

Introduction

In early October, SU-AAUP conducted two forums and circulated a campus-wide survey to all faculty concerning teaching modality in a time of Pandemic. Over 100 faculty registered for the forums and over 300 completed the survey, representing 20% of faculty from all schools and across all ranks, including teaching faculty and part-time instructors. Faculty expressed a range of concerns re: Spring 2021, highlighted in the chart below and elaborated in the Key Findings section of this report.

SU-AAUP organized these initiatives to respond to member concerns that faculty and departments were feeling pressured to increase the numbers of courses taught face-to-face in Spring, a sense that was confirmed by the September 29 message from Provost Liu. The Provost's message reversed assurances previously given to faculty over the summer that choice of teaching modality "was theirs and theirs alone." This again put faculty in a position of having to remind administrators that the faculty have primary responsibility for matters of instruction according to [widely recognized protocols of shared governance](#).

There are sound pedagogical reasons why faculty choose particular modalities for different courses. For these reasons, SU-AAUP advocated from the start the position to which the Provost again arrived in October: that faculty need to assess the best choices of modality for their own courses. This is not to argue for the superiority of any particular modality, but instead to assert that faculty are in the best position to make determinations about instruction. It is nonetheless noteworthy, however, that the report confirms that many faculty currently teaching in hybrid/hyflex classrooms--the only way that 'in-person' teaching can be delivered

during the pandemic given the necessity of accommodating quarantined and ill students--have found this modality to be pedagogically unsound and not yet supported by adequate technology.

Responses to the survey made clear that faculty recognize the dire financial situation faced by SU and higher education in general, and appreciate the work that Vice Chancellor Haynie and his team have done to keep the rates of infection low at SU for most of the semester. They also recognize, however, that some of the success for containing outbreaks likely has been the result of the relatively low current density of in-person instruction, a point insufficiently acknowledged by administration, as is discussed under "Communications" in the next section on "Key Findings."

More generally, "Key Findings" outlines the main takeaways from the SU-AAUP survey and forums, and uses both to make several recommendations in the areas of instruction and teaching labor under conditions of pandemic, including provisions for the most vulnerable instructors. The findings section also addresses several broader faculty concerns with issues including childcare and health and safety as well as communications between administration and faculty.

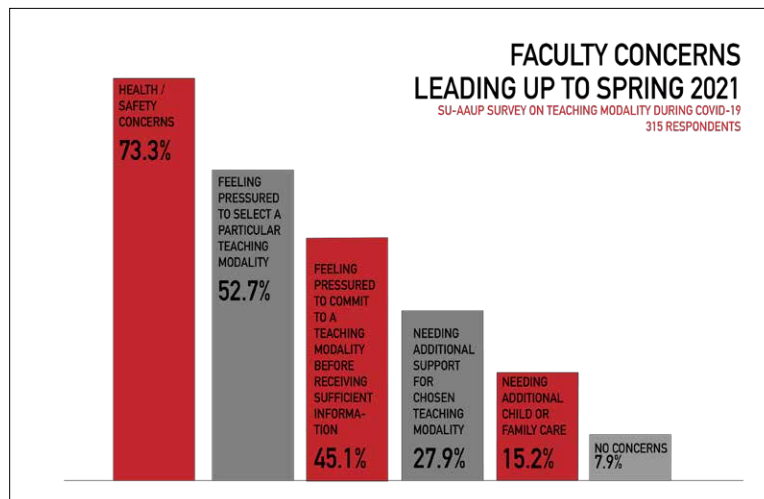


Figure 1

The goal of this report is to *enact* shared governance by underscoring faculty voices. As such, although an October 14 email from the Provost re-confirmed that decisions about teaching modality belong with the faculty, this report remains timely and important as we navigate an ongoing crisis and the challenges of Spring 2021. The high level of engagement with both the SU AAUP survey and the organized forums makes clear that faculty across all ranks want their concerns heard and collectively addressed.

Key Findings

Students Come First

Faculty commitment to their students and the educational mission of the university remains paramount, even under conditions of pandemic, despite considerable costs to research and personal life. Figure 2 shows 74.3% of faculty—regardless of teaching modality—spent “more time overall” on teaching labor for Fall 2020. During AAUP forums and in the survey, faculty underscored that they put what is best for their students first, often at their own expense. One Professor observed that she had “spent weeks of planning for my courses this summer to ensure the best possible experience for students,” and has continued

these extra exertions into the semester. An Associate Professor notes that she is “spending an average of 40 hours per week on prep, student contact, online engagement, etc.” Doing what faculty consider to be best for their students in all these ways is taxing to sustain. As an Assistant Professor commented,

“I think my students are doing well and learning a lot despite us being online but it’s a lot more work for me and I am completely exhausted, approaching burnout and don’t have time for research.” These sentiments were echoed by many. A Professor observes: “online is the only safe option for my household, but it takes working 7 days a week to produce a quality course. I have had very few days off since the beginning of July and not a single one since a week before the semester started. I am exhausted and have not been able to do any of my own research.” “We are putting our research completely on hold in order to be able to teach well,” another added.

Not only do current conditions of instruction require faculty to master new modalities, and to constantly try out new strategies to keep students engaged, but the demands of emotional labor have increased exponentially because students, too, are “tired, overworked, juggling several different learning modalities, and

trying to navigate an unfurling outbreak on campus.” Many faculty worry that conditions of instruction under pandemic has made it more difficult to spot students in distress, and that most students require far more individual attention than usual, for everything from troubleshooting technology, to questions about lecture material they were unable to hear clearly when delivered behind a mask, to simple comfort and empathy in anxious times: “students seem to need more feedback/reassurance, so I’m spending more time communicating with them outside class than in any previous semester. Which I don’t mind because it fills that response gap from class sessions. But I feel like I have to be super-prepared for each class and work

much harder to maintain their interest and engagement. It’s exhausting and I am wrung out at the end of each class.”

Other faculty commented on the difficulties and challenges of working with students in different time zones. One Assistant Teaching Professor described adding an addition-

al weekly class meeting solely for her three Chinese students. Another Professor discussed coming up with field trips and outdoor meetings to engage his students and keep everyone safe. “We love our students,” underscored an Associate Teaching Professor. Pedagogical and emotional commitments to students were consistently expressed by many faculty surveyed, and enacted in the increased labor-time devoted to teaching and being attentive to student needs.

In short, faculty teaching in all modalities have been working harder than ever to find the best way to teach safely, balancing compassion with academic rigor, and often prioritizing students’ educational experience over their own research and work-life balance. Yet there was little sense among those surveyed that administration fully “recognizes this or appreciates what we all had to do,” as one Professor put it.

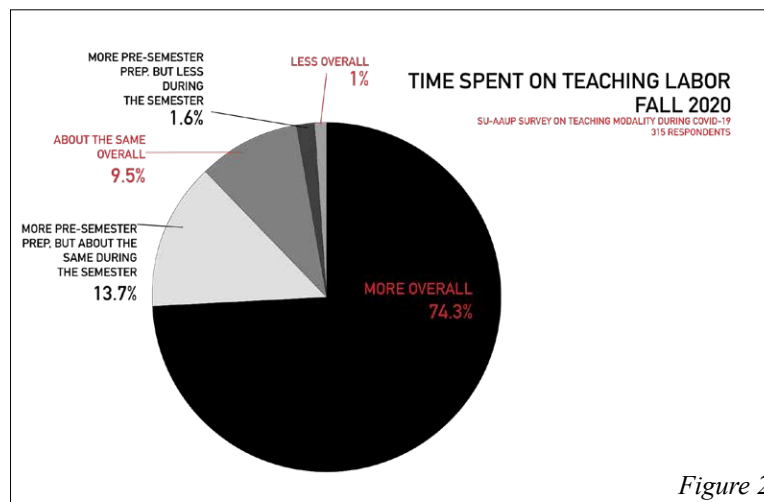


Figure 2

Labor and Life

The labor issues that have emerged from pandemic conditions are not only multiple and complex, but symptomatic of larger problems in faculty/administrative relations.

Lack of research time as the demands of teaching are intensified, is a matter of particular concern, especially to Assistant and Associate Professors, who are acutely aware of the potential long-term effects of neglecting research (“my book is being delayed”). They repeatedly noted their concerns for their careers, and also underscored that their perceptions were manifest materially: “I thought I was underestimating the amount of time I’m getting for research, but I started using a time tracker app to make sure. I have not yet got in more than 1 hour per day for research (including week-ends).” Some protested that they were not even able to devote so much as an hour. These conditions are especially stressful for faculty up for renewal of contract or tenure: “I was going through a review, it was hard to do both - write and submit all of the materials for the review *and* go through all of the training and preparation to make it interesting for students to learn online.”

Faculty—including PTIs—also report spending their own money on equipment to enhance their teaching, even though many households have been hard hit financially. As one professor put it: “Faculty have had to spend their own money to support online teaching (hardware purchases, reconfiguring home space, etc.). This is inappropriate, and particularly unfair to faculty who are experiencing financial stress.”

Financial stress is even more profound among the contingent faculty and graduate students. Graduate instructors report they often far exceed the stipulated hours they are supposed to devote to teaching, and both they and PTIs noted that they were receiving very small remuneration for massive effort: “In 29 years of teaching,” one PTI observed, “I have never had to work so hard.” Another added: “None of us were compensated for our labor in creating online classrooms, nor are we adequately compensated for the additional labor required to continuously respond to changing conditions in the classroom, and its added workload.”

Indeed, negotiating work, life, and mental health is a top concern of faculty at all ranks. Working throughout the semester without breaks, which makes sense from a public health point of view, has been very hard on

students and faculty alike in practice. This is exacerbated by the need for faculty to forego even weekend breaks in order to satisfy state contact hour requirements: “The way we are currently teaching is OK in a crisis situation, but it is not sustainable. The students are burnt out, too. I am disappointed that we couldn’t come up with a solution for the spring semester that involves a break (in which students must stay on campus and/or in state).” Many pointed out that they felt as if they had not had a real break since last January, given that the previous Spring Break was effectively deleted by the demand to transfer all their classes online, and summer required the redesign of courses and the learning of new teaching skills before being hurled into this unprecedented semester.

Those with children report significant additional stresses—financial, career, time management, and lack of support—with the greatest burden falling unequally along gender lines. The consensus is that the administration is not doing enough to support faculty, particularly women, burdened with caregiving responsibilities. One survey respondent mentioned the inadequacy of the University childcare subsidy: “Child care for school-aged children on remote days is nonexistent. And even if I were to find some, SU’s child care subsidy wouldn’t come close to covering it.” Another noted the special problems with in-person teaching for faculty when schools are closed or only partially open, and even babysitters hard to find: “childcare now makes in-person enormously complicated for me, just getting to campus at the times I am scheduled.” Some faculty in our forums even expressed concern that they may be compelled to choose between their and their families’ health and safety, and their jobs. Others noted a depressing lack of empathy even among immediate colleagues who no longer have young children at home: “I feel like I have to hide the toll it’s taking.”

Given these labor conditions, many faculty felt that administrators’ pressure to increase in-person instruction—especially without engaging the faculty directly in the decision making—displayed a remarkable indifference to the time and effort that faculty have had to commit to developing expertise and facility in online modalities. One Associate Professor put it this way: “I am online because I really need to see my student’s faces and hear them clearly so am glad I opted for online, though I do not love it. I *have* learned lots of ways to make it more effective as a learning environment, and so really resent feeling pressured to teach in F2F in the Spring having already invested so much time and effort in online instruction. Being forced to hybrid would mean learning a whole different set of skills.

Admin appears to have not thought about, or not care about, this labor issue at all!”

Unequal Vulnerability

At the time of the survey, significant numbers of faculty reported feeling increasingly vulnerable to administrative pressure to comply with the push for increased face-to-face instruction. Over half (52.7%) say they felt pressured to select a particular teaching modality for Spring 2021, and nearly half (45.1%) felt pressured to commit to a choice of modality before receiving sufficient information to make an informed choice. Although these numbers were evenly distributed across ranks, many observed that in practice they fell more heavily upon graduate students, PTIs, and untenured full-time faculty (whether tenure track or not), and they worried about this disproportion.

Although the administration ultimately backed down

again in the Fall from the “expectation” that, given sufficient classroom space, all instruction in Spring 2021 should be face-to-face with the exception of faculty at higher risk for COVID, or who lived in households with high-risk individuals, two points remain salient. First, it is time-consuming for

faculty to have to engage in the same struggles repeatedly, especially when time is in short supply. If pressure from parents was informing this administrative directive, faculty would expect that administrators communicate to parents the hard work that faculty were already doing to make various modalities work well under highly unusual conditions—work that many students recognized as successful. Instead administrators tried to make a mandate to faculty that many found unworkable, and yet felt pressured to accept.

Second, after the Provost relaxed in October the “expectation” for in-person instruction, administrators were not uniformly careful to pass this information along to PTIs and graduate students. A persistent theme in AAUP forums was a concern that instructors with the least power and security—adjunct instructors, part-time instructors, and graduate instructors—face the greatest pressure. As one faculty member flatly stated at a forum, “New and adjunct faculty do not feel they

can refuse to teach in person.” A survey respondent suggested, “Non-tenured professors are risking their health by teaching in person because they are afraid of offending the administration.” An Assistant Professor noted a double standard: “I do not feel I was able to ‘elect’ my own teaching modality. The way it was communicated to me through my college and department is that online teaching was only available for faculty who were older and had health conditions, leaving everyone else required to teach in person (unless their class was very large). In addition, as an untenured faculty member I did not feel I could press the issue.”

In response to subtle forms of pressure (that varied by department, Dean, and School), one part-time instructor even admitted a willingness to sacrifice so others can teach online: “many of my colleagues need the waiver for online teaching more than I do. I am anxious about doing it but feel like there was really

no choice.” Other groups who expressed unease were Teaching Professors whose contracts were up for review, and untenured Assistant Professors, especially new ones, some of whom had not been informed that they *had* a choice of teaching modality for the Fall, and were simply assigned modalities by Chairs.

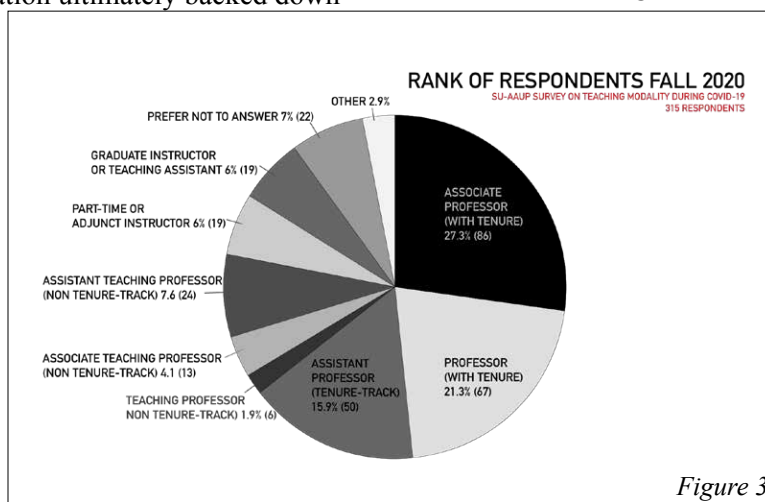


Figure 3

It is clear that many faculty, especially more vulnerable faculty, feared retribution for not electing to teach face-to-face (hyflex) in Spring 2021, in the wake of the Provost’s September 29 message. Furthermore, it is clear that not all Chairs informed their PTIs of the extended deadline or changed tone of the October 14 message, raising issues of fairness and equity.

Communication Problems

Even faculty who were generally favorable in their assessment of administrative handling of the pandemic gave them low marks for communication on the survey: “Per usual, there were problems with messaging/communication. The administration is very inept about this and the faculty, it seems to me, is predisposed to be distrustful of the administration’s motivations.” During this crisis, once again, faculty are forced to remind the administration that trust is earned through transparent and inclusive decision-making.

An instance that particularly troubles faculty has been the repeated, but unsubstantiated, assertion on the part of administration that there was “no evidence” of classroom transmission, when the main reason for “no evidence” appears to be not having looked for it, as a number of respondents to the survey complained. Contact Tracing did not extend to the classroom, and only very late in the semester were any faculty asked about crucial matters such as classroom density, seating arrangements, ventilation and so on when students in their in person classes tested positive.

Furthermore, no determinations from such data has been shared with faculty. That it was eventually evident to administrators that such questions might *need* to be asked in itself casts doubts on their confident assertions of “no evidence,” though this has not stopped the claim being made, which makes substantial numbers of faculty skeptical. While the questions now being asked are commendable, the confident assertion of classroom safety this semester in the absence of such data collection all along does not encourage faculty trust.

While appreciating, then, as one survey respondent put it, that “the University is stuck between a rock and a hard place” with financial pressures as well as public health concerns, faculty have been frustrated and confused with the incomplete and mixed messages coming from the administration. In one of the AAUP forums, a faculty member said they had received, “four different messages from John Liu: statement in Senate, email we [faculty] received, statement in faculty listening session, individual conversation”—all of which were substantially at odds with each other. Faculty reported similar experiences across the board and in numerous situations.

Many complain about the length and tone, as well as the inconsistency of administrative communications: “I have been, at times, dumbstruck by the communications we have received from the administration about their expectations for faculty since March—so much so that I have had to, at times, stop reading or ignore the communications so as not to add to an already high level of stress and anxiety.” Problematically, crucial information turns up smack in the middle of lengthy emails, or is delivered only in listening sessions or other forums where most faculty are not in attendance. Sometimes it is never delivered to faculty at all, and they learn about it only in the *Daily Orange*, as was the case most recently with the changed emphasis on student attendance in face to face classes.

Communication problems are compounded when different Deans and department Chairs have different practices in passing along information and decisions from above, and choose to exert different levels of pressure for instructors to conform to administrative “expectations.” One faculty member reported, “The language of ‘choice’ over teaching modality doesn’t fit the fact that the decision is not framed as a ‘choice’ in some departments.” Another pointed out, there is “No single policy for all schools and colleges. Each department does what it wants.” For the Fall, some complained that they were teaching in-person when others opted out, and felt that this might impact on them negatively, since they thought the hyflex instruction was problematic: “I feel lied to—they said that 85 percent of fall classes were going to be in-person, so I felt like I had to teach in person. Turns out for many of my students I’m their only in-person class, or only one of two! What if my evals are worse because of the crappy tech in the classrooms?”

PTIs, in particular, reported often not being included in invitations to workshops and other supports for teaching, and often not receiving in a timely way, or at all, important department and university-wide communications concerning instruction. Responses at the forums and on the survey indicate that there are vast differences across schools and departments in communicating with and including PTIs in College and University instructional support. Given the large amount of teaching now done at SU by non-tenure track faculty, this is profoundly disturbing.

Other faculty reported feeling as if the promise of increased residential instruction was not being honestly described by administration; what the administration calls “face-to-face” ultimately means “hyflex” in Spring 2021 as for the Fall. As one faculty correctly put it, “There are no fully in-person classes during this pandemic.”

Even lower-level administrators expressed concern with communications: one program director noted that even when administrative responses arrive, they are not always as “timely” as one might hope. A department chair pointed out: “the double-standard expected of students and faculty being cajoled into meeting in person, yet no other meetings (admin, faculty, etc.) are being held in person?! This is very strange, and if I was a student I would NOT be impressed that faculty and admin are not following their own rules.”

Pedagogy

Faculty across the board miss face-to-face teaching and eagerly look forward to returning to the in-person classroom (“Much more fun to be in the classroom”). That said, many were pleasantly surprised about how effectively they are teaching, despite most not being able to meet students face-to-face at all, or as much as they would prefer.

Faculty’s least preferred teaching mode, with some exceptions, is hybrid/hyflex. In AAUP forums, faculty across ranks and units report that hybrid/flexible teaching, as currently practiced, isn’t working for them or their students. As one survey respondent put it, “The hyflex model is educationally unsound. You end up doing two things...poorly, as opposed to one better.” Additional faculty comments highlighted frustration with technology, with having to divide attention between two quite different learning communities, and with registration frustrations:

“My f2f classes were opened to other modalities without making me aware of that and it was up to me to figure out how the students were going to attend (and many switched to online during the semester).”

In fact, many faculty noted very low attendance at supposedly “in-person” sessions, about which faculty drew different conclusions. Some found it frustrating and wanted to make attendance mandatory, but felt constrained from doing so in the Fall. Others simply noted that students seemed to have a preference for online modality, despite administrative and parental claims to the contrary. A sampling:

- “out of 120 students registered in my course, only 20% (24 students) expressed interest in in-person options. Only about 15 students actually attend in-person meetings every week”;
- “within 3 weeks 90% of students in the hybrid class decided to attend via Zoom instead, so we switched to online synchronous (I think it was just easier for them than coming down to campus)”;
- “out of 20 students enrolled, only 2 have consistently showed up to classes.”;

- “it is very frustrating teaching in front of a handful of students that is below adjusted room capacity. I am starting to feel classes should be either all in person or all online.”
- “It [low in-person attendance] makes it very difficult to plan the class and frankly classes would be much better to be fully online in that instance, but of course that is not what the university wants”;
- “Based on this semester, it seems that students don’t actually want to always attend in-person classes. Due to restrictions on eating/drinking on campus, many students seem to prefer being in their residence without a mask and attending class via Zoom. It makes me less inclined to teach in-person in the spring semester despite institutional pressure to do so”;
- “They shouldn’t be simply able to opt into whatever they prefer. Students are comfortable enough to interact with each other everywhere else EXCEPT classrooms.”

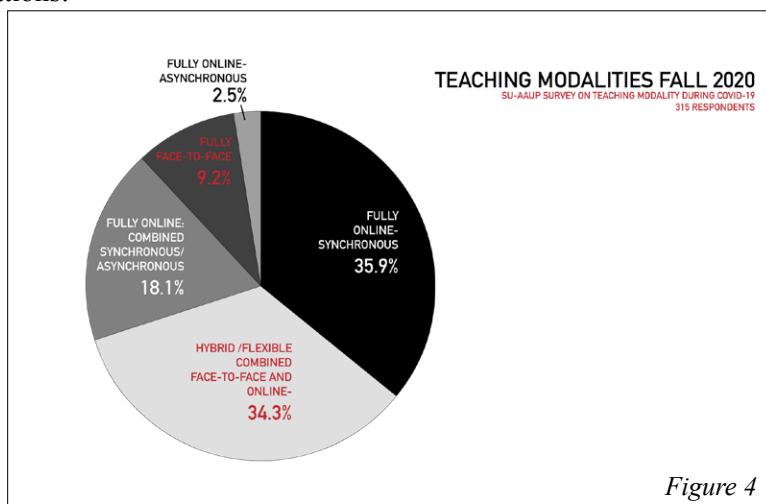


Figure 4

Some faculty in both the forums and the surveys noted that students in some classes seemed to be abusing the ability to Zoom in to “in-person” classes to avoid taking exams and quizzes in person, or to participate in taxing labs and other activities: “I feel like I have compromised my objectives by accommodating online instruction,” one lamented.

Many report superior teaching and learning in fully online courses, and even those who are making hyflex work report that lack of adequate technology, such as classroom sound systems, and predictability of participation in the mixed classroom environment, makes planning nearly impossible. As one faculty put it at a forum: “there’s a pedagogical rationale for going fully online and making it work.” SEM 100 is reportedly fully online for these pedagogical reasons, with faculty claiming they were given no option of modality.

At the same time, there are faculty who strongly advocate in-person teaching, and specifically underscored that they hoped that this view would be represented in this report: “There is a special alchemy when we share physical space together and my students are genu-

inely happy to be present with me. Having said that, this semester has been challenging—but we are living through truly extenuating circumstances, so that is to be expected!” said one. Another added: “I have been truly surprised by how grateful my undergraduates are for my efforts to gather them in person—how kind and gracious they have been when things go sideways, how consistently they are showing up. Many say mine is the only class they have in person and they talk about how much they value the chance to get together, even under the circumstances.”

Other faculty express a desire to teach in person but want more support. One respondent noted, “I think we should be calling for more information and more support for instructors to make that choice [in person instruction] safely.” Faculty not only want in-class assistants, but also upgrades to technology to make in-person hybrid teaching more possible. The struggle with technology does not necessarily suggest that faculty do not appreciate the efforts of IT staff, however, since many specifically praised them: “The university IT team has been phenomenal in supporting faculty.”

It is also clear there is a [wide range of views](#)¹ among students on what teaching modality they prefer. In our forums, one faculty reported their graduate course of 45 students preferred synchronous online at an 8:2 to ratio, while another faculty reported students preferring in-person 20:1. Faculty also report students are voting with their feet. One faculty reported only “seeing 2-3 students in the classroom, more and more moving online.” Another said, “At any given time, 25% of students are fully online, and 25% are quarantined.”

A significant number of faculty also worried about teaching evaluations and their use during these unusual circumstances, especially those who were teaching hybrid and struggling with erratic or inadequate technology; those who had not been able to count on any particular number of students in person on any given day, which they felt undermined their lesson plans; those noticing Zoom fatigue on the part of students (and faculty) and many other unfortunate conditions, which they felt were either not under their control, or not indicative of their teaching skills: “I am worried about teaching evaluations. While I hope the students appreciate the flexibility I have given them in choosing their format, I am worried about the possibility of low-

¹ <https://provost.syr.edu/spring-thinking-survey-results/>

er teaching evaluations because of the issues that come up in teaching multiple formats.”

Health and Safety

Faculty commend the administration for its testing, health and safety protocols, which, in the early part of the semester, at least, were demonstrably successful: “They have done a much better job than other institutions around the country at ensuring the health of students, staff, and faculty,” said one, and “I think they did a reasonably good job under very challenging circumstances,” commented another. The situation in the final weeks of the semester, however, which were not yet evident at the time of the survey, gives added weight to some faculty member’s concerns that increasing in-person teaching would significantly increase infection risk.

In the Fall, only about half of all courses had any in-person component, and many students elected not to turn up even for the in-person sessions on offer, resulting in very low classroom density. Infection still proved difficult to control as soon as the weather started to become colder, as numerous Public Health experts had predicted. This does not bode well, as many faculty had already noted in the forums and survey, for attempting to increase in-person contacts in the January and February: “SU is doing an impressive job with regard to infections. I believe that the amount of online instruction is an important factor in the university’s success. So I worry that forcing instructors to teach in-person in the spring, when the rate of infection is expected to rise, will put us on a dangerous trajectory.”; or another: “Do they not realize that the predominance of online learning is the only thing that is keeping us now from a major outbreak on campus?”

An overwhelming majority (73.3%) of faculty report that they are concerned about their own health and safety as well as the health of their families, students, colleagues, and community as they consider teaching modality. Many report being worried that in pushing for increased residential instruction administrators haven’t made it clear how they will provide adequate classroom space with proper ventilation, cleaning, and safety practices that are necessary to ensure safe teaching and learning. One survey respondent reported, “Windows do not open fully, ventilation and filtering of air is not complete. We are being asked to teach in spaces that are not adequately ventilated.”

Several faculty pointed out “tents won’t work” in Spring Semester, which is mostly in the Winter. Other faculty are concerned about themselves, staff, and

students being pressed to disclose home and health conditions in order to be accommodated in their selection of modality, and a number report feeling pressured to incorporate in-person components in spite of additional health risks they may face. One faculty member who chose online because of elevated risk still feels they are “getting attitude” and “being punished” for their choice to teach online.

Lack of health care coverage availability was also noted by PTIs as particularly problematic in a time of pandemic, both for themselves and the rest of SU and larger community.

The Importance of Shared Governance

Most of the findings above point to the basic principle that faculty need to have primary control over teaching modality, as AAUP shared governance guidelines direct. If administration would consistently consult and work with faculty—including frank and thorough briefings on financial pressures—*before* making crucial decisions concerning instruction, many problems described in this report could be avoided. Faculty frustration with administrative failure to treat them as allies cannot be overstated. Electronic polling, as well as Senate and faculty forums provide such convenient mechanisms for working with faculty that the neglect of such sites of mutual engagement in favor of extra senate “working groups” with slender faculty inclusion (n.b. Deans are not “faculty” for these purposes) and no representative responsibility for group members to consult constituencies are lamentable and entirely at odds with effective shared governance.

Recommendations

1. Protections for Vulnerable Instructors:

Concrete protections for the most vulnerable instructors should be established at every scale from department to University-wide. Tenure-track, non-tenure track, part-time instructors, graduate instructors, and teaching assistants must have equal power to determine modes of teaching. Furthermore, there should be recognition of the significantly increased labor time required for teaching under Covid conditions that disproportionately affects graduate students and PTIs, whose remuneration is already low. Many noted having increased labor that effectively increased their course load, or exceeded the teaching hours as stipulated in their contracts, and administration should be paying careful attention to making sure that this does not happen in future. In addition, all PTIs and graduate instructors should have access to teaching support, workshops and communications concerning policy commensurate with that offered to full time faculty.

2. Shared Governance over Instruction:

According to long established AAUP protocols, “the faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process.”¹ This means that in these areas faculty must be primary decision-makers, with visible and faculty-controlled processes at all times, even under crisis conditions. Currently, the administration is too often making decisions that are, and should remain, the purview of faculty. Administrative overreach in this area generates stress, creates a culture of antagonism, and risks deeply inequitable outcomes across teaching ranks. The Senate committee on Instruction should be regularly and consistently consulted by relevant administrators on all matters of instruction, and this committee should take major policy changes to the full senate. Because faculty senators are representatives, they can bring to the table a wide range of voices and positions and ensure informed constituencies.

¹ <https://www.aaup.org/report/statement-government-colleges-and-universities>

3. Health and Safety:

Contact tracing should be expanded to include classrooms and other academic spaces (i.e. library) especially if student density will be substantially increased in these spaces in the Spring. The practice of consulting faculty concerning classroom conditions if students test positive in their classes should be universal, and collective data shared with faculty. Regardless of the letter of county or state health regulations, Syracuse University should have its own policy to fit the needs of a residential institution. Confident assertions that infections have not been traced to classrooms cannot be made when tracing protocols do not include the classroom. Contact tracing extended to the classroom along with faculty consultation could have the considerable benefit of identifying classroom spaces that are less safe, in terms of ventilation or specific practices (singing, etc.), and assist in creating safer protocols for teaching spaces.

4. Caregiving Support:

Flexible, specific, sustained support of faculty dealing with the gendered demands of family care—including child care and elder care—during the crisis is urgently needed. The administration must work closely with the Senate Committee on Women’s Concerns to address intersecting inequities in managing the demands of teaching, research, carework, and financial security. The university must recognize how concrete differences in personal situations affect differentials in productivity, and emotional and physical well-being.

5. Communications:

Administration should approach communications not as public relations or management but as engagement with faculty colleagues. It should be frank, thorough, consistent and unspun. Crucial information should be communicated directly with all faculty in writing in an easily read format with the most important items foregrounded in a summary at the start. (For example, the first announcement of the moved up date for ending in person instruction was buried in the middle of a very lengthy email from Vice Provost Haynie and many faculty missed it). Furthermore, to ensure consistent distribution campus wide, responsibility for communicating administrative decisions should

not be left to Deans, who are inconsistent in dissemination. On matters of instruction relevant to them, PTIs and graduate instructors should be included in all relevant communications in a timely way. (For example, many were not informed of the relaxed “expectation” concerning face to face instruction in the Fall or Spring.) Listening sessions and other informal forums should not be the sites where crucial information is revealed or relayed, and so these sessions should always be followed up with formal communication to all faculty, not only concerning the conversation, but also about any concrete results that ensue.

6. Material Recognition of Extraordinary Faculty Effort:

Though there have been a few verbal accolades from administrators, some of which are more convincing than others, faculty hope that when the crisis is past, we will be materially recognized for our extra labor during Pandemic hardship conditions. This might include restoration of cuts to research budgets, and other losses, such as to salary. Faculty also must have a seat at the table when such decisions are made. Remuneration for hardware and software purchased for pandemic instruction should be considered, including for PTIs and graduate instructors.

7. Tenure Time-clocks:

Consistent university-wide protocols must be developed to take into account the toll of Covid on research, especially for Assistant Professors facing tenure. These protocols should take particular note of care-giving responsibilities with their often gendered unevenness. Course and service release, junior research leave and lengthened timelines might all be considered.

8. Course Evaluations and Faculty Reviews:

The extraordinary challenges of pandemic teaching should be taken into account when reviewing course evaluations from Covid semesters. PTIs and graduate instructors as well as full time instructors at all ranks should not be penalized for problems that are out of their control, as outlined in this report, and no faculty fired or penalized on the basis of teaching evaluations during this period.

9. Shared Governance over Budget Matters:

Looking forward, the Senate Budget Committee should work with administration on protocols to deal with financial exigency and crisis prior to hard decisions having to be made, and the full Senate should be actively involved in the process. As AAUP principles assert, “The desirable thing to do about financial exigency and governance issues is for colleges and universities, through joint action by the faculty, administration, and governing board, to ensure that sound standards and procedures exist to deal with budgetary problems in good times and bad, and to ensure that what is applied in actual practice matches the stated standards and procedures.”² Any such protocols or ongoing work must be reviewed by the full Senate to safeguard the primary research and pedagogical mission of the University, for which the faculty have fundamental responsibility. In all cases, faculty should be directly, fully, and frankly informed about the financial situation of the institution, and our participation in its ongoing solvency actively engaged rather than covertly compelled. If confidentiality is called for, shared protocols to safeguard it should be jointly established.

² <https://www.aaup.org/AAUP/comm/rep/finexg.htm>