

# VRA EAC Community Hour

March 31, 2022 at 9:30am PST // 10:30am MST // 11:30am CST // 12:30pm EST

Topic: Empowering Future Advocacy

**Moderators:** Lael Ensor-Bennett & Cindy Frank

- Please keep your microphones muted--please use a reaction, raise your hand, or use the chat to indicate that you would like to speak.
- **Video not required**, virtual backgrounds welcome (be mindful of your virtual background selections). Feel free to add your pronouns to your Zoom name.
  - [How to change your name during a Zoom meeting](#)
  - How to provide captions via [PowerPoint](#) or [Google Slides live captions](#)
    - <https://webcaptioner.com/> - Free Captioning Right In Your Browser
- If you'd like to ask a question anonymously, please send your question through a private chat to any moderators listed above.
- **Community Hours are not recorded** for the sake of attendees' privacy and so that all attendees feel safe to express any concerns or questions they may have on various topics.

EAC webpage: <http://vraweb.org/about/committees/equitableaction/>

EAC email: [ea@vraweb.org](mailto:ea@vraweb.org)

Submit a topic for a future Community Hour: <https://forms.gle/fENKfkEJjAC6Fgew5>

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Thank you! [Visual Resources Association's Equitable Action Committee](#)

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## Notes:

### About the Equitable Action Committee

- Welcome to our first hybrid EAC Community Hour; welcome to everyone, in person and on Zoom
- Check out the EAC page here <http://vraweb.org/about/committees/equitableaction/> for information about us as well as our [Resources List](#)
- Email us anytime with any suggestions, questions, or resources you'd like to share
- Join us for our **April Community Hour Friday, April 15 at 2pm EST: Facilitating Effective and Equitable Meetings**

### What has changed, what we have experienced in our workplaces in the past two years of the pandemic?

- Some employers forced a “back to normal” as if nothing has happened and going back to the strength of **in person education** as a selling point for our institutions
- “Revoked empathy” to “perform ‘Normal’”
- Residential campus means *everyone* should be on campus even if we didn't actually interact with students on a regular basis (i.e. back of house workers)
- “Getting back to our real jobs”--can be alienating
- Other folks have experienced more understanding and flexibility
- Recent removal of mask requirements have proved problematic in some cases and created inequities in power (ex. Not having the power to ask for someone to put on a mask if you are uncomfortable)
- Masking varies from place to place but in most cases the mandate is being removed or is about to be removed
- Masking mandate dropped right after Spring Break at some places; seems odd given that so many students had been traveling
- Remote work policies are often inequitable—who is able/allowed to work from home, and who is not?
- One place allowed folks with kids or who were immunocompromised to be on a rotating list to work from home some days
- Some institutions have apps or online forms with daily health checks to report to work—some used these in the earlier phases but are no longer in use
- Required weekly testing now gone or only monthly (some places have option to test weekly if so desired), sometimes offered to students first or only to students
- Testing dropped off dramatically after vaccines and vaccine requirements
- Changing parameters for remote work, lack of information about what is going on with hybrid work situations, no definite answers—being in limbo is stressful
- Some places allowed “applications” for remote work with lots of invasive questions and/or requirements to explain how you would track your productivity
- A lot of remote arrangements were trial runs and are still not defined as to an end date, if any
- In some places, remote arrangements vary from department to department within the institution

- Two remote days a week seems to be fairly common across institutions, but often with a caveat that this arrangement will end at some point in the near future
- Equity issues between who HAS to report in person and who is able to work from home, unionized vs non-unionized, tiered types of employees
- Being allowed vs having to apply/request remote work options (range of casual through formal arrangements)
- Some places already had a remote option to preserve office space (ex. IT departments), which is always at a premium
- Mask mandates (or lack thereof) affect folks with their own offices differently than those who have to share public spaces


### **What have we learned from our experiences?**

- Some positives: more flexibility and understanding about self-care
- Learning we could manage a team remotely—a new skill set!! Rethinking how we could make things work, and work more efficiently—why get back to “normal”?
- More flexible working methods should be preserved going forward!
- Learning more to work in teams of folks supporting one another
- Oral history projects and other digital projects were sparked by necessity
- We missed “happy accidents” and impromptu chats in person—these can create new ideas
- Increased use and interest in digital content and collections, ability to connect with faculty more than in the past
- Expanded workload—new hires needed to help create and manage content!
- New/additional hires can also help reinforce argument for more flexible scheduling and use of office space—hoteling or “hot desks”, shared work spaces and equipment
- Conversely, some folks are hesitant to work remotely because they don’t want to “lose” their personal offices/work spaces
- New models for work are possible, but sometimes there’s administrative resistance in the desire for “going back to normal”
- Documentation of the historical shift in how we work
- What strategies do folks have when you are overhearing other folks’ online meetings? Using library study rooms to do your work, creative use of space for meetings
- No longer dealing with the daily commute and the time and money lost on that
- On the flip side, we do get to actually LEAVE work if we go home from the office—a challenge to know when to “turn it off” when there’s no change of space
- Increased flexibility of remote meetings has also led to folks being asked to attend meetings in off hours or being asked to drop everything to attend
- Setting boundaries is more difficult for folks who are just starting out in their careers or in less permanent positions, more precarious financial situations
- Having to “prove” you are working (a lot of the work we may do is invisible)
- Greater empathy and more advocacy for others

### How can we implement what we have learned, and advocate for changes?

- Hope for updated and flexible work models that have nothing to do with Covid protocols!
- Hybrid work in a **contract** rather than a temporary request granted
- **Speaking up** to define our boundaries (ex. when people are asking you to attend meeting outside of your work schedule or when you are not on campus)
- **Turning off notifications** on your phone and **not emailing after hours** (ex. schedule a specific time to deal with your email)
- **Separate space for working and living** is essential for mental health, even if it's within your living space
- Adding a note in emails that an immediate response is not necessary, to **take the pressure off**
- If you are a supervisor, **have empathy and be flexible** with your employees
- **Model healthy and flexible work habits** so others can do the same

### Resources:

- Link to slide deck:  **EAC Community Hour: Empowering Future Advocacy**  
(<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1zx7Q5pSH1XYuMwsKRcCYjJhNbrmrLLUAlxOVOYllbw/edit?usp=sharing>)
- About future trends in work spaces:  
<https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/reaction-offices-and-the-future-of-work/>
- Find courses to advocate for yourself on the AAUW (American Association of University Women) website <https://www.aauw.org/get-empowered/>