



Pilot: Staff “Thoughtful Thursdays” Recommendation

Begins late April 2022

Context and Background

We have heard from many staff and department supervisors that work-life balance is a key priority and a continuing challenge. We are recommending this pilot concept be adopted to help staff better manage and accomplish their work. We heard from staff in the Calls to Conversations, in the Human Resources (HR) Staff Update Sessions, in the HR Listening Sessions and from department supervisors struggling to maintain workloads for themselves, and for their staff.

Studies indicate that if time is preserved as meeting-free, stress levels reduce and work productivity increases. Articles reflecting some of these studies are noted below. Training on meeting efficiency will be provided by HR to further support this effort and are detailed below.

The President's Administrative Advisory Board, (PAAB) discussed this issue and recommended that the Executive Team review and approve a pilot program as described below.

In our effort to be responsive and respectful of our staff, we propose the following:

The College recommends a “Thoughtful Thursdays” pilot program which is a meeting-free day or half-day. A day without meetings will allow our staff community to collectively designate Thursdays as time for strategic and independent work. This program is being implemented in response to employee feedback about the desire for better work life balance.

The implementation of “Thoughtful Thursdays” is a strategic step to reduce stress, increase productivity, and improve work satisfaction; it allows employees to schedule focus time, which is time that is purposely set aside to work without interruption. Research indicates that such focused time allows employees to do their work during the work day so they do not have to work into the evening or over the weekend to meet deadlines.

“Thoughtful Thursdays” will begin in late April for a 90 day trial period. Staff will be surveyed after 60 days and that data will be assessed by PAAB, to determine whether this program will continue after the 90 day pilot. Intra-department meetings may continue to be held as needed on Thursdays, however, interdepartmental meetings are not encouraged on Thursdays, unless necessary.



Flexibility - A cornerstone of this pilot is flexibility. Departments have the flexibility to determine what works best for them in order to accomplish their work. Meetings within departments may be necessary, and inter-departmental meetings might take place on days other than Thursdays.

Resources, Impact and Implementation

Positive Impacts of a Meeting Free Day:

[Studies](#) have shown that providing employees with a minimum of one meeting-free day per week will add to productivity and work life balance by:

- **increasing communication, engagement, and productivity;**
- **decreasing stress; and**
- **supporting a positive work-life balance**

Guidance for Implementation:

Departments have the flexibility to determine if a half-day or full-day free of meetings works best for their operations. Does a half-day free of meetings rather than a full-day work better for your department? If so, do that instead! The more departments that commit to this pilot, the more successful it might be. We recognize that flexibility will be paramount in successfully implementing “Thoughtful Thursdays”.

Staff, supervisors and department heads should refer to the resources below to learn more about best practices for implementing “Thoughtful Thursdays” for their departments:

- **[Ideas for Working More Effectively and Sustainably](#):** Guidance and suggested approaches to foster an engaged, healthy, and resilient workforce with a focus on efficiently getting work done and time management practices.
- **[Working More Efficiently](#):** This article suggests ideas to effectively manage your time. Does every question/challenge require a meeting?
- **[Tips for Successfully Implementing Thoughtful Thursdays](#):** Explains how to successfully implement a “No Meeting” day.

Additional Resources to manage valuable work time:

[Stop the Meeting Madness! Improve Efficiency and Company Culture By Wiping Out Meetings.](#)
Linkedin



Training Opportunities

- **April: Making the Most of Meetings:** In this session, participants will learn what they can do to ensure that the meetings in which they participate are an effective use of everyone's time. Participants will learn how to prepare for a meeting, communicate successfully during a meeting, and how to address the most common meeting challenges.
 - [Training Dates](#): 4/22 (12 to 1 pm), 4/26 (1 to 2 pm), and 5/2 (10-11) in Hogan 410

- **May: Getting Organized with Google:** This webinar focuses on helping you to use Google as a tool to overcome your email and time management challenges. Together, we will explore useful tips and tricks in Gmail and Google calendar, such as labels, settings, flags, etc. that will help you begin to create an electronic organization system that works for you.
 - [Training Dates](#): 5/10 (1 to 2 pm), 5/16 (10 to 11 am), and 5/19 (12 to 1 pm).

Amendments: This pilot program may be amended, modified, supplemented or replaced, in whole or in part, at any time and from time to time by the College.

Program Owner: The Office of Human Resources.