

Examining and Implementing Telecommuting Policies

Audrey Freeman '23

Industrial Engineering

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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Team Introductions



Audrey Freeman

TELECOMMUTING POLICY INTERN
Industrial Engineer



Sarthak Prasad

SUPERVISOR
Sustainable Transportation Assistant at Facilities and Services



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Project Overview



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Project Timeline

Phase	March 5 – 12	March 12 – 29	March 29 – April 16	April 16 – April 30	April 30 – May 5
Start project					
Research Telecommuting Policies					
Create Questionnaires and University Outreach					
Conduct surveys and Interviews					
Final Deliverable and IHR Meeting					 



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Project Background

Project Background

The iCAP 2020 objective 3.4.3 is to “Establish telecommuting policies for the campus by FY24” to allow more employees to work from home in order to reduce commuter emissions on campus.

Project Overview

Background research and creation of interview and survey questionnaire

Interview and survey data collection

Synthesize data for proposal

Proposal development and implementation

Research

This project researched the impact of telecommuting on energy needs, space needs, and how telecommuting affects the morale, productivity, and general wellbeing of the employee. Data was collected from Big 10 Universities, Ivy League Institutions and schools within the Illinois University system.

What can we do with our data?

We aim to report the findings from this project to the Parking department, Facilities & Services, and the Transportation SWATeam. We hope to recommend feasible options for the University of Illinois and how can we benefit from this in the long run.



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Research Methods



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Research Methods

In order to gain as much information as possible, the team utilized four different research methods over the past month



SWATeam Resources

Prior to the internship, the transportation SWATeam compiled a document of resources. Within this document, links to different telecommuting policies and commuter programs were included.

Online Research

After gaining a better understanding of what telecommuting is, we began to investigate specific telecommuting policies at the Big 10 Universities, Ivy League Institutions, and other Illinois Colleges. These findings were then reported in one excel sheet.

Questionnaire Data

To dive deeper, we created a questionnaire for the Illinois IHR department and for the Big 10 Universities we aimed to reach out to. In addition, we created a google survey like the questionnaire document to more efficiently collect information.

Zoom Interviews

In order to gain more personable insights, we set up a meeting with the IHR department to better understand their needs. In addition, each university we personally reached was invited to meet with us over zoom. We have recently been in contact with the University of Iowa.



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Research Results



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Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Quantitative

Many universities only have a telecommuting policy currently in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and they did not have one prior.

% Only NYU and the University of Iowa related that they specifically had a telecommuting policy prior to the pandemic

Very few schools with a Climate Action Plan related their telecommuting policy to any environmental initiatives.

% Only 4/25 schools surveyed referenced sustainability in their program description

Qualitative

Effects

Most schools found at the beginning of the pandemic that a flexible work environment improved employee morale and productivity. However, further into the pandemic, many employees reported burn out and a need for socialization.

Essential Personnel

Many telecommuting policies relate directly to a university's human resource department. Specific departments and respective supervisors are responsible for determining if a given employee can telecommute.



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Comparing the benefits and consequences of working from home

Benefits	Consequences
Reduced travel emissions, and thus decrease in pollutants and increase in air quality	Increase in home energy and electricity use
Ease parking space demands and office space	Work facilities still in full operation even while employees work from home
Savings in individual time and money without having to commute	Limits human interaction and social opportunities
Assists employees with physical disabilities	Puts pressure on parents working from home, especially mothers
By working from home, people are typically more environmentally conscious	Zoom fatigue and burnout

Telecommuting offers a significant amount of environmental and physical benefits, however, it can harm people's social fulfillment, mental wellbeing, and puts significant pressure on working parents.



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Sample of Environmental References

University	
Harvard University	<p>“Depending upon the outcomes, you may decide to continue certain aspects of the flexible 8 response permanently. For example, perhaps you cut business travel by 25% and substituted video conferencing. You determine afterward that about 80% of those meetings were equally as effective virtually. Therefore, a 20% decrease in business travel will continue, but this time as part of the organization’s sustainability strategy to cut carbon emissions.</p>
Rutgers University	<p>“There are many benefits to teleworking for those who are able. Employees who work remotely one day a week can reduce their commute trips by 20%, resulting in a significant decrease in parking demand and carbon emissions.”</p>
Yale University	<p>“The local New Haven community benefits when there are less people driving to campus, which supports Yale’s commitment to sustainability” (CAP is linked on website)</p>



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Risks and Mitigation



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Previous and Potential Risks and Mitigations

IHR Meeting Delay

Unfortunately, our meeting with IHR was postponed until after the final deliverable presentation to the SWATeam.

Limited Personal Responses

Although we reached out to over 12 different universities, only 4 filled out the google form.

Natural yearn to return to “normal”

Many schools want to return to normal which diverts from furthering telecommuting opportunities.

Our IHR meeting has been postponed to May 5th 2021, but we aim to update this presentation after our discussion.

Many schools have useful information on their websites that allowed us to gather data from 25+ universities.

Positive results from employee telecommuting surveys reveal that many faculty and staff would want to continue to still work remotely.

Although none of these are detrimental to the project’s effort, we wanted to address the IHR meeting delay, limited personal responses, and the goal for many schools to return to normal this fall.



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Final Recommendation & Next Steps



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4 Recommendations to facilitate the implementation of an Illinois Telecommuting Policy

1

Collaboration with IHR

- Create plan to implement telecommuting policy
- Support IHR department when creating telecommuting policy

2

New Employee Orientation

- Include project findings in new employee/orientation packet
- Specifically include environmental concerns into packet

3

Pilot Program

- Work with IHR department to start pilot program trial this coming fall semester.

4

Future Commuter Incentive Program

- Track days that employees opt to telecommute and provide commuter program incentives



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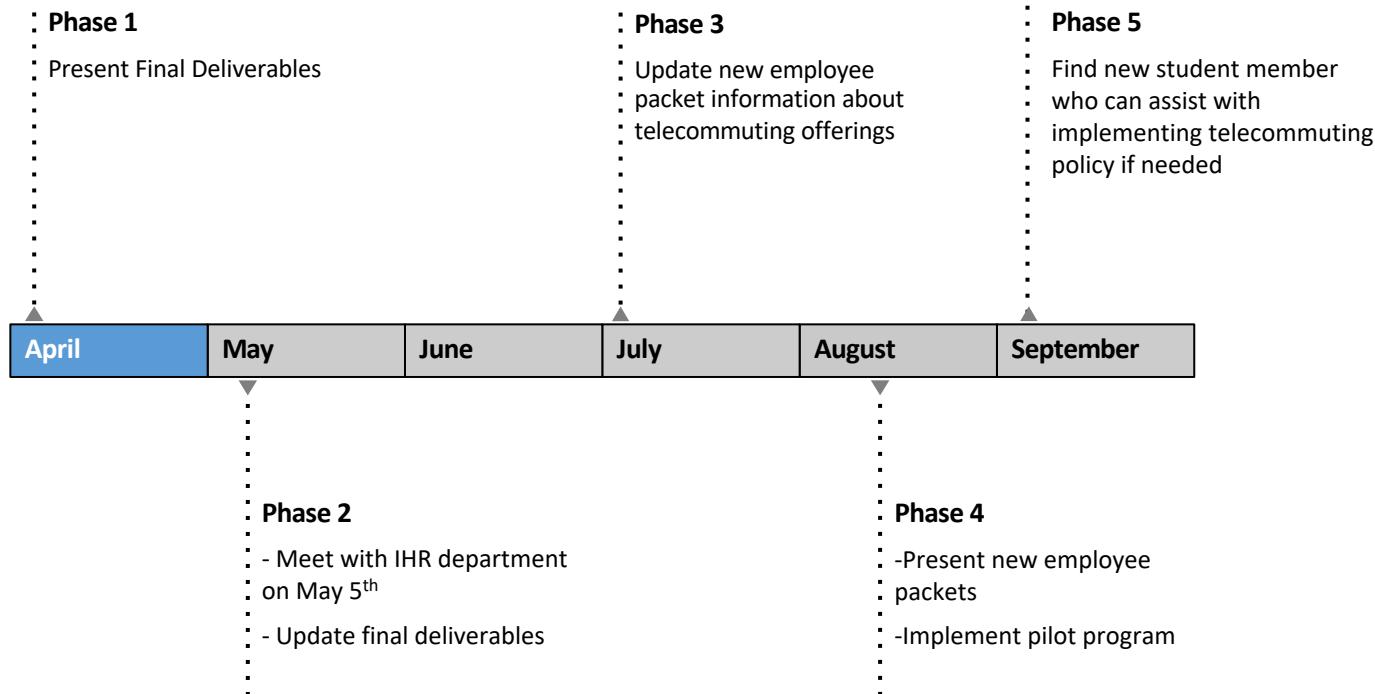
Implementation Timeline



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Implementation Timeline



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Questions?



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Appendix



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Universities Researched

Schools we Researched	Schools with Environmental Mention	Schools who Filled out the Google Survey	Schools we Interviewed
Big 10 Universities	Harvard University	University of Iowa	University of Iowa
Ivy League Institutions	Yale University	University of Illinois at Chicago	
Illinois University Systems	Rutgers University	Purdue University	
	University of Maryland	University of Minnesota	



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