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Subject: Tips for improving your home workstation

Greetings!

The efforts made by our employees when adjusting to UHD's swift move to online operations over a month ago is nothing short of miraculous. I'm incredibly impressed with how so many of you met the challenges of setting up a home workstation and adjusting to telecommuting in such a short time. Thank you for making it work so UHD could ensure the safety of our campus community.

Since it will be a while before everyone is back on campus, now is a good time to reassess your home workstation and make sure it is not just working — but working for you.

If you find yourself frustrated with your current workstation, dealing with new aches and pains or just wanting to make it better, the following tips can help make your workstation better fit your needs. Please note: Many of these tips can also help improve your workstation at UHD when we are all back on campus. I hope you find them helpful.

LOCATION

Initially, finding an ideal space in your home quickly may have been difficult. Now that you have more time and can better understand your needs, it is important to review your current workstation location and determine if it is your best option.

Ask yourself:

- Is it private?
- How's the lighting?
- How's the Internet connection?

Finding a private and dedicated location that works for you may involve moving your workstation to your bedroom, spare room, large closet or laundry room. It is important to create a distance between your work and personal life to ensure you have a way to leave work at the end of the day.

DISTRACTIONS

Noise

If you are unable to move your workstation to a private location or you encounter regular distraction in a private location (dog barking, lawnmowers, etc.), you can reduce distractions by using headphones or a white noise machine. A pair of over-ear headphones are often more comfortable than earbuds and provide better sound quality. If you have noise-cancelling headphones, those are even better at blocking out distracting noises.

Clutter

Noise is not the only distraction that can be frustrating your workstation. Everyday life and mess can quickly take over your work area, whether you work at the kitchen table or in a dedicated home office. To reduce the distraction of clutter, make a point of cleaning your work area at least once a day.

DESKS

Desks are an extremely important part of your home workstation. If you have one, it is recommended you use it and adjust your seating and monitor in accordance with it. If you don't have a desk, you probably developed something in a

pinch. Now is a good time to evaluate whether your improvised desk is working for you. Suggestions for improving your desk situation include:

- If using a desk...
 - Make sure there is enough clearance to move your knees and legs under the desk
 - Ensure you are not experiencing contact stress with the edge of the desk
- If working from an improvised desk...
 - Make sure you're set up is ergonomic
 - Avoid using your bed or couch
 - Consider acquiring a small desk
 - Find alternatives that may offer a better solution, such as an ironing board, countertop, kitchen table, folding table or two book stacks with a shelf (preferably it is level and about 29 inches tall).

If you develop any new pain, whether you are working from a desk or an improvised desk, adjust your position and workspace to improve ergonomics so you stay healthy and pain free.

CHAIRS AND POSTURE

A proper chair can make or break your workstation. Working in a position that is not ergonomic can strain your body and cause back pain, neck and/or shoulder pain, headaches, eye strain, hip pain, Sciatica and knee pain. The following suggestions will help you ensure your chair is working for you.

- Avoid sitting on your couch or bed.
- Make sure the height and shape of your chair benefits you and doesn't cause pain.
- Adjust and adapt your current chair by:
 - Adding a cushion, pillow or folded towel to raise your hips and increase comfort
 - Using the backrest to support your lower back
 - Increasing lumbar support by adding a rolled up towel between your chair and lower back
 - Changing the height so it allows flush alignment of forearms and elbows with the desk
 - Using a footrest, books or boxes if your feet dangle to make sure they are flat. Your hips and thighs should form 90-degree angles.
 - Changing your posture regularly. Sitting in the same posture the entire day can cause neck, back and shoulder pain.

BREAKS

When at the office, you probably take breaks to use the restroom and walk around the office to socialize with coworkers. However, when telecommuting it is easy to stay in a silo and remain focused. It's important to remember walking around and taking short breaks are just as important while working from home as they are when in the office. To ensure you are getting the physical breaks you need while working remotely, you are encouraged to do the following:

- Avoid sitting for too long. Set a timer for 30 minutes and take a break for up to five minutes to get up, walk around and do some quick stretches.
- Follow the 20/20/20 rule to reduce eye strain. Every 20 minutes look away from your computer screen and spend 20 seconds looking at something else 20 feet away.
- Ensure you take your lunch break away from your computer. Use this time to eat lunch and physically move around. You can even use part of your lunch break to do stretches, take a short walk or practice a low-level activity, such as yoga.

TECHNOLOGY

Monitor/Laptop

Laptops are ergonomically challenging since the monitor is either too low or the keyboard is too high. Ultimately, the top of your monitor, whether it is a regular monitor or a laptop monitor, should be just below eye level to avoid neck strain while you read. To make your monitor work for you:

- Raise it with objects such as books and boxes so it is eye level (6 to 12 inches above your desk)

- Place it an arm's length away directly in front of you
- Adjust lighting and shades/blinds to decrease monitor glare
- Add an anti-glare filter to your monitor
- Reduce eye strain by lowering the contrast between ambient light and the computer screen through monitor settings or by adjusting external lighting
- Adjust font sizes on the display to reduce eye strain
- If using a laptop, use a wireless keyboard and mouse once you've raised the monitor to an appropriate height to avoid neck and shoulder strain associated with shrugging your shoulders.

Keyboard and Mouse

Improper keyboard placement coupled with repetitive action can lead to Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. To avoid unnecessary strain on your hands and wrists, implement the following:

- Place your keyboard at the same level (height) as your elbows.
- Slant the keyboard the same angle as your forearms so your wrists stay straight when working.
- Position your mouse and keyboard close to the front of the desk if the desk is even with your elbows and make sure the mouse and other devices are close to the same height as the keyboard.
- Use a mouse with a wrist pad if you have one to help support it while working.
- Make sure your elbows are close to your body.

ACCESSORIES/ADJUSTMENTS

Accessories and adjustments are often seen as minor conveniences but can make a huge difference in the effectiveness of your workstation. Some recommendations are:

- Place reference material as close as possible to your computer screen and put it at the same height and distance as your monitor to reduce eye and neck strain.
- Use a headset, headphones with a microphone or put your phone on speaker mode if you talk on the phone for extended periods. Doing this will help you avoid cradling your phone between your shoulder and ear and causing tightening of your neck, back and shoulders.
- Use ergonomic accessories to improve body postures, such as wireless keyboards, armrests, lumbar support, etc.
- Plug your computer and other workstation devices into a surge protector to prevent damage to your electronics.
- Take advantage of the bonus hotspot data many wireless carriers are offering right now to make your devices mobile or to have as backup for spotty home Internet. Check with your provider to see if they are offering bonus hotspot data in response to the coronavirus.
- Scan documents with your mobile phone. Scan apps are available for iOS and Android devices. iPhone users don't need to download any additional apps. They can open the Notes app, tap the camera icon and then scan their desired document.

Best,

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