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**To:** All Faculty and Staff  
**From:** Gena Jones, Assistant Vice President, Human Resource Services  
**Re:** HRS Information You Don't Want to Miss  
**Date:** July 1, 2020

As you know, the NMSU system has seen huge change in recent months. We have experienced uncertainty and circumstances that we can control – and those we cannot – but we continue to learn, grow and work effectively through it all. Each of you is to be commended for the adjustments you have made and the resilience you have shown, time and time again.

As we return to campus, even if you will remain on telework, some of you may be concerned about safety, as well as how the pandemic will continue to impact the work and educational core of our environment. Additionally, you may still have many questions about teleworking, how decisions are made as to who will be asked to return to campus, new safety policies and procedures, and other topics. Please know that you can be assured that your concerns and your well-being are taken seriously. Below is information that not only addresses elements of returning to campus but also other updates and reminders that you may find helpful.

## What's new

### Alternative Work Arrangements Policy (AWA)

Over the past several months, as we've worked through this unprecedented situation, the pandemic has highlighted the need for flexible work arrangements, particularly in the area of telework.

To that end, I am pleased to announce that Chancellor Arvizu has approved an [Alternative Work Arrangement \(AWA\) policy, ARP 6.87](#), effective July 1, 2020. The AWA supports Goal 4: Build a Robust University System in the [NMSU LEADS 2025 Strategic Plan](#). Specifically, the AWA allows for work to get done productively in remote locations and promotes low employee density on the campus. The options available in AWA include telework, flex time, short-term work modifications, and a compressed work week. An [AWA Request Form](#) must be completed for new AWA requests submitted after July 1, 2020. Employees on telework prior to July 1, 2020 do not need to complete the AWA Request form at this time. Training modules have also been developed to assist managers – [Telework for Managers](#) – and employees – [Telework for Employees](#) – and additional resources for telework are available at [hr.nmsu.edu](http://hr.nmsu.edu).

### Climate Study “Action Team” (CSAT)

As a follow up to the [Climate Survey](#) conducted last fall and in alignment with LEADS 2025 Goal 4, improvement opportunities were identified across the NMSU system. A Climate Study Action Team (CSAT) was formed. Volunteers on the CSAT include faculty and staff from DACC, administrative units and employee groups. Click [here](#) for the list of CSAT members. The group is charged with the following:

- Identifying NMSU system-wide activities to address the most pressing issues;
- Connecting with groups across the university system to learn what they are doing to address such issues;
- Sharing these ideas so others can consider them in their areas; and
- Tracking improvement.

The CSAT has established three subgroups focusing on the topics of university communication, trust and pay and benefits. The team has already made great strides in facilitating faculty and staff focus groups, and the establishment of university principles geared towards the topics noted above. Stay tuned – the CSAT is working diligently on exciting new ideas to rollout and will continue to seek your opinion on proposed actions for enhancing the work environment.

## **What we want to remind you of...**

### **Additional Leave Benefits**

The federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) provides employees with two types of leave benefits as support for those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic through December 31, 2020: [Emergency Paid Sick Leave \(EPSL\)](#) and [Emergency Paid Family and Medical Leave Expansion \(EFMLA\)](#). Eligible employees have a right to these benefits.

Under EPSL, emergency paid sick leave is available for up to two weeks of pay for eligible employees who are unable to work or telework because of a COVID related situation. Eligible employees are also entitled under EFMLA to take up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave if the employee is unable to work (or telework) due to caring for the employee's child (who is under 18) because the child's school or place of care has been closed or his or her childcare provider is unavailable due to the public health emergency. For more information and request form, go to the [Benefits website](#).

## **Return to Campus Information**

### **Department Safety Protocols**

Every department plays a crucial role in keeping our work and educational environment safe. Each should have a plan in place detailing the safety protocols to be followed in the department. Of equal importance, is for department leaders to provide communication about the plans, as well as issues impacting their faculty and staff, that is timely, relevant and widely dispersed through the department. The plans should be posted within the department for easy access and periodically assessed for effectiveness. A [decision tool](#) has also been created to assist supervisors in planning for staffing levels and the needs of their employees. Refer to [hr.nmsu.edu](#) for additional information, resources and tools, as well as the Tuesday NMSU Ready newsletter and the [NMSU Ready](#) plan for up-to-date information on returning to campus.

### **Focus groups**

As mentioned, the CSAT assisted in the facilitation of eleven focus groups for faculty and staff and heard your thoughts, concerns, ideas and questions regarding returning to campus. The information gathered was very informative and was shared with the NMSU COVID-19 Rapid Response Team. Many of your concerns and ideas have been or will be addressed in the [NMSU Ready](#) materials. A report will be published soon on the information gathered from the focus group discussions. Thank you to all who participated.

### **HR & EHSRM Tiger Team**

A tiger team has been formed to address areas of the return to campus affecting faculty and staff. The team is made up of individuals from across the university system. The team has worked diligently to identify important aspects of returning to campus that are relevant to faculty and staff. Again, many of your concerns and ideas have been or will be addressed in the [NMSU Ready](#) plan. The team provided feedback on the face covering guidelines and will be developing a prototype for creating a positive and supportive employee experience as planning for the return to campus is solidified.

## **Take time for you!**

It's been an emotional time and undoubtedly there may be feelings of fatigue, isolation, uncertainty, fear, concern for your co-workers and being out of touch on some aspects of your life. You are encouraged to ***take time for yourself***. Do something that helps you to relax, refresh and renew your spirit. The [Center for Learning and Professional Development \(CLPD\)](#) and the [Aggie Health and Wellness Center](#) have put together a number of support modules and resources to assist in addressing the personal and professional challenges you may be facing.

Lastly, be sure to check out the resources and tools available to you in the links below.

### **Resources and Tools**

- [Mandatory safety training-Return to Campus](#)
- [NMSU Employee and Administrative Protocols for Return to Campus](#)
- [NMSU Ready Plan](#)
- [HRS homepage](#), email to HRhelp@nmsu.edu
- [Aggie Health and Wellness Center](#)
- [Return to Work Manager Decision Tree](#)
- NMSU relevant web pages
  - <https://nmsu.edu/coronavirus/>
  - <https://nmsu.edu/coronavirus/#info-staff>
  - <https://safety.nmsu.edu/occupational-safety/>

### Alternative Work Arrangements

- [Alternative Work Arrangements Policy \(AWA\)](#)
- [Alternative Work Arrangement Request Form](#)
- [Alternative Work Arrangement - Frequently Asked Questions](#)

### Telework

- [Telework Training for Managers/Supervisors](#)
- [Telework Training for Employees](#)
- [Telework Guide for Managers](#)
- [Telework Guide for Employees](#)

### Tools

- [Sample Telework Project Tracking Sheet](#)
- [Sample Telework Weekly Tracking Sheet](#)