Moderator: Okay. With that, go ahead and click through that. Thanks, . Okay.

Awesome. Then we will just jump in then. If you all, first of all, could tell us about the work that you do at the university. We will just go around and take turns. For most of the discussion, you can just pop in and say whatever you want to say at any point. [brief interruption redacted] And feel free to just speak up. We do not have to take turns or anything. But for this part, I will go ahead and call out your name in the order I see on my screen just to hear what role you have at the university. , could you start us out?

Participant: Sure. I work on campus as part of the [redacted] theater staff. Mostly during shutdown, we were feeling questions from patrons about performances we could no longer have and what we would be doing for them. That is still kind of what I do now for them. I think that is everything we were doing at that time.

Moderator: Perfect, thanks. And ?

Participant: Hello. I am . I work in the greenhouse at [the gardens]. And we have a pretty large plant collection that we use for our visitor center displays and for the garden in general. I was here watering. They need water. We are working with live plants. Somebody had to be here.

Moderator: Perfect. ?

Participant: I also work at [the gardens]. And I am managing the front desk admissions as well as the gift shop here. We did a close for a short time. But we were open pretty much most of the pandemic. I was here selling tickets and selling merchandise.

Moderator: Perfect. ?

Participant: Hi. I am [PH].

Moderator: Oh, it is .

Participant: Oh, it is okay. It is okay. Most people when they see me. But it is pronounced… I go back . I just switched roles. But it was similar to what I was doing during the pandemic. I was in the College of Social Work. I was their undergraduate and graduate advisor/coordinator. I worked really closely with students in helping them get admitted. I was working with prospective students, new incoming students, and then continuing students helping them through the whole gamete of navigating university during the pandemic.

Moderator: Perfect. Thanks, . , am I saying that right?

Participant: Yes.

Moderator: Awesome.

Participant: It looks like I am one of four staff at [the gardens]. You have really good representation.

Moderator: Good job, [gardens].

Participant: I am in charge of the horticulture team. And since [the gardens] is a living museum of plants, those things do not take care of themselves. Pretty much our whole team needed to be on campus. On the other hand, fortunately, most of our jobs were outdoors. You had to be here, and you had to perform work. But you could also be outside and socially distanced.

Moderator: Thank you. ? Oh, sure. We can come back to you. ?

Participant: Hi everyone. I have since changed roles. During the pandemic, I was working in the [international students] offices on the main campus. The reason I was on campus primarily was at the time we were waiting for one of the government agencies, USCIS, to make a decision about submitting documents to students electronically. Before that, we had to submit documents to students with a wet ink signature. That required us to be on campus and give them to students. Because of the number of issues, we had students stuck in all parts of the world who were also trying to get home. There was definitely a need for them to talk to someone and just to get immediate live answers. That is when I would go in. But I am no longer in that role.

Moderator: Great. Thank you. ? Am I saying that…?

Participant: .

Moderator: , okay. I apologize. I saw the other and was like oh, are you going to go.

Participant: without the me.

Moderator: Oh, okay.

Participant: I am in facilities. I work in [the sustainable energy department]. My team does utility metering, billing, energy efficiency projects, and tracking towards carbon neutrality for what we use here on campus. I joined the

university in July of 2021. When did the pandemic end? Very unsure. Kind of a different perspective.

Moderator: Awesome. Thank you, . ?

Participant: Hi. I also work at [the gardens]. And I manage the front desk staff. During the pandemic, we had to… they are seasonal staff members. We were not able to keep them on during the pandemic. There still needed to be someone at the front desk. That was me. Even when we were closed, I would come in and check emails, voicemails, and reach out to people who were wondering what was going on. Then when we reopened, I was working at the front desk until we were able to bring on our seasonals again.

Moderator: Well, thank you. And ?

Participant: Hi. I am with [the theater] like . and I both were both [box office and customer service office] through the pandemic. Like said, we did a lot of customer inquiries. We were only remote for probably a month before we started coming back in to do things. It was a lot of patron inquiries, a lot of answering questions for what was in there. I want to say one thing that we also did is we ended up creating almost a little maker’s market. We ended up selling some things through that. We were manning our box office and kind of doing all of that.

Moderator: Wonderful. Well, I am so excited to hear about your experiences. We have a great variety of interesting experiences here. Starting now, just feel free to jump in any time you want. If you could share with us how the COVID- 29 pandemic impacted your work activities.

Participant: I am more than happy to start. At [the gardens] when the pandemic hit, the first thing was we go through the production season. It is a six-to-nine- month process. We were in the middle of that production season. We had an entire greenhouse full of plants that have to be watered daily. We were selling some of them. Some were going out into the garden. And just the ambiguity of what are we doing with these 60 thousand plants that are supposed to go somewhere. We also had to get rid of our seasonal staff.

We were moving full steam ahead and then it stopped. Then nothing moved. There were no answers. Nobody had answers. Yeah, it was just the halt. We still have all of this product that we cannot have staff to help take care of it. It was jarring, I think, because we were in our busiest seasons. But yeah, lots of questions that took a while to get answered.

Participant: I will pick up where left off. A lot of that product was for our annual spring plant sale, which we were trying to find out whether or not we

could even have a plant sale that spring. And in the end, we were not allowed to. Because the campus…nobody just understood how the disease was going to spread. And whether if one person picked up a pot and decided not to purchase it and put it back down and was COVID spread that way. Basically, in just talking with the higher ups, there was no way that we could come up with a safety plan that we could guarantee people’s safety to purchase the plants. The plant sale was off.

We tried different ways to try to not waste those plants. In the end, we wound up making donations of just a whole hell of a lot of plants. We donated some plants to the hospital nurses and donated plants to [a local hospital], to some of the community garden centers, and whatever. Just because we did not want to throw it out. We spend a lot of time. Anyway, that was kind of one aspect of those plant things.

The other thing to kind of take off, we had to let all of our seasonals go. I think we really just kept two seasonals in the greenhouse. But usually, we might have 30 – 35. And we had to let all of them go instantly. We still had to pay them at least for a month because HR said you cannot just let somebody go and not at least pay them for a month. We paid them for a month when they were not working because we could not have them here. And we lost all of our volunteers at that time too because a lot of the volunteers are elderly. And they are the group that is more at risk for negative effects of COVID.

You still have everything that you need to do at the garden, but now you only have full time staff. And all the full-time staff were dropped down to three-quarter time or less. You only have your full-time staff at three- quarter time, no seasonals, no volunteers, and still just everything to do. I do not know if that… I am sure other people have experienced similar situations.

Participant: I have been trying to figure out how to choose my words wisely because I was extremely… I was working in a small college with a large amount of students. I guess one of the nicer words I could come up with right now is it was extremely chaotic. Someone had mentioned earlier we did not know how the virus could get contracted, what kind of protocols to put in place. Leadership was trying its hardest to keep us up to date with what CDC or the hospital was saying. And students were just consistently in a panic losing their jobs. Their basic needs and securities were not being met in various kinds of forms from childcare to transportation, to work, I lost my job. There were all kinds of basic needs that were being impacted severely while students were still trying to go to school and be present in their classes and their assignments.

It felt extremely chaotic the whole time. Because things were changing at the academic level, but then also the logistical and operational level.

Things would consistently change. The student would hear one thing. And then they would be like oh, I heard this through the grapevine. Chaos impacted every single impact. And it is interesting that I am hearing that from the [gardens] side people were going down to three-quarter time

part-time. I felt like me and my team, we experienced…we were all salary.

We experienced working tend folds because of how much chaos was

happening in the students’ lives and then trying to keep up with policies and new procedures. At least for me in a really small college, then you also work really closely with program directors in trying to keep things just updated in every aspect. There was no uncertainty. It just created a lot of stress, extra work, and a lot of… yeah, it just felt consistently chaotic.

Then I ended up getting pregnant during the pandemic. That added a whole other layer. My boss also was pregnant at the very beginning of the pandemic and was going to go on maternity leave. Yeah, it was chaos.

Yeah, that is what I will show for now.

Moderator: Thank you for sharing and congratulations. Yeah, that sounds like chaos.

Thinking about your experience now in your jobs, has there been any change in flexibility in your job now when compared to pre COVID work or has there not been? Specifically with flexibility. Oh, sorry, . Go for it.

Participant: Oh, you are fine. I will step in on that one. This is something that and I talk about quite a bit because we work in the same area. There really is not an opportunity for us to have flexibility. Because since we reopened, there has to be somebody managing the front desk. There is not a way for us to work from home or work remotely when we need to manage staff that is there or step in and cover lunches or manage an issue with a guest that comes in. I would say the flexibility is probably exactly the same as it was pre COVID if not worse. Because we have gotten busier since COVID. And we have more people coming to the garden and we need more management there. I think there is probably in our positions less flexibility. It is not really an option for us to work from home or work remotely. That has been my experience at least.

Participant: And to follow up on that, we have our other coworkers who do have that flexibility where they do not work directly with the public. They are working from home. That has actually been an extra layer of difficulty on

 and I. Because we were used to having all of our full-time staff here on site that we could go to with assistance when things would come up. But now they are offsite. It is like there is an extra layer of burden for onsite issues to be managed by the two of us.

Participant: Yeah, I am….

Participant: Oh, sorry. Go ahead. Go ahead.

Participant: I was going to say I am kind of the counter to that in terms of most of my teams works on computers and is able to work remotely. I think of the Omicron wave last January when we were all asked to stay home to keep from overburdening the hospitals. That was the time where a lot of us barring one member of our team were able to go home and work remotely that we had actually been trying to bring back more expectations and reset those limits with a comment that made of like there has been so much flexibility that is trying to recreate the structure so it is easier to rely on people and figure out times of day that they are available and when you can expect them to troubleshoot. We have maintained a fair amount of flexibility. Although there are still questions from [the information technology department] and leadership about when do you expect people to be in the office? How do you provide equipment for them to work from home? And in the office, you do not want to have wasted cubicle space. Those are the questions that we deal with at this point.

Participant: I was going to say. I recognize I am in a different role. But I feel it is a mixed bag. Though on paper, it looks more flexible. Because now so many people will have a hybrid job where the expectation is that you can work hybridly. The opposing side to all of this is that now you are reachable at any time, any day, any hour. I am still getting emails at 10:00

p.m. at night. The question then is do I respond right away or do I put my foot down and say this can wait until tomorrow morning. It is a vicious cycle. Because I see if someone else responds, then I feel obligated to respond. It is looking at how my peers are reacting. Yes and no to that sense.

Researcher: Everybody, I am sorry. We seem to have had a technical glitch. And we have lost [Moderator]. Let me just hop in and continue. Sorry about having to switch on you.

Participant: Are we switching to the next… oh sorry, . Are we switching to the next question, or could I add to that?

Researcher: Please add.

Participant: Interestingly, I am in a new department. Funny enough is I have been in a different one of this but after social work. Trying to find a good fit is very important now that I am a parent. I would say that I definitely echo what

 had said. But interestingly, being in a different department just earlier

today someone said hybrid is here to stay forever. But I would say for the department I am in now, the department I was in previously, and also the social work just having been in both of those, there was a bigger push to be like we need to try to… once the university said okay, we can start coming back. The messages I was receiving from leadership is we want to have office presence every day 8:00 – 5:00 like normal business hours even if it is more of a skeleton. That way we can help accommodate the hybrid that is now in our world. And I think that works well for the work that I was doing, am doing now, and was doing previously. But I think it created… I would hope our staff practices as much as possible to work 8:00 to 5:00. That is when you are expected to.

If you work 8:00 – 5:00, you do not have to worry about making up your hours later. But I know that that is really hard when you are at home. Once I had my child, I no longer had a space to work from home. That is why I came to campus every day. It allowed me to keep those boundaries. But it was interesting to then get those emails after. Anyways, I worked a lot. I was always responding. But I would always tell people please do not respond. If you are done working, do not respond. Trying to create a culture that is supportive but also meets the needs of the new world we have while meeting the requirements of the university.

Participant: It is like the double-edged sword though in terms of offering that flexibility to people. There are times when it is absolutely great. I had work going on in my house on Tuesday. I told my team that. I was like hey, I am going to be off for two hours. But I will be on for two hours later tonight. And that is my choice. After my kid goes to bed, I am going to be online. Trying to set those expectations of like if you just want to do your 9:00 – 5:00 that is fine. But then having people who are like oh, well I do the kid pickup at four o’clock, so I work an hour and a half in the evenings. Trying to set the boundaries and the clear expectation with the flexibility is definitely a challenge.

Moderator: Well, I apologize everybody. My internet cut out for a minute and kicked me out of the group. For some reason, I had to sign back into our internet. Hopefully we are good to go now. I am hearing some great things. Does anybody have anything else they wanted to add about flexibility and how that may have changed since the pandemic?

Participant: I am really sorry. I am going to add one more comment about forced flexibility. The number of meetings that I have that are virtual now and setting rules for myself of saying that I am in more than four or six hours of virtual meetings that day, I have to work from home. Because I cannot do that in a cubicle. And I do not know if that falls under flexibility. But it is a weird thing to have teammates that you are like I am stuck in six hours

of meetings. You can hear me, but you cannot talk to me. That is a very post COVID thing.

Participant: Sort of similar to that, and I were sharing an office and trying to do Zoom meetings in the same room when we are both trying to talk. You would get all of the feedback and all of that going on. Yeah, that was a bit of a mess.

Moderator: That is super helpful. Thank you for sharing all of that. Has there been any change in communication levels when compared to pre COVID work?

Participant: Yes. For me, again, just that situation where we are used to having all of the full-time staff onsite. It was easy to just run down the hall and go talk to them. Now everybody is working from home. And you are trying to get a hold of them. And not being able to know if they are around or not around. What is going on. We were used to having people right there.

When everyone went home, it was a little bit harder to be public facing and then have all of our support absent.

Participant: I would say yes, it has changed. There are so many platforms and venues now. Some people will tell you contact me on Teams. Some people will say please email me. Some people will say here is my cell phone number; give me a call and we will talk. Some people will say contact me on Zoom but only after 5:00 p.m. What I end up doing is actually sending out information in multiple ways across multiple platforms. Different people have preferences. And I am afraid to miss one of those preferences. I will just double down on the information and send it multiple ways. In that sense, yes. Communication has changed.

Participant: I think sometimes too it depends on the person. Most of my staff had to be here because they were taking care of the gardens. But there are a couple of people who are doing plant records, databasing, mapping, and those kinds of things. They could do that. Depending on the person, they would respond instantly. You did not really lose anything. You still felt like you had that connection. I think where it felt like the connection disintegrated for me maybe was more with human resources. Because I think they all

went home. And there was not a way to… they did not have anybody manning the phones. You had to leave a message on the phone. Then you had no clue when anybody was going to get back to you in any way. I am sure they were overwhelmed. But nonetheless, we were trying to get answers. And there was physically no way to geta a live body in HR, at least not for me.

And since all of our staff essentially went down to at least three-quarter time, I had five staff in my department who went down to half time. I

know that there were other staff in [the gardens] who went down to zero percent during that time. Maybe they maintained their benefits. But they were no longer getting a paycheck. There was a lot of needing to collaborate with the department of unemployment and trying to get answers from them about how to fill out those forms. Do they need to be applying for X many jobs every week to continue on unemployment. But then what happens if they get a job? We do not want them to get a job. We want to keep them. Because somewhere along the line, we are going to be able to gear back up. And we do not want to lose them. And not having timely responses from HR was definitely a huge headache.

Moderator: As a follow up question, do you feel like communication levels now are healthier than they were pre pandemic, less healthy? How would you describe the change as far as communication health?

Participant: I will jump in really quick. I think going off of what someone else was mentioning with all the different platforms to touch base with people and also the lack of boundaries of when those things happen. I do not remember pre COVID. I work weird hours because I work concerts, nighttime, daytime, and all over the place. But I will get text messages from my staff members at 1:00 in the morning, 6:00 in the morning, or midnight if they are not feeling well. Because I think during COVID it was kind of expected that if somebody was not well that they needed to reach out immediately so they could figure out what to do through the university and how much time they needed to be off and all of that. We had to be a little bit more flexible with communication so that people could let us know what was going on.

Now I think it is a boundaryless situation, at least in my case. Where I have had to start just responding to my staff and saying I am not at work. I am not the supervisor right now. I need you to reach out to someone else until I am back clocked in. Because it got so out of hand. I was spending so much time on my phone just responding to messages from my staff members that I do not feel need to be happening when I am at home. For me, I think that the communication thing is almost out of control now.

That is my personal opinion.

Participant: I had a little bit of a similar experience as did. During COVID, it was all bets are off. And that communication needed to happen. I have struggled with the hybrid model that we do have at our company now.

Struggles there. I feel like communication has gotten better. I feel like I have actually set up better boundaries because of that hybrid model with some people. I know people are not going to be here on Fridays. They are technically at home for some of our administrators. And I know I am not going to answer. I have just stopped expecting an immediate answer. I

have been able to do it with some of my stuff if it is not an emergency. I do not know. I feel like I have had healthier communication just by knowing that a lot of our hybrid model people are not going to respond. I do not know if that is good or bad. But it is different for sure.

Participant: I feel like I have had both. I have had situations where somebody is texting me at 6:30 a.m. And I am like I am not going to remember this text message in two hours when I get to the office and need to give everybody the update. And then vice versa with the hybrid model. If somebody is working from home, if their vacation is extended by a day, if they are sick and forgot to tell me. It really does feel like both in terms of I need you to update your calendar, so I have a place to go find that information.

Because if you are telling me via, text, whatever random message, that is a lot of information for me to hold on to that I might have received at 6:30 a.m., Friday night, or something like that. Versus I need a place to go look for that answer. The communication is definitely almost like the rulebook changed. Some people are overkill. Some people are underkill. There is no expected normal anymore. We are just constantly trying to reestablish normal with changing roles. Because I would not tell people oh, talk to me less. That is the problem. I need you to put it in a place where I can go to find the answer again is my biggest struggle.

Participant: I need to add another perspective because of my role of having more interpersonal relationships with a lot of, lot of students. I would say definitely that the rulebook changed significantly, especially having worked in a professional program. I still work in a professional program. We would really work adamantly at teaching our students how to communicate professionally with a lot of the faculty, the practicums, supervisors, and things like that.

I think what the pandemic did for somebody who was working on campus but then with hybrid or fully remote folks is that it also opened up the

space into… because we would see their children, family members, or their pets would be walking across the screen. In some aspects, it opened it up in creating learning. Someone who does not do any social media or prior to the pandemic never did anything online. For other people who I knew were like that too, it opened up different comfort levels of communicating virtually with folks. And getting a glimpse into their personal lives because we were literally in their family space. A lot of people had to live together for a long time in the same space.

I would say in that sense it was a really positive experience in being able to get to know my students at a completely different level. Even though I would ask them oh, how are you doing? And I would remember things they would share with me about personal things, right. But then when you

were in their personal space all the time, they would open up more. But on the flipside, it also felt like sometimes communication etiquette, manners, and things like that kind of went out the window too. The way students would actually communicate, or the way the faculty or staff would communicate, I would be like whoa. Would you be telling me this?

Because I think there was just so much stress people were dealing with or a lot of personal issues. Sometimes when we are not our best selves, we do not communicate in the best way. I felt like the pandemic really… even sometimes at the highest level of leadership I would interact with, I would be like wow. This is wow. I am going to let this slide right now because I am trying to get to a goal.

Participant: , I do not know if this mimics what you experienced. But I feel like people being on the phone at home meant they just got way more personal. Because you lost the context of work. Instead, you just feel like you are talking to a friend.

Participant: Yes. That is a great way to say it. There were positives and cons with the healthiness part. I would say yes, there were some aspects that I felt got healthier. Then once the students would start coming back, they were not just doing IVC, interactive video conference or fully online. Once they were starting to do a hybrid or coming fully back in person, it was like I felt a lot closer to my students. But yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Communication changed significantly. I think part of that is still happening now.

Participant: I am going to run off of that a little bit just because I do think during the pandemic, we were so stressed. And everyone’s personal lives and work lives were intertwined because it was chaos. I know later in the pandemic in early 2021 when we started bringing people back, I wanted that feedback from my team members. You want to make sure their mental health is okay and that they are doing okay. That just has not stopped, which is good to a certain degree. I agree fully that personal communication has changed.

Moderator: This is fascinating and super, super helpful. Thank you so much. Based on your experiences during the pandemic, what differences did you see between men and women in their experiences at work?

Participant: I do not know that I saw a difference between men and women. I certainly saw a difference between people. In some way, I kind of think that our team was better off in the sense that we could work outdoors with plants. And some people just went with the flow with that. You were trying to tell everybody to social distance. But some people set into what they called pods. They were kind of like we are each other’s pod. We are this team.

We are doing it together and we are good. And there were very

specifically two people, both women, who had an incredibly difficult time. One was never really able to recover from her fear of getting sick. And the other one, I think, has recovered and is still here. Anyway, the one gal actually wound up leaving. But their fear was so overwhelming. They were just not able to do their job. And I think that it rubbed off onto others not necessarily in a positive way at all. You are trying to really manage someone else’s fears. And trying not to let it rub off too much on the others. Anyway, it was a difficult time.

Participant: I would say my experience with that is my ex-husband. I went through a divorce recently. I am sure that there was part of that that… the pandemic was difficult on our relationship. My ex-husband owns his own business. He could have easily worked from home whenever he wanted to and chose not to. That meant that more of the childcare taking was on me. Because my kids were not in school and did not have anything to do. And even though they were older, they still needed food, entertainment, things to do, and to go places or whatever. Not only did I have to work in person at the garden, I also took on a lot more responsibility of caretaking at home that I did not have before when my kids were in school. Or when I felt like my ex-husband actually was doing equal share of time. But it felt like during the pandemic it really fell on me. I do not know if other women felt that way. But I felt so overwhelmed for two years of just feeling like all of that pressure of not only my job but also caretaking my kids through a pandemic was solely put on me.

Participant: We do not have a lot of single income or single working parents in our team. I feel like the difference was not necessarily between men and women and they were how they were responding. It was between people who had kids and did not have kids that that was a massive… and I got pregnant during COVID. And the way that it changed especially… or even people who had older kids who were high school, self-entertaining age.

That line of struggling with the increased number of responsibilities and lack of support was the bigger line that we saw. We had people whose kids were grown and older and their grandparents. They responded very differently and had different health concerns. Versus people whose workload tripled and quadrupled. It was not as clear of a gendered line. It was what other caretaking responsibilities did you now take on as well.

Participant: I would agree. When it comes to a lot of my colleagues who had either children or were caregivers of others in their households, that was much more a point of focus in any conversation we were having. And the plus side I would say, this was coming out of men too. Men were saying I have to go pick up my kids. They are sick. Or my mother is not doing well or whatever it was. I think that was a plus side. But I would agree. It became more if you have caregiving at home or you are single and do not have

anybody that you need to be taking care of. And I do have to say our leadership at the time was very intentional. There were certain things that some people were asked to volunteer for and in person contact with some students or scholars. And they would make it very clear. It is not because you do or do not have children at home or people at home that you need to take care of that you are naturally being volunteered or expected to do this.

Everyone is on the same playing field. They were very conscious of

people’s health conditions and responsibilities outside of work whether those were disclosed or not. That was the experience. But yes, I would agree. Caregiving was the big dividing….

Moderator: Do you feel in general that caregiving, whether it was a female parent or female caregiver for an elderly parent or something. Whether it was a female caregiver or a male caregiver, was that pretty equally divided from your experience and from what you saw as far as how the changes affected them? Or do you feel like they affected women any differently than men?

Participant: This is purely alteration, and this is my experience. But most of the women around me were definitely taking on a lot more than their male partners or their other partners. Women were definitely taking the brunt of the work at home and outside of the home.

Participant: Yes. My comment was not to say that men and women were doing the same thing. Because that is always going to vary in every relationship. But what was the big threshold was not necessarily women or men. It was whether you were taking care of people. And after that, there are more gradations of change in difficulties and stress.

Moderator: I think that makes a lot of sense. Thank you. Is there anything else people want to share about how the changes that happened affected women versus men differently? Whether that is the changes in flexibility, changes in communication, other changes? Were there changes that were more difficult for one gender. I know that we have talked some about that. Were there changes that were maybe more beneficial for one gender than another? And we can bring in our non-binary friends as well if you have thoughts on that.

Participant: I will just in because nobody else jumped in really fast. I do not know that I experienced any… I can’t answer that question. But we are still noticing things from the pandemic have not changed. I mean we are still experiencing things. It is so hard to get other vendors to do work. And a lot of whether it is electricians, stone workers, or contract workers, anyone and everyone that you try to contact is so overwhelmed with the work that they have to do. And so, any kind of timeline that you are trying to shoot for to get anything done is just totally blown out the window before you

even start. And I caught myself today talking to somebody. It is kind of like you cannot be an ass. Because if you were an ass to somebody and they were just to hell with you and move on. I feel like I have had to shift into something where I am so damn kind to these people that they would not have the heart to tell me no. And that they will find a way to work me into their schedule somehow.

But the timeframe of trying to get things done has greatly, greatly increased and so has the price. I mean it is kind of like we have gotten some bids for things that maybe a handful of years ago – eight – ten years ago, I would expect to maybe pay five thousand for that. And now I got a big for 19. It is like holy hell. What happened. But anyway, that is kind of what I am experiencing. And it is still the same. And everybody that I talk to whether it is a male or a female, they are all telling me. Oh my gosh, I am so busy. I talked to somebody the other day. They are like what the pandemic took away was the chance to take a breath. The is still going on. And I do not think it matters whether you are male or female.

Moderator: , I really, really appreciate you bringing that up. Because that is actually what our next question was about. What changes happened during COVID that are still here?

Participant: Can I throw something out for the last question about differences in males and females. This is not specific to [this university] network, but personal network. I have a lot more female friends and family members who are in healthcare. And the cycle of grief, burnout, exhaustion, and denial that they have gone through is one of those this will probably change you for the rest of your life. And the number of women in healthcare compared to men is like a 10:1 ratio. That is something that I do not know what that recovery is going to look like long term for that side.

Participant: I am glad you brought that up, . Because I was trying to think about how to say that. Because having been in social work, my network there was and still is. And being a social worker myself, it is predominantly female, or women identified folks. Yes. I saw that with the students. I saw that with my colleagues. I saw that in my personal network. You said it so well. I unmuted myself and was like I do not know how to say this. Yes, definitely. I saw the exact same thing.

Participant: Now I forgot was your current question, [Moderator]. I am so sorry.

Moderator: Oh, no worries at all. Yes. It is just based on pandemic decisions for work activities, what types of changes for your work are still in effect now?

Participant: I would say for us, at least at the front desk, something that changed significantly was how easy it is for us to fill seasonal positions. I am sure

 has had the same situation. But pre pandemic, and I actually only had been there for a few months before the pandemic hit. I was still very new at my position. But from what told me, it was very easy to hire and very easy to keep seasonals that would come back year after year after year after year after year after year while they were going through college. That was something that was not hard for us to do previous to the pandemic. Once the pandemic happened and we had to get rid of our seasonals, a lot of them did not come back. A lot of people that I had hired and had to put on freeze notice for eight months had to find other jobs.

They could not wait.

Then we got through that. Finally got a handful of people. We could not hire. In ’21, I could not fill positions. I was working 60 – 70 hours a week just doing the front desk, concerts, and everything. I could not get people. And it is still hard. And we do not have as many people that stay on as they used to. Our turnover is so much higher now. And I think a lot of it is pandemic. But also, people got better jobs. We could not pay what other places were paying. All of those things, we are still seeing that in our positions now.

Participant: It has gotten better. But it is still harder than it used to be. But also what we have noticed is perhaps in the past where we might have many more people that would work three and four days a week, now there are a lot more people that only want to work one day a week or two days a week. Things that you might have been able to fill with less people now maybe take you twice as many people to fill the same number of hours. I mean that is definitely a thing now.

Participant: I feel like the hybrid schedule has definitely stayed on. And it is almost an expectation in a lot of roles. This is not 9:00 to 5:00 in the office, 40 hours a week anymore. Going back to some people’s comments, I think there are a lot more people changing jobs. They are more intentional about the type of work they want to do. They are less willing to accept conditions or pay that is subpar. There is a lot more conversation about mental health and taking care of yourself, self-care. I would say those are the conversations I am hearing a lot more that I think initiated in the pandemic. But I am still hearing today.

Participant: One hundred percent.

Participant: I would… no, go. Continue.

Participant: One hundred percent with the mental health and the not settling for a position. We work with a lot of younger staff in general. And one thing I found that has worked with hiring is being like we care about your mental health. And while [the gardens] has always cared about their staff’s mental health, I feel like it is a conversation I have. Some of my team is breaking down, I guess. It cannot be discredited at all anymore. And it is a much more open conversation that definitely started during the pandemic. And I do not think it is going anywhere anytime soon. It is good to be in tune with everyone. I do like that. It is definitely a change.

Participant: Well, that is one of the challenges between those who can work remotely and those who cannot. If someone needs to take a mental health day and they are not public facing, maybe that is a little bit easier to work around. But when you are public facing, if you are not there, somebody else has to be. We are trying to accommodate those staff members that are struggling with issues. But that means that we are doing more, and we are doing extra. That has been definitely a challenge.

Participant: What I was going to say. No, I was just going to say that what I noticed a big difference in is pre pandemic there was really an urge to work through your sickness. For us at least, the second you start to feel ill, you are out of the building no matter what. I know that has been the case at least in our office. But I know in other offices… my partner works in an office where he says that everyone works through their sickness. And they just say oh, it is not COVID. And it is driving him absolutely insane. His anxiety is through the roof. But with us, we are so rigid in our health that the second that anyone is getting sick, we are immediately cracking down on it.

One thing I also do want to comment, and it is something that I have noticed particularly in the [the gardens] conversation but also with other people. There is a real resentment towards the people who can do hybrid schedules and who cannot. And I honestly think until we figure out that balance, it is here to stay. At [the theaters], we stopped any form of hybrid work. But you know that there are people who are really… honestly, they are resentful over the fact that they cannot do hybrid work when it is clear that they are able to. And that is just also interesting. And I am not sure how we are going to deal with it.

Participant: I mean just to kind of follow up on that, we would have staff members who would express fear for coming back and working onsite. When we were working onsite and having customers who… we put up the plastic

barriers. But we could not hear from them. The customers would take their masks off, go under the barrier, and yell. We are right there face to face with people maskless.

Participant: Every time.

Participant: And then hearing from our coworkers that they were afraid to come onsite.

We are like really. It definitely created resentment.

Participant: It was a different gear. But something that I am surprised about is that it has not really fixed childcare changes. Having a kid during COVID, I have been on wait list for one of the daycares for a year and a half. I joined it when I was six to eight weeks pregnant. I am still on that wait list and have no news of when I am getting off. We are stuck with a very expensive daycare option. The daycares are also way more readily sending children home at any sign of sickness and calling parents, specifically mom, to come pick up child. Then on the flipside of that, there is expectation because I can work from home in hybrid that I will work from home with a sick child. We are just hitting the age where that is virtually impossible. It is this trickle, trickle of like oh well, you cannot really get into the daycare. You have low options. The daycare that you have is super expensive and will call at the first sign of anything. Then on top of that, you are expected to work from home because you can work from home. Why can you not work from home with a baby. We all did it during COVID, which I mean is absolutely awful. But it is just kind of the expectation.

Participant: Yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Is that not so annoying? My husband

actually…we switched our lives around. I got a different job. My husband went from being a store manager at a grocery store to being a part-time cashier at that same store. Because at the first sneeze, something tickled my little kid’s nose. It was like oh, go call mom. And I am like….

Participant: I got a message this week that my kid was unhappy. He was unhappy for the morning. And they were like do you want to come pick him up. I am like I do not know what that means. What are you talking about.

Participant: Now my husband works part-time and is a full-time stay home… during while I work here at the office and then we switch. And that is how we made it work. But yes.

Moderator: Oh, gosh. This is so super helpful. Thank you so much. I am cognizant of the time. I know we only have two more minutes. But is there anything else that you all would like to share with us?

Participant: Something just really quick I did not include. It is from one of your previous conversations. I just thought about it. With the gender differences in the pandemic, I really did see differences across the board. We have a seasonal who ended up being a stay-at-home dad. They had to make that

decision. I have a really good friend in Alaska. His wife was getting her Ph.D. That stopped. She had to drop everything to be a stay-at-home mom. I think it was an across-the-board tough decision.

Moderator: or , are there any follow up questions you would like to ask?

Researcher: No. I just want to say thank you. You have brought up some things we have not heard before. And that has been really good to hear and more for us to think about in terms of this. Thank you for all the work you did during the pandemic and for sharing that with us.

Moderator: Yes. Thank you so much. This has been super, super helpful. We appreciate you taking the time to join us for this and volunteering. You are all wonderful. Thank you.

Participant: Thank you.

Researcher: Listen. Well, everybody have a great afternoon and a great evening. Participant: Thank you.

Participant: You as well.