

# **Draft Report on the University Senate Council Survey of Senate Members on the COVID-19 Pandemic in Fall 2020**

## **Introduction**

Between September 24, 2020 and October 8, 2020, the University Senate Council in conjunction with the Student Government Association (SGA) conducted a survey of the University Senate and SGA Senate membership (each of the University Senate student members is also a member of the SGA Senate). The survey asked senators to communicate with their constituents and to answer on behalf of their constituents. An analysis of the quantitative and qualitative results of the survey follows. Survey responses are separated into faculty and student responses. There were 64 faculty responses and 14 student responses. This represents a large fraction of those surveyed, and, because of the respondents actively sought the input of their constituents, the results represent the views of faculty and staff across campus. The feedback from faculty and from students are discussed separately below.

## **Faculty Feedback**

Following a basic statistical analysis of the quantitative responses of faculty survey respondents, it was possible to discern the relative concerns encapsulated in the responses. Faculty exhibited somewhat greater concern about the following:

1. Personal exposure to COVID-19
2. Compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols
3. Faculty evaluation
4. Faculty workload

Faculty exhibited somewhat lesser concern about the following:

1. Classroom capacity
2. Workers' compensation

In reviewing the responses to the qualitative open-ended questions, there were five primary themes that emerged from the comments provided by faculty (the comments are based on aggregated responses of constituents). The themes align well with the concerns expressed in the quantitative survey items and are as follows:

1. Compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols
2. Reporting of COVID-19 statistics
3. Faculty workload
4. Faculty evaluation
5. Personal exposure to COVID-19

## ***Theme 1: Compliance with COVID-19 Safety Protocols***

Several comments were provided that discussed the level of compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols for both employees and students. In addition, some comments mentioned the availability of supplies needed to sanitize classrooms. Other comments discussed the safety of the work environment as well as penalties for noncompliance. There did appear to be some variation across campus units with respect to this topic.

### **Illustrative Quotes**

- “Not all students wear masks, in the correct way and all the time, during in-person lectures. (When the mask does not cover the nose, it is not working.) There is really no way for faculty to enforce this. While I would prefer to teach in person, I am not willing to repeatedly take the risk of being in a classroom for an hour or more with some students who are not masked.”
- “Several constituents expressed concern about different groups of staff (medical workers, farm workers) in noncompliance with masking and social distancing. The lack of notification to faculty about positive cases in classrooms was universally viewed as a major concern. The perception generally seemed to be that to focus on students and student testing may not provide sufficient protection/concern for faculty. Overall, though, people feel that the University is doing a lot, and that the semester is going better than expected.”
- “What is the university doing to keep students from congregating in large groups? Attending classes isn't what is causing the spread. Most students we have been in contact with are fairly responsible while on campus. It's the off campus behaviors that are problematic.”
- “I am concerned that some courses offered by the [college name] are planning to administer final exams in-person, on-campus in the middle of December. This directly violates UK policy, and creates a public health risk.”
- “Personal protective equipments, like masks, and materials, like cleaning wipes, were provided once for faculty and staff and in classrooms at the beginning of the semester. As the time goes by, those equipments and materials were used and not replenished. We need to have a better system in place to replenish these equipments and materials.”
- “Plans developed at the top don't always work as planned. There is poor compliance across campus. For example, at any given time in the clinics or medical center, where compliance to mask wearing should be highest, at least 50% of staff are NOT wearing masks correctly. This lackadaisical attitude is appalling and seems to be getting worse. Accountability for addressing this issue is low.”
- “I believe the CON is doing a phenomenal job with Karen Butler as lead on Covid 19 and our students. I feel we faculty and students are all well informed, stay connected and communicate well, have successful plans in place to keep student up to speed with classes and assignments.”

## ***Theme 2: Reporting of COVID-19 Statistics***

The reporting of University COVID-19 statistics is a topic that several respondents mentioned. Many comments focused on the delays in reporting and the desire for more details in the reporting approach. There are concerns that Dashboard is potentially deceptive, with difficulty understanding who is being tested, which numbers are in the numerator and denominator, etc.

### **Illustrative Quotes**

- “Some of my faculty colleagues felt the information about the covid-19 cases or trends from the University information resources, like the covid-19 dashboard, does not provide the most up-to-date information and is different from what's being provided on the news. The communication of correct and up-to-date information of covid-19 data on campus and in the Lexington community needs to be fast and accurate.”
- “Better breakdown of stats/numbers by units and/or faculty/staff/students.”
- “Cleaning supplies and communication are strong. I would like to know which pools of students (athletes, Greek life, etc) are getting COVID-19. Trends reporting on the dashboard has been excellent.”
- “I don’t understand how the UK dashboard cannot reflect what is happening in the news. I feel that we do not have current nor up to date data from the dashboard. When I’ve heard the Provost asked about this from other faculty across campus, the response is that there are delays in getting accurate, verified information. But it just doesn’t make sense.”
- “I feel like the number of positive COVID students should be made more accessible than on the website. Maybe in an update on the emails that come through 'what's happening'. May not be something UK wants to share everyday but as faculty members, especially those who are in-person everyday, we should know. We are the front line workers in this situation. Right now feel that students get more attention and concern than faculty, especially with the availability of testing opportunities.”
- “I’m a bit disappointed that trends was the word chosen because that doesn’t address the real issue. I don’t understand how the UK dashboard cannot reflect what is happening in the news. I feel that we do not have current nor up to date data from the dashboard. When I’ve heard the Provost asked about this from other faculty across campus, the response is that there are delays in getting accurate, verified information. But it just doesn’t make sense.”
- “We need better clarity over the university's positivity rate. There seems to be a discrepancy between the metrics used by the university and the number of students actually on campus.”

## ***Theme 3: Faculty Workload***

There were many comments related to faculty workload (or as some comments mentioned – faculty burden). Within this theme, there were two distinct groups of comments: (1) those related to managing multiple modalities of instruction and the need for flexibility in managing workload and (2) those related to work-life balance. There was some concern raised that certain groups of populations would be impacted to a greater extent than other groups. For example, many comments focused on the challenges facing working parents during this time when they

are balancing both work responsibilities and managing virtual education for their own children. A potential longer term impact is exacerbation of gender wage gaps. The illustrative quotes are divided into general concerns, concerns about managing modalities and the need for flexibility, and concerns about work-life balance.

### **Illustrative Quotes: General**

- “In my opinion all questions are being handled adequately with the exception of faculty workloads do not become too burdensome. Faculty workloads ARE burdensome and I would list this as the highest priority
- I don’t know what’s happening in other departments, but for us, I would say the 80% of our faculty are swamped.”
- "The University hasn't paid enough attention to faculty workloads -- for some of us, work has doubled or tripled with the pandemic and this is without the added responsibility of caregiving. For those faculty members, there is no break. If UK genuinely cares about preserving the mental health and well-being of its faculty, it will determine what is and isn't absolutely necessary this year and take swift and concrete action to implement workload reductions. For example, FMERs could be eliminated this year or at the very least the deadline postponed. Any steps the University can take to save faculty several hours of work, or even 1 or 2 hours here and there, would go a long way."
- “I am working 50% more each week, mostly due to teaching. The Provost just sent a memo to us about how to teach. I think it would be appropriate for the Provost and Administrators to \*each\* teach \*one class\* per semester. This is an area of need.”

### **Illustrative Quotes: Managing Modalities and the Need for Flexibility**

- “Teaching in person while also having some students remote requires additional cognitive resources. I feel like an air traffic controller as I monitor the zoom recording, check the chat box for questions, stop the share, restart the share, and then make sure to share the correct screen image because if you don’t your slides don’t advance, then making sure you not forget to post the email link with the recording.. and if for some reason you post the wrong one, students make sure you know you did, then you have go to email and dig out the correct one.”
- “The most important thing is maintaining instructor choice (across rank) about whether or not to teach in person, online, or in a hybrid modality.“
- “I think support for faculty, allowances for modality and flexibility in scheduling our classes to fit the needs of students, faculty, and meet accreditation standards are critical at this time.”
- “The University and Health Corps needs to capture and release the data on students who are COVID negative, but asked to quarantine/isolate for 14 days. These absences affect the dynamic of an in-person class and increases the pressure for faculty to Zoom their classes in addition to teaching in person.”
- “The clinical teaching demands have been most difficult. Faculty in these roles, have had to create new programs via telehealth, provide training for not only students, but patients as well. Additionally the clinical assignments have constantly been re-done as clinical

sites deal with shifting policies which has increased work of faculty. Faculty in these roles also have had to deal with how to re-open and run our on campus, in person clinic. Yes it's been a burden"

- "Many faculty feel they have been asked or are expected to prepare to teach in multiple modalities--in person, hybrid, and online. This is an unreasonable burden, especially long-term. Expectations for faculty members need to be clearer and more reasonable."
- "Faculty are completely and totally exhausted because they are being asked to teach in multiple formats. While the provost may say that faculty aren't being asked to teach both online and in person, we essentially are because we have to find some way to deliver content online to students quarantining or staying online by choice, which is very difficult to do and keep students engaged. It is also very difficult to teach in a mask and hear students."

### **Illustrative Quotes: Work-Life Balance**

- "There needs to be a special consideration for working mothers (at all levels, students, staff, and faculty) taking the brunt of extra child care responsibilities and who are being forced out of the workforce. UK doesn't seem to support family's ability to use sick time for child care responsibilities during COVID or take unpaid leave. If UK really wants to support diversity and inclusion they need to be sure that they are not forcing out a generation of women from the workforce."
- "I also wanted to share a quote from one of my colleagues, who contacted me this morning and asked me to amplify this message: If I did not have a supportive husband who is an involved father, I would probably have to seriously consider ending my academic career (I am not going anywhere- don't worry, but that is true). It's just too much to help my kids through this, and literally other than you and [division coordinator] no one has reached out to ask how things are going from UK."
- "if it weren't for my husband's ability and willingness to quit his job to care for our children, I don't know how I would still be working in academia right now. The parents of my children's friends are also reluctant to let their children play with my boys because I work at UK. My family is extremely fortunate and privileged, and we are still struggling. I hope the faculty senate will take this seriously and work to address the struggles facing women and caregivers at UK right now."
- "The one issue I have brought up multiple times but seems to fall on deaf ears is that of faculty (and staff) with school-aged children. There really is no question that addresses that issue in this questionnaire. It is already very clear that women are falling behind (publications and other products) and this is all over the news in Science magazine and PNAS. There are lots of Universities that are having discussions about this issue and how to address it, but it has been crickets at UK. It is actually maddening to me. I would really like for the Senate to take on this issue and at least be part of the conversation that other universities are having about it. I know it affects men also, but it is again mainly women who suffer the most and sometimes it feels like that is the reason it does not get addressed. I think that there HAVE to be a couple of questions in this questionnaire about this issue. Thanks again for doing the important work in the Senate for all of us."

- “In addition to the feedback I shared in my survey, I wanted to pass along this article from the NYT that I just read. Many of my concerns about the impact of the pandemic on women on UK’s faculty (particularly women of color) are articulated in this article, and it includes several things other universities are doing to address this (allowing faculty to request removal of portions of student evaluations that evince gender bias, repurposing funds to support caretakers, waiving all nonessential service, such as serving on committees and administrative duties, suspending standards for research productivity, and giving teaching relief to faculty with the heaviest caretaking loads). I hope the faculty senate will seriously consider what many women (and men who fill caregiving roles) are facing right now. As Dr. Maria Fernanda Escalln, assistant professor of anthropology at U of Oregon, is quoted as saying in the article, I hope the administration realizes that anything they do now to alleviate this issue for caregivers will directly impact how the professoriate will look five to 10 years from now, “ how diverse it will be, and how many women will be in positions of power within academia.”• “

### ***Theme 4: Faculty Evaluation***

Another theme that emerged in the free response questions related to the evaluation of faculty. This included evaluation related to teaching quality as well as evaluation regarding promotion and tenure.

### **Illustrative Quotes**

- “...Third, pre-tenure faculty are very concerned about the impact the pandemic may have on their promotion and tenure cases. No communication from the university has explained how student evaluations from Spring 2020 or subsequent semesters will be (not?) used in P&T cases. While an extra year was given for tenure-track faculty, many feel this just increases expectations for them. Many academic units have not given clear guidance on how the pandemic will affect P&T--likely because there has not been clear enough guidance from the Provost's office.”
- “I think most of us are primarily teaching online, and online teaching requires so much more work and time than in-person! And the email load is incredibly daunting!! I know the College has encouraged some decreased service requirements for non-essential service....but for those of us with essential service, this service is daunting on top of our regular teaching! My biggest concern about all of this will be how teaching and service will be evaluated and considered for years to come on merit reviews and promotions! I will be up for promotion soon, and the stress of promotion process following a pandemic year is really weighing on me.”
- “Faculty evaluation questions should be edited to give a better picture of classroom management, preparedness, and knowledge of the topic. However, faculty members failing to provide quality content or "contact" hours should be held accountable for not adapting appropriately. Resources are available for us to use and when students mention that their instructor was unaccommodating or otherwise unavailable then this should be taken into account for promotion/tenure.”
- “The faculty senate should consider suspending the TCE each semester of the pandemic when normal teaching can't be performed.”

- “Faculty expressed the concerns that we need more concrete support and a better method for performance evaluation for faculty with school-aged children, especially for female faculty.”
- "I am a full professor and so fairly shielded from the evaluation protocols of our university, but on behalf of my junior and less senior colleagues I think one small step UK could take to show its commitment to faculty success would be to suspend both FMER and TCE this academic year."

### ***Theme 5: Personal Exposure to COVID-19***

A final theme that emerged were concerns about personal exposure to COVID-19. More than 2,000 of our students have now had COVID-19, which suggests that many people are not aware that they are being personally exposed to COVID.

#### **Illustrative Quotes**

- “I’ve had at least ten students in the Covid protocol or who thought they were having symptoms and I haven’t heard from contact tracers once. I don’t get the impression that if I, or my class, was exposed to a student who was sick that we would be informed. I do very much appreciate that I can teach classes hybrid or remote if I want, but I wish it was made more clear what our risks are teaching in the classroom at any given time.”
- “I have a student who tested positive and I never received any notification from the University, only directly from the student.”
- “First, faculty and staff would like more information when individuals test positive; for example, if a student tests positive, the relevant faculty and staff members SHOULD be informed because classrooms and staff-student interaction are close enough situations that transmission should occur.”
- “Contact tracing of students in classes is a major problem because of confidentiality issues. Depending on class size, one could get numerous notices but may not have been within hundreds of feet of the student.”
- “The faculty are concerned about students not reporting their results. The faculty were unsure of the procedure for handling their class after students were confirmed positive-- they felt they had to inquire and learn that they were "safe" and that no notification to the class was necessary.”

### **Student Feedback**

Following a basic statistical analysis of the quantitative responses of student survey respondents, it was possible to discern the relative concerns encapsulated in the responses. Students exhibited somewhat greater concern about the following:

1. Personal exposure to COVID-19
2. Awareness of strategies to limit COVID-19
3. Availability of personal protective equipment/cleaning supplies
4. Compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols

Students exhibited somewhat lesser concern about the following:

1. International support
2. Dormitories/food service

In reviewing the responses to the open-ended question, the respondents of the survey provided aggregated comments expressing student opinions. There were three primary themes that emerged from the comments provided by students as follows:

1. Compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols
2. Course modality
3. COVID-19 testing

### ***Theme 1: Compliance with COVID-19 Safety Protocols***

Of those provided, the theme of compliance emerged as one that came up in the comments. Students shared their concerns regarding compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols both on and off campus.

#### **Illustrative Quotes**

- “There is a concern of students participating in off-campus activities who are not being regularly tested. This is resulting in some students questioning whether in-person classes are safe, especially with how the first weekend with football was handled.”
- “I am an RA on campus. Students do not follow the mask rule and continue to hold large gatherings in their rooms, and then go out to large gatherings such as parties. When these students come back they are potentially spreading the virus to roommates, hallmates, RAs, etc. There needs to be more of an initiative to shut down parties both on and off campus, and encourage mask wearing in all public spaces. Signs around campus are not enough. Many students get an attitude when asked to put on a mask and there is nothing RAs can do if they refuse other than write them up, which usually doesn’t lead to anything. Something needs to be done to keep our campus safer.”

### ***Theme 2: Course Modality***

In addition, aggregated comments suggest that students also have some concerns regarding course modality.

#### **Illustrative Quote**

- “The majority of respondents believe that online/hybrid courses are somewhat sufficient, but this is a hot topic in the open response portion. I allowed students to type in anything else they had to add (23/41 participants chose to do so), and most students expressed a dissatisfaction with this form of learning. They feel as though they are being cheated out of their money.”

### ***Theme 3: COVID-19 Testing***

The final area mentioned in the student comments related to testing.



## **Illustrative Quotes**

- “The next biggest point is over the frequency of testing. Multiple respondents advocated for more testing. One claims that testing should be done weekly while another says they should be done monthly. One person even mentioned that there is a lack of testing and resources for faculty and staff, but since that is more on the faculty side and not the student side I won’t dive too deep into that.”
- “UK Health Corps is completely disorganized and overrun. Attempting to get a consistent answer from them is impossible. Every time you call, a different answer will be given to a simple question.”