



Building The Post-COVID Adaptive Workplace in Higher Education

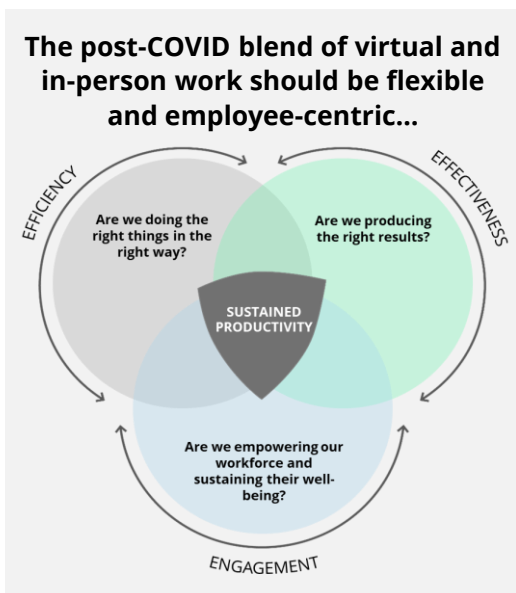
February 2021

Deloitte.

Today's Higher Ed Workplaces are at an Inflection Point

COVID-19 expedited changes in higher education that many predicted would happen over decades, forcing those seemingly distant changes to happen within weeks. Overnight, higher education institutions and their staff were forced to shift to remote work in addition to rethinking the deep-rooted orthodoxies about how and where learning – and the critical work that enables it - is done. Today, colleges and universities remain influenced by the sudden shift to predominantly remote work & remote learning brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The impacts of this transition on productivity, collaboration, and culture for faculty, staff, and students remain unclear, as does the path forward for institutions in terms of how to bring about a tailored adaptive approach and reimagine the campus in the “new normal”.

Although initially challenging, COVID-19 has presented a unique opportunity for higher education leaders: an opportunity to assess what has worked in a remote environment (and what hasn't) and make decisions to proactively shape the future. Many leaders are now looking beyond the impacts of COVID to evaluate how the work, workforce, and workplaces of their core operations can be optimized going forward while continuing to offer a best in-class learning experience and employee experience in a “hybrid campus.”

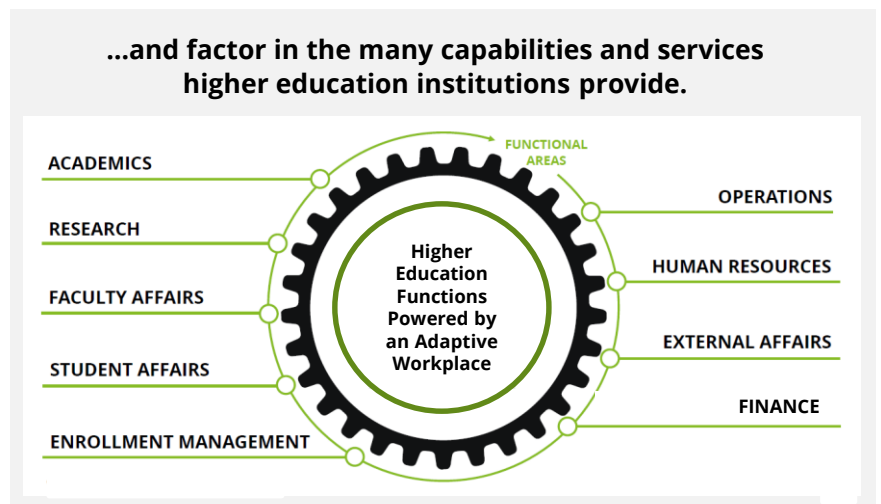


Alongside these considerations, institutions are evaluating which of their many capabilities and services need to be delivered in person, and when services or enabling functions are more convenient or effective if delivered through an adaptive workplace model that adapts to the changing needs of students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders.

The vision for what the workplace looks like next has moved beyond the traditional binary choice of onsite or telework. An **adaptive workplace** is a flexible workplace approach that enables faculty and staff to work where they are most productive, engaged, and effective in carrying out research, teaching, and service, depending on the task and the people who are needed to execute it. Institutions change the way the workplace looks by enabling its workforce to do their work wherever they feel most productive and engaged. This human-centered approach to the workplace promotes productivity, efficiency, effectiveness, workforce well-being and a positive workforce experience.

As vaccine developments put the end of the pandemic in sight, they also place institutions at a critical inflection point today. Recognizing the benefits of the adaptive workplace experience, higher education leaders are asking critical questions: How can our institution position itself to capitalize on the current forced virtual experience and become a leading adaptive workplaces employer? And how, at the same time, can it offer unwavering support for, the faculty, staff, and students who are impacted?

This shift will be built on key enablers that drive success in a hybrid environment: navigating **virtual collaboration tools and telework platforms**, implementing **telework policies and procedures** that maximize productivity and collaboration while **minimizing data security risks**, and adapting **long-held in-person norms and culture**. Institutions that are successful in making this shift will first assess their current landscape, then begin to address high-priority workplace components that impact faculty, staff, students, university finances, and operations.



What is Deloitte's Approach to the Adaptive Workplace?

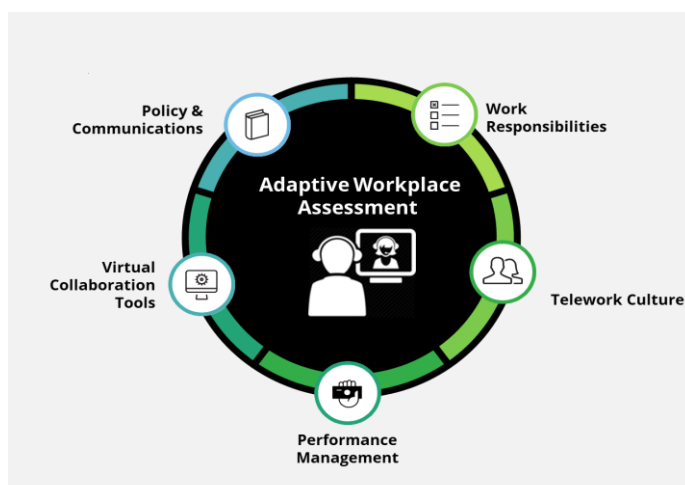
We designed, tested, and proved our workplace strategies prior to COVID-19 – for our higher education clients, and even for ourselves – in the wake of other digital transformations. Our adaptive workplace model blends on-site, remote, and hybrid work to build a flexible work environment that enables every member of the workforce to work where they are most productive. Just as we advise clients, our COVID-19 response prioritized the well-being of our people and offered support in managing this stressful time using our human-centered change principles and methods to guide data-driven decision making that is both proactive and responsive. At the same time, we have guided higher ed institutions through this transition – informed by proven successes across a wide variety of organizations and benefiting from an approach that incorporates the many elements that drive that success, including change management and training efforts, employee experience campaigns, real estate footprint analyses, organizational design, and future-forward strategies for workforce transformation.

The Adaptive Workplace: Preparing for Flexibility in Two Sprints

Universities should anticipate a future with a range of hybrid work models, built on a series of components that make up a mature and fully operational adaptive workplace. Deloitte's metrics and assessments determine what those models should look like to equip students, researchers, staff, faculty, and others with what they need in a successful adaptive workplace to meet the mission. To capture learnings from the current COVID-era working environment while looking forward to the ideal future state of flexibility, we recommend a **dual-sprint approach**.

In the first sprint effort, we assess the current state of flexible workplace maturity across an institution by conducting an assessment with leaders and staff. Deloitte's tools for advancing the institution's action towards the future of work are based on measuring a range of organizational indicators – from employee well-being to available shared space – that illustrate how and why to transition to an adaptive workplace model given the current state, beginning with a targeted workplace assessment.

This customizable assessment maps the university's maturity along the five adaptive workplace components Deloitte considers essential (policy/communications, work responsibilities, virtual collaboration tools, telework culture, and performance management).



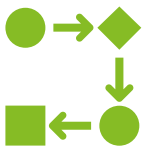
Data can be analyzed by employee functions, demographics, or other identifying factors to understand how the workplace has affected staff across the institution. Combined with financial, real estate, and personnel information, the assessment arms the decision makers with data for probing deeper into the highest-priority components of an adaptive workplace.

The outcome of this sprint presents a **Future-State Adaptive Workplace Implementation Roadmap** for how to operationalize the future-state vision, with a specific focus on enabling productivity or solving those immediate workplace issues. This implementation roadmap should consolidate insights and recommendations for both **near-term and longer-term activities** to stabilize and optimize a workforce mobility model.

In the second sprint, we partner with our clients to implement the target future-state **Adaptive Workplace** in a way that enables the workforce to bring their best work to the table, no matter where that may be. This work often starts with financial models that prove the ROI of shifts to an adaptive workplace – both from the organizational perspective and from the perspective of an individual workers, who may save time or money that was previously spent commuting. We also incorporate the visual representations of the new workplace, and how it has shifted to prioritize faculty and staff engagement and productivity, and tools to create a supportive adaptive workplace culture that enables productivity.

Making the Adaptive Workplace Stick

In the middle of this crisis, no one can predict the future, but we do know this: the pandemic has highlighted compelling reasons for lasting change. The cultural and operational shifts experienced under emergency conditions have illustrated that many of changes previously considered “off limits” in higher education are, in fact, quite implementable and beneficial for the long term. The time to design your version of the adaptive workplaces is now, before others define your future for you. Getting started, and making change last, could begin with any number of action items:



Rearchitect existing workflows



Adapt the workplace to extend beyond physical campus boundaries



Develop a robust technology infrastructure to support hybrid and virtual interactions



Build data infrastructure and analytics tools



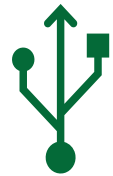
Provide greater access for students, faculty, and staff by supporting connectivity at home



Develop and deliver training for faculty and staff to use new tools effectively



Provide additional emotional support to faculty and staff



Support the workforce with the transition, and consider needed capabilities

Can institutions designed around in-person interactions transform into hubs brimming with innovation enabled by an adaptive workplace? Together, we can make the answer a resounding “Yes!”

Let's talk.

Have an interest in innovation? We do, too.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our thanks to the following Deloitte colleagues for their contributions: **Anna Duncan, Brett Currier, Cecilia Daizovi Weiland, and Love Anderson.**

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