Zoom, suddenly we were having to create guides and all this stuff to get all the classes more online. And then [U3] installed Zoom cameras all over campus. And my office—IT handled the physical camera, but my office handles the online running of it, so we had to train faculty on how to use it and all of those things. And I was back and forth through the pandemic. I’m full-time remote now, but I would spend half-and-half during the pandemic, so it was just a lot of juggling. But the flipside of that is, we were able to get our phone and help desk answering system to be used remotely, and that’s part of what allows me to actually be a fully remote employee now. So that was set up through that experience.

Participant: I think for advising it was less structure because we meet with students.

That’s our day-to-day is meeting with students. And so still meeting with them on Zoom and trying to connect with them was hard, especially when you hadn’t been working on Zoom and not knowing how to connect with people. At least remotely for me that was a learning curve. Also similar to what these lady said as far as the work seems to extend. Although I feel more productive because I don’t have people to chat with home, I feel like the work is almost endless. And also had to hold ourselves more accountable to what we were doing during the day because the flexibility came and the structure left that to hold my job security, I had to put on my calendar every minute of every day what I was doing so that I could keep a job. Because I was still working.

Although, they couldn’t see what I was doing, or it wasn’t physically in office. I do think having the opportunity of growth as far as advising seeing that it could be done remotely. Although, that connection with students can still be difficult knowing that if someone has COVID but are feeling fine, they could work remotely and still get their job done. Versus I feel fine, but I have to sit home and do nothing. So I think that there were good and bad things as far as my experience. Mostly lonely because I am a huge extrovert so that was very difficult. But I got to spend lots of time with my dogs so that was great.

Participant: Very similar to because at the time I was working with students in that capacity of counseling, and I was doing scholarships on campus. It was a big adjustment to where we were doing a lot of in person and maybe phone appointments, but switching to Zoom was kind of a different world

of okay, there’s face-to-face interaction, but just getting comfortable with that environment and moving towards that. Also working a lot with the federal system, there’s a lot of federal changes within the Department of Education specifically about COVID-19 and student finances and things like that. So a lot of funding changes and a lot of special circumstances.

So we had a lot of changes working with COVID of being like oh, this is a special circumstance for now. And so we’re coming off of those special circumstances now like okay, now we have to go back to the normal. So there’s a lot of things like that. Specifically, my work-study world, we made some good shifts to doing training with more online whereas I used to it online and in person and now just really shifted to where there is so much more of a presence on campus that’s not on campus. We want to make sure that people felt engaged and had the same experience, which I think is great. I think there’s people in this room that have worked remote for a long time before COVID, and so they may have felt that isolation from campus before this. So it’s kind of I think hopeful that campus has become more inclusive to people who work off campus and I really like to see that.

Participant: On the flipside of those federal regulations, we’re seeing now new federal regulations coming in that are going to be permanent. And so those are fun juggling things that my office actually deals with a lot.

Participant: I mean, you’d think in international, we can’t travel every time we need to do something internationally. You’d think we would have more remote things prior to COVID. And we did have some, but COVID certainly pushed us to be more savvy and more comfortable with remote and online activities, presentations, connections with students and so that was good in that regard. But it definitely just put a massive stress over everything that we did. Thinking of students in other countries and all the different realities they were experiencing. Students in China. And it was just like a different flavor for every country. And then absolutely just the added stress of three kids being homeschooled and that falling largely on me was incredibly stressful. But I have always had—well, for a long time I’ve had kind of a remote component to my schedule, and so that was an easier transition for me.

Participant: For me, we went completely online. So all of a sudden I had to learn how to do therapy online, which I’d never done before. And so never done that to doing it all day every day was a big transition. We had to learn—do a lot of training and learning just about, how do you support a student who is in crisis over the internet. And that’s just a whole different—it’s just so different than having them in your office in person. We also because we

have a training program, we have trainees working under licenses, so we were having to figure it out for their graduate degrees what were the requirements going to be in terms of doing therapy online and supervision online. Was that going to be allowed and how much, et cetera, et cetera.

Thankfully there was a lot of flexibility around that. But there was just so much unknown at the beginning that it was pretty challenging trying to figure all of those components out. We also tried to increase how much outreaching we were doing. And putting out a lot of content to just support general mental health on campus that we hadn’t been doing before as an office. And so we shifted in that regard too. It felt like all of a sudden we had to be experts at things we’d never done before. And also had to be kind of leading the way in putting out mental health supportive content while we too were in a mentally really stressful situation that we didn’t know anything more about than anybody else in the world. And so that was a particularly hard part of the transition.

Moderator: A lot of you have talked about changes in flexibility in your job. Could you all tell us a little bit more about that? Was there a change in flexibility in your job compared to pre-COVID and is there still now?

Participant: I would say yes. Advisors now have the opportunity to have a work remote date or a flexible schedule. I think that brought about the whole university of having flexible schedules as far as staff goes. Which I think is fantastic for a lot of folks. And I know that a lot of folks don’t have that opportunity either, so I know that that’s something that has been in the works for a while as far as what flexibility means for everyone in every department.

Participant: Yeah, we went from fully every staff member was always in – well not always - we had one staff member who worked remote, but it was always that very special circumstance. And it was really interesting to go to that where I was pregnant with my first when COVID hit and it was, go home.

Here’s a laptop. Figure it out. Go home. We don’t want you here. We

don’t know the medical concerns that you may have as a pregnant person in the office. Which was very—I was very happy about that situation because it was a scary time.

But it did long-term turn into like mentioned, and our office have usually two days a week that our counselors get to work from home. I fully work from home due to other changes. But it’s definitely opened those door to the thought process of, they can do it. People can work from home, and it can work really well. People can get their jobs done. But on the flipside, I think that management does have to step in and be like okay,

we have to make sure things are getting done. So it’s definitely been an interesting to see different managers handle things a little bit differently on campus.

Participant: I mean, I think it’s really depended on who your supervisor is. My supervisor is very open very flexible. Our department is typically looking ahead. We were day playing with days off. One remote day off a week and things like that in our department. Prior to COVID, we started preparing our stuff for COVID training a couple weeks before it was called. So we tried to look ahead. But I do think there’s varying degrees of response now that especially I’m fully remote. There are times where I offered to help with something and they’re like, no. They want to do it all in person. So it’s like okay, cool. Whatever. That’s cool. But it’s just outside of my department, I definitely seem more less interest in working with remote employees if that makes sense.

Participant: See I’ve been remote since 2005. I live in Las Vegas and work for [U3], so I live in a different state. And for a long time when people would contact me they would just ask, when are you going to be on campus next because I want to schedule a meeting with you. And then now everybody knows how to use videoconferencing and I find that everybody is so much more willing to just jump on a meeting whatever. And so that’s been the silver lining to the whole pandemic for my work because everybody knows how to communicate with me much better now.

Participant: Yeah, I’ve seen more flexibility for student workers and non-student hourly part-time workers as well with the tutoring. Because prior to COVID it was kind of a situation well, if someone was sick, then they just stay home, and they don’t work or they come to work sick. There wasn’t really an in between. And so with the writing center having to go fully remote for maybe a couple of semester, semester and a half or something like that, that kind of helped people shift their perspective on that flexibility of being able to work from home.

So if someone had a caregiving situation or car problems, they couldn’t get to campus, or they were recovering from an illness, but they still wanted to work. Then being able to shift their schedules online and figure out a procedure and a protocol for doing that. So I feel like it benefited the hourly part-time workers in my group. For me, it was kind of a mixed bag because the flexibility of Zoom was great. Otherwise, the invisibility aspect though, because a lot of people didn’t know what I did prior to the pandemic.

And so when I wasn’t there to be seen as a body doing something, it was

even more invisible afterward. And then when other people started being able to come back to campus, but I still couldn’t being immunocompromised, people were less excited about using Zoom. And so I would often be the one person that would still need it for a meeting and there was some grumbling about that. And I was like well, if you’re going to have the meeting and if I have to be there, this is the only way that I can be there. So I don’t really know how else to approach this. So yeah, so flexibility in some respects, a little less flexibility in others. But I feel like it was in both cases more of an attitude.

Participant: I feel like there was a lot of flexibility in being at home with my kids especially while homeschooling them. The part that felt a little less flexible was my own guilt of feeling like I needed to be available all the time. So I didn’t leave my computer much. I didn’t take lunch breaks because I felt if someone had to ask me a question, I needed to be right there to answer it. So I felt like I was a little more tied to my computer than if I would’ve been on campus.

Participant: I’ve had that guilt for nearly 20 years now. Eighteen years of working remote, and I’m attached to my phone and everything now. Still I feel like there’s that whole expectation since they don’t hardly ever see me in person, I’ve got to make sure that I am responding to things as fast as possible.

Participant: I was just going to say same. And I’m always yelling at people when I get they’re out of office that they’re responding to me. I was yelling at ’s boss the other day about that.

Participant: Yeah, I experienced that too. I burned out so badly during the first year and year and a half of the pandemic because I was the only—technically I’m full staff for benefits but I’m on an 11-month contract. But because I was the only technically full-time person in my group, I felt like I had to always be on, always available 24/7. I would be answering emails and text messages up until midnight and past. And there was no work life balance. And so eventually, I can’t do this anymore and I just had to turn off my work email notifications on my phone and try to start restricting myself to my actual work hours. And letting people know that, if this does not constitute an emergency, then I will respond to you when I am back at work tomorrow.

Participant: I agree with on that. I had an office space and after a while I got sick of it, and I didn’t want to go in there. But definitely restricting it, if I’m in this office space that’s what I’m doing, and I can step out. And it’s lunch,

I’m stepping. Or when it’s 5:30 I’m stepping out and I’m not doing anything else. Which is really hard to do.

Participant: Yeah. For when I do recruiting students in different time zones, it makes a lot of sense when I’m getting up super early to do webinars or accommodating different time zones. So I particularly have a lot of flexibility with remote work. A lot of flexibility. I have a space on campus, and I don’t feel like I’m taking up an office, but it’s like a cubicle space. So I can work on campus. I can work remotely, and I actually adore the flexibility. But there are other parts of our division that it’s like they’re so student facing they have to be there.

And they have hardly—if you’re sick, yes. You can remote. But they don’t do a ton of remote. So there’s a lot of differing scenarios in our department or division because of just the different nature of the work that we do. But I was remote in [redacted] for a couple of years, and I felt like

like that. You were just so responsive because you didn’t want to be the weakest link because nobody could see what you were doing. But I feel less of that now because for our recruitment team it’s so common that we’re all remote and there’s a lot of trust. It’s a good energy.

Moderator: This is super helpful and eye-opening. And actually leads really nicely into our next question which is about communication. So some of you have talked about different ways in which the COVID experience has shifted communication levels in your work. So we were wondering to learn more about that. Has there been a change in communication levels? Was communication healthier pre-pandemic, during the pandemic? How is communication in your job now?

Participant: Okay, I have a split answer on this. Before the pandemic, I feel like communication was healthier in terms of how much time people would be okay with waiting on this. Because everything was changing so rapidly during the pandemic, everything needed a response so rapidly. And so that was the unhealthy side of it. But as I mentioned earlier, the healthy side of it is that more people know how to communicate with you when you’re remote. And so I think that that’s helpful for everybody whether your full- time, always remote like me, or if you’re somebody who is in and out of the office on occasion, or if you’re just sick and you can’t make it. I mean, people have ways of communicating with you and still including you, which is fantastic. But I do feel like there is an urgency to things that it just needles at least at me and the things that I’m doing. I feel like that has been amplified a lot and I feel like I’ve been sitting on pins and needles ever since the pandemic because everything has just been go, go, go, go, go and it’s hard to deal with sometimes.

Participant: Yeah, I would absolutely agree with . I switched jobs halfway through the pandemic. In my first job, there was kind of this understanding that okay, if you’re sick, it’s okay to take a little bit more time to respond. I did interviews for my previous job and some people needed some extra time to work on stuff. And so that was kind of the understanding that it was going to take a little bit longer to get back, but it was going to be okay.

And then when I started this job, kind of going back to the flexibility part because we needed to be so flexible during the pandemic. That was built into my job description and understanding that I could have a flexible schedule, but that I should also be available for texts and emails and calls past work hours. So that’s kind of been my experience. I feel like yeah, post-pandemic, the need for information is a lot more—there’s not as much flexibility in that. People need answers quicker. It feels like you need to get the information out quicker. So that’s just been my experience.

Participant: Yeah, just touching on that really quick. I remember about a year ago having this conversation with our team about what is appropriate communication for one another. Because COVID had transcended. It was like, you could text anyone any hour of the date. You could email anyone any hour of the day and your expectations were like, they were so high like they used to get this response any hour of the day from each other.

And so it was like, what is now appropriate? We need to have a new definition of the timeframe and just have little more respect and thoughtfulness of, does this really need to be sent out right now. Schedule send on your email. If you’re working at 11:00 at night because that’s when you can fit it in, you can schedule send those emails and things like that. So anyway, it was just kind of like a courtesy conversation that we had that I thought was interesting and healthy for people to realize okay, things are normalizing now. We don’t need to be in a panic 24 hours a day anymore.

Participant: For me, it really does come back to my supervisor. I’m lucky in that my supervisor gives me a lot of trust, which it gives me room to breathe. But as far as communication goes, that was one of the things I was most concerned about going fully remote. Because I would often pop into my boss’ office with whatever the new problem of the day was. So he and I now worked out a system where I can send him a message, we can put a calendar appointment up for a half-hour if I have a list of things. That was today. But it’s just learning new routes of communication. And I tend to over communicate with my team, so we’re doing very well.

Some of the other teams in my department as they’ve had fully remote employees haven’t communicated as well. But I think it’s just the dynamic

which helps. And a lot more instant messaging I found. I’ve instant message and and . A lot of the people here. But just for quick things where it’s more casual and less I don’t need a direct answer about this. That said, I’m always feeling like hey, at 6:00 pm I’m still on my phone and still on my computer. Let me finish this project real quick especially since I’m in a different time zone now. It makes it really complicated to get off as early as I should get off.

Participant: I definitely think we’re – I’m with that there’s a mixed bag of issues and benefits. Definitely on our student side. There’s a lot of benefits. I feel like our students on campus have a lot more access to us and formats that they’re more comfortable with. Being very front facing to the students for a long time, we did encourage face-to-face appointments. But a lot of students aren’t comfortable with that. And so really opening up to Zoom appointments and phone calls and things like that where they can have a little more anonymity, a little bit more where they can feel comfortable was really nice for our students.

Having gone from working in the office to being fully now, there was definitely issues and just conversation were like hey, sometimes you miss those being in the office where most people did work in the office at least at some point in the day. You miss those little conversation. Those little decision that are made for the office in those passing moments. So it definitely had to be like hey, remember I’m here. I still work here. You have to let me know when things change. I definitely thought my director has taken that and being like oh, yeah. We need to invite this person either on the phone.

All of our meetings have been through Zoom even though a lot of people are in the office, there’s enough of us out of the office that it’s easier to have good communication. Because for so many years, it was like oh, that one person up on the screen, like . And they had a hard time jumping in when everybody is sitting around a conference table and this one person is on the screen. So I definitely think we had to work towards that of

being, everybody’s voice needs to be heard. We need to make sure everybody is on the same page because not everybody is here all the time. So while we have made strides, it definitely was a pinch point for a while like, I don’t know what’s going on because I’m not there. And if nobody tells me, I don’t know.

Participant: Yeah, I had to have a come to Jesus meeting with my boss about that specific—a certain level of announcement in the office, you have to include the whole office. Because there was something I found out from my staff under me that I should’ve found out from my boss over me.

Participant: Yeah, so couple of things of communication. One, I discovered—because I was already sending a lot of emails before the pandemic, but then once I started working remotely, all of my—practically all of my communication had to be done through writing. And a lot of people didn’t have their phones, their work phone set up for call forwarding or something like that, so I couldn’t just call somebody really quickly to discuss something to get a quick answer. So everything had to be done through writing and I discovered, this thing that I could describe it like five seconds is going to take me 50 words writing it out.

And discovering just how exhausting having to put so many conversations and so many things into writing and not realizing how much cognitive energy that demanded. And so some days by the end of the day, I look at my to do list and I feel like all I’ve done is answer and send emails today, but I’m exhausted. I don’t have any more brain juice to tackle these other things on my list because I’ve used it all with all of this communication.

But apparently my communication style shifted over the course of the pandemic.

Because in the beginning, I was thinking like oh, it’s going to be hard for people to read tone, so I wanted them to know that I’m being really friendly and approachable. So I was using more exclamation points than usual, more smiley faces. And then as I just got progressively more tired and burned out, my emails would be shorter. Not as much exclamation. Not as many smiley faces. And I was like, hopefully these people know me by now that they know that it’s still me and it still the tone. I just don’t have the energy to make it at this high level of energy right now as I did originally.

Moderator: This is extremely helpful. And I want to keep going, but I’m also aware of the time. So I’m going to go ahead and ask you the next question. So based on your experiences during the pandemic, what differences did you see between men and women in their experiences at work? Were the changes that happened in pandemic different for women than men? Were they more difficult for one gender? Were they more beneficial for one gender? Let’s talk about that.

Participant: I work in the IT department where the majority of the people are men. So most of them, they either had stay-at-home wives or wives that did not work full-time. So once their children were at home and they were working at home, you might see a kid run by in the background or something. But they were not the default parent. And even in my home environment, my husband would literally go into the guest room, close the

door all day work, and had no clue of what the kid’s Zoom schedule was or anything like that. And yet, I’m sitting here juggling it all. And I’m like, come on. You’ve got to take this when I’ve got a meeting that I’ve got to do. And she’s got this one.

And I just feel like a lot of the times—it just feels terrible to just general I like that. But men just are so oblivious to all of the little things that women do to keep it all running even within the office they men that would do everything they’re sitting there, oh. Who’s picking up all the mail? And I’m sitting there, this gal in the office picked up the mail every time and brought it to this table and then you guys thought your mail magically appeared at the table. It was just funny how there were so many things that didn’t happen when people were not all there because it was women that picked up the pieces.

Participant: Sorry. I’ll be quick. I would agree with that. When I started this job, my boss was really aware that all of our schedules would be pretty flexible and his as well that he had this flexibility now that he could work from home and work in office whenever you wanted to. But I think there was this disconnect of okay, when you’re not here, people still have to work. They still have to do things that keep your schedule running and your department running. And so that fell a lot on me and some of my coworkers who happened to be female. And so while he has a very flexible schedule and can kind of take days off when he needs to and wants to, there’s kind of been some issues with that. Not saying that we still have to work, and you still have to do things that people are still keeping things running while you’re gone. And so that’s been kind of an issue. And I think COVID definitely was to blame for that a little bit.

Participant: So kind of my experience with this is, I feel like things at least within [U3] and my office specifically, we’re very equitable as far as how many people can stay home and things like that. Honestly, I think that it might have gone a little bit in the other direction in some ways. A lot of my office is female, and we actually had three people pregnant at the time. So it could’ve been more the side that we got a little bit—I’m not going to say preferential treatment because I don’t think that’s preferential.

But we were dealing with more medically complex situations and may have gotten a little bit more flexibility for that first little bit of trying to figure everything out in a scary—associated with COVID. On a more personal note, my husband also actually became a work from home employee at the exact same time I did. We both worked full-time in offices and so it was a big shift to go home, but also we were having our first child. And so while it sounds like a lot of people may have had

children in school, it was a very interesting dynamic to having very young children and trying to do this flexible of okay, I have a meeting. I have a student who I have a call with. Or he has a meeting or something like that. And we did a lot of back and forth and we had to figure it out together.

And because it was our first child, we had to make those lines. While things are shifted because of job changes for me more recently, it was very equitable I felt like at first. But I do see, and I did see a lot of people that really struggled with taking on that load especially children that were in school that now had to be home all the time.

I had a lot of families that dealt with those massive concerns. So I felt very lucky in that I was starting out into my family with being a remote employee and my husband a remote employee. And we had to make the conscious decision instead of the defaulted decision of okay, you’re the mom so you’ve always been the one all over the place and taking care of the kids. We were both in that situation together and we had to be like okay, your work is just as important as mine. So we have to find a good balance at the time. So just interesting differences I feel like.

Participant: My office was very similar to in that the women who were working in the office, their husbands were also working. But the men who were working in their office with the children, either the children were older, or their wives were taking care of the children. So luckily my daughter was old enough to fend for herself for a lot of ways, because I ignore my child most of the time. She’s a tween now. She doesn’t want me. But there’s still this—my husband, I love my husband. But my husband was working part-time, but I still was the one making sure she was doing her schooling. Making sure we were getting food in the house. Making sure dinner was available. And even now he’s working full-time, but I’m still the one doing all those things too. Yeah, so it’s just that different dynamic. Again, it comes down to, I have a great office and a great team where if I have to flex to take my daughter to something, they know I’m either making up that hour somewhere else or I’m taking time off.

Participant: I would say as far as the office goes, I felt like the female person was a lot more high stressed as far as, I got to make sure my calendar is up to date. I got to make sure that I’m meeting the quotas as far as meeting with students. I felt like the gentleman weren’t so much based on what they told me as far as getting together for lunch and hanging out or whatever which really pissed me off I’m not going to lie. Because I did not do that. But as far as personal, similar to these other ladies, I may not have children, but my husband was working in person. He didn’t work remote ever. He was working in person and so I was still expect—not still. I guess I was expect to not only take care of my work but also doing household. Doing

everything. Like everything. Bills whatever, which felt like extra. And he was going to work and doing the same exact thing. So that was stressful that way.

Participant: So for a minute at the beginning of the pandemic, our office tried to have some flexibility in terms of if one of us wanted to come in and just get out of the house and work in our work office, could we do that? And we were trying to arrange it so that only one of us would be there at a time, so we weren’t spreading germs and et cetera, et cetera. But it was really interesting to see how quickly the men in the office would sign up to have a day in the office so that they could get out of their home environment, get away from their children, and have a moment to themselves to focus on work in a quiet space. And that meant the women rarely got to do that.

And it was very interesting how just this kind of norm that society has had for years and years of men leave the house and go to work kind of acted itself out. Where the women more quickly had to figure out how to adapt to just being at home 24/7 and doing everything that we’d used to been able to do in our work offices do remotely. And so that was this really shocking difference in the beginning. And it worked itself out with time and we kind of set some limits that like, no. Either our whole office is remote or not. We can’t have the men are allowed to go into the office and the women compensate for them doing that by not going to the office. So yeah, that was some strange inequality with that that happened that we had to address really directly. Which was shocking to me. I didn’t see that coming.

Participant: I noticed more differences between myself as female staff and my male faculty counterparts. So here at [U3] and in the writing center it’s pretty female dominated. So there weren’t immediate differences to see within my group. But I’m Facebook friends with a lot of writing center coordinators and directors across the country and there’s a distinct difference between the faculty directors and coordinators and the staff. Because the faculty had more time. They were like oh, I learned how to make sourdough bread. I learned a new language. And some of the male faculty would be like oh, I finished my book, and I started two or three new book proposals.

And then they’d be like oh, yeah. What are you doing for self-care during the pandemic? It’s like, I don’t have time for self-care. I’m working 40 hours a week. I’m high risk. I have family and friends who are high risk, so I’m worried about them. I’m also doing all of the emotional labor in my group. Checking on the tutors who’ve gotten COVID and seeing if they need anything. And I don’t have the bandwidth to learn how to make

sourdough bread or learn a new language or write the great American novel or whatever. And I think a lot of us saw those memes going around like well, Shakespeare wrote a whole new play during the Black Death or whatever. And what are you doing during those two years?

And there was also seeming this expectation of not even just sustained or continued productivity, but increased productivity. Somehow you have time. You have opportunity. What are you going to do with that? And staff is like, no. I really don’t. I didn’t have it before. I don’t have it now that I’m shifted to remote. And I did see also that there was a lot more expectation of female writing center directors and coordinators to go way over and above on the emotional labor for their writing centers than their male counterparts in those comparable positions as well. So those were just some differences that I saw. Not necessarily here at [U3] in my group since we’re pretty much mostly non-female, but yeah. It was a national trend.

Moderator: Wow. This is incredibly, incredibly useful, and helpful. Thank you. I’m aware that we are coming up—we have seven more minutes. We should be wrapping up in the next 10 to 12 minutes. But if you need to go right on hour, totally understand. We appreciate you so, so, so, so much. Just have one more question and then a little bit of follow up with that. So based on pandemic decisions for work activities, what types of changes for your work are still in effect now?

Participant: I mean, I ended up going fully remote based off of the seeds from the pandemic. The fact I can answer our office phone from home. I can work with my student workers. We can manage different things. And then

we’ve allowed our student workers once they get a certain level of experience to work from home if they’re having a really bad sick day but not sick enough—sick enough not to spread germs, but not sick enough not to work. We’ve worked with them to allow them to be able to work from home on those kind of days. Yeah, so I mean, we’ve had those planted. My office was already experimenting with a single work from home day before the pandemic, but we still have those and have people with alternative schedules like 4/10s or different things like that.

Participant: I find it interesting that the pandemic was—kind of felt like punishment to work remotely for me. But now has become a form of self-care. So you’ve been in the office all week, or you went to work in the office four days.

Why don’t you work one day remote? Which is kind of what advising has shifted to whether they do 4/10s or 9, 9s or a work from home day, which is so interesting. But over the summer, I’ve started working remotely on Wednesdays. Which again, I feel like I get a lot of work done. It’s very

productive, but I don’t know if it’s so much self-care because I feel like I’m working more. So that would be my take on that.

Participant: Just that we still let people Zoom into meetings if they want to do. We offer Zoom therapy to students. Almost none of them take us up on it. But it is an option that we continue to offer. And then yeah, the flexibility in terms of people being able to have work from home days, we have that option. Again, whether we’re able to do it or not depends a lot on what our schedule looks like and our caseloads and stuff. Because if all of our clients want to be seen in person, we see them in person. But in theory, there is the option to have work from home days. And some people are able to take that kind of not necessarily every single week, but here and there. So we have that as well. So definitely some flexibility has come from it that we just before did literally everything in person and now we realize we don’t have to.

Participant: Yeah, so for our weekly directors meeting, it move to complete remote.

We do have two pretty much fully off-site employees. One resides in Africa most of the time. So it’s worked really well. It’s been nice to keep that. There are times when - I got all these samples of chocolate truffles we might order for like a giveaway - can you guys get together for a meeting so we can all taste it? And like – decide? I don’t know. There are times when it’s just like I want that face-to-face interaction and contact, and it is pretty hard to come by for our team. But yeah, I think for me the flexibility just the demonstration of my work being remote effective.

Thunderstorms out here. But yeah, additional thoughts. It’s just been

really nice, and we’ve retained a lot of the remote practices and I think for the better for the most part.

Participant: Yes. And the Staff Association meetings have continued on Zoom so that staff members who are working remotely either permanently or temporarily can still join in. So that’s been a great thing I think for more inclusion of everyone so that everyone feels part of the same team. And I’ve had to hire some remote hourly part-time workers, tutors so developing online trainings and training protocols and so forth has been helpful. I’m still working from home mostly because I lost my workspace

on campus during the pandemic. They got repurposed. Anyway, so I go to campus for some things for meetings and then work the rest the day from home. But I’m actually in the process of moving into a workspace on campus finally. Two or three years. But I’m going to continue to have Zoom meetings because I’m still going to have some of my team remote still so things like that. So I feel like there are still positives in place that we might not have developed or experienced otherwise and so I’m grateful that those are continuing.

Moderator: Speaking of balancing mothering and working, you can probably see my six-year-old sitting on my lap [unclear]. So follow up question. Was there a change in equity in your job during the pandemic? I think that can kind of tie in with the things you all talked about with gender and how things have affected women versus men differently. And I wonder is that something that you see continuing long-term. I know some of you have talked about how working remotely feels like a punishment for you or working remotely feels like a benefit for you. Do you think that working remotely affects women more positively than men? Men more positively than women? Does it really just depends on personality more than gender circumstances?

Participant: I think personality first and foremost. But I do think that men look at it as a perk more so. I’m part of several remote worker groups on LinkedIn and it always seems like the men are saying, I’m working from this beach or from this trail or from these mountains. This is so awesome. Remote work is amazing. You guys should all be doing this. And I’m sitting here, this has not been my experience of remote work because I have to be online at certain times. I have to have a stable internet connection. And I have to take care of my home life still. So it’s not like it’s this open door for adventure and opportunity. It’s just I do work in a different spot than where everybody else does.

So that’s been kind of a weird thing. I definitely have a lot of colleagues that will be like yeah, I would be all over. I would be traveling. I would be working from Thailand. I would be working—I’m like, no you wouldn’t. The reality is that we all work for this company that operates on certain hours for the most part. and it’s not like you’re going to all of a sudden upend every other week and be in some different part of the world because of the nature of what our job is. We still work in a clock environment. The university has stuff happening at all hours of the day. But the bulk of the day is at Utah 8:00 to 5:00.

Participant: Yeah, I’m on Central time and I work 7:00 to 4:00 in Utah. But most the time I end up working 7:00 to 5:00 because of those things—because of the hours.

Participant: I’m in Pacific time and so technically my day is 7:00 to 4:00, but I work 6:30 am because of that whole, prove that you’re valuable stuff. And then until about 5:00 pm my time just because I have to go take a segment in there to pick my kid up from school. I was gone 20 minutes. So that means I have to work an hour to make up for that. Total messed up math.

Participant: Well, I feel like the difference isn’t so much man—well, it is male versus female for sure. But my best friend has been working remotely for like ten years and she’s child free by choice and I see huge differences in responsibility just because of my having children on top of it. So I get all of the mom stuff and then the household stuff. She still does a lot of the cooking in her house, but she doesn’t have children to take care of.

Participant: Yeah, I think that’s a huge component is the parental side of things. In my situation, the equity is definitely there for me. It’s 100 percent worth it for me to work from home. Financially, it’s a huge benefit for me because I have support in my home to be able to have my children at home. Whereas if I was in office, I would be looking at large amounts of financial burden essentially to have childcare and to live by that schedule and things like that. So there has been a really great benefit for me and it has been worth it for me. But I agree, it totally depends on personality. It depends on personal situation for sure.

Participant: I will say that the university does seem are open to there being children or caretaking responsibilities happening while somebody is working from home. Because when I started working remotely in 2005, that was still eight years before I had a kid or whatever it was. And I had written in my remote contract agreement is that part of my workday, I would not be taking care of another person. It was written specifically in there. And then as this all unfolded—I mean, so I’ve always paid exorbitant amounts for childcare to take my child away from the home while I stay here because it was written into my agreement that I would not take care of another person during my work hours. And now it’s just commonplace. There are people all the time you see people showing up in meetings with babies and children like we just had. And I don’t care. I mean, it’s the world. That’s everybody in the world exist from all different ages. I don’t see why that’s bad that we’re reminded of that. But it was definitely pre-pandemic. It was like, no. We don’t want no reminder that you might have somebody there.

Participant: I remember getting my master’s degree at University of Utah 10, 15 years agp. And I remember going to meeting and there was a woman who came and brought a child with her. And I just loved it. I loved that reminder. But I do think that the remote work explosion has kept the invisible labor tethered to women. And so it is what it is.

Participant: I was going to say , I think that that depends on what VP you fall under. I can think of different VPs who are more open to children being knowledgeably in your work from home. And some who don’t want to know that childcare is in your work from home.

Participant: We had a different VP at the time when I started too, and so that person was another child free by choice person who definitely didn’t want reminders of that.

Participant: I know your VP now very well. So I can’t say anything bad about him.

Participant: One thing I noticed, and this was fairly early on I think within the first year, but faculty were—and this isn’t a gender equity issue. But faculty were compensated I think an additional was it, 6,000, 3,000 or something like that. They were paid extra for the labor of shifting their courses from in person to online. And staff were given three extra paid days off. And so that in terms of equity, that’s nowhere near comparable because staff still did have to do a lot of work pivoting in their departments, changing training, changing how they did hiring, and onboarding and all these different things. Changing how we communicated with our teams and so forth. And it just seems that there was not a very clear understanding of what staff actually do on a daily basis. And what would be appropriate compensation for that labor and appropriate supports. So going to what

and others have said, it did also reinforce that invisibility and the value and in this case, the undervaluing of what we contribute to the university.

Participant: I do know the staff association and the faculty senate want to fix some of that divide, but I do think that the divide at the beginning of the pandemic was some of the furthest I’ve seen since I’ve been here. And I’ve been both faculty and staff in my time at [U3]. So I do think the pandemic hurt that quite a bit. But I do think thankfully for our institution, they’re making efforts to repair that rift.

Participant: Yes. And that’s been great to see. Like I said, this was early on. And so I think that also created a rise in advocacy for staff and compensation equity across the board.

Moderator: Well, this has been absolutely fabulous. So insightful. Thank you so, so, so much. [Researcher], is there anything you want to follow up with?

Researcher: No. This was wonderful. So informative. Very reflective. Thank you everybody for this. Wonderful. Yeah.

Moderator: Yeah, thank you for joining us. Hope you all have a great day. And , I love your cat baby there in your lap. Very cute. Have a great day everybody. Thank you.

Participant: Thank you.

Participant: Thanks. See you.

Participant: Thank you.