Returning to Campus: Tips to ease anxiety

We all recognize that change is constant -- both planned and unplanned. To maximize productivity, managers need to be aware of the many resources available to support staff members who may be facing their own challenges and uncertainties. Here are some key points to consider:

- **Recognize employees may experience a variety of emotions regarding returning to work.** This can include fear, anxiety, gratitude, and excitement.

- **Collaborate and communicate often to build trust.** Use email, conversations, staff and one-on-one meetings to reinforce and update specific messages on how Penn is approaching safety and health precautions. Make your communications positive, concise, and focused on the present, demonstrating a collaborative problem-solving approach.

- **Check in with your team members as to how they and their family are doing.** Do this periodically as family health and other situations can change. Your staff, no matter what their situation, wants to know their managers care about them as whole human beings. Engage in active listening and demonstrate empathetic curiosity.

- **Respond to emotional reactions.** Listen and watch for signs of emotional distress, which may include changes in work behavior.

- **Solicit feedback regarding the frequency, type, and length of your communications.** A constant bombardment or long-winded reminders can prompt employees to overlook vital information.

- **Get input from your staff about what is working and what is not.** Determine if a concerning issue is an individual or more broadly shared issue. Consider soliciting solutions to help resolve the issue.

- **Model flexibility.** Adjust expectations while still holding employees accountable for the things that matter most.

- **Make sure you are following your own self-care plan.** Stick to the preventive health and safety measures, get proper sleep, take lunch breaks, and find activities that help you restore your energy and a sense of balance. If you are feeling overwhelmed, seek help.

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