

# Faculty Senate Q&A

## Reopening

- With the spike of COVID-19 infections in the Houston area, is there a protocol that would result in the University transitioning back to remote working and teaching?

*As a state university, we seek guidance from the State and continue to monitor local conditions to determine if the University should return to fully remote operations. We expect to have on campus classes in fall, but are prepared for any scenario if the city or the state conditions require it.*

- What will happen in the case of an outbreak on campus? Is there a process to inform the campus community about any COVID-19 cases? In a similar vein, how will the contact-tracing program created by the College of Medicine be implemented on campus? And will the University provide COVID-19 testing?

*The guidance for UH employees on what to do in the event of a positive case can be found here: <https://uh.edu/covid-19/return-to-work-information/covid-19-diagnosis-symptoms-protocols/>.*

*The established protocols for COVID-19 case disclosures to inform our campus community of positive cases is being completed and will be posted shortly.*

*UHPD will serve as contact tracers and plans are being made to ramp up these operations for the fall.*

*Faculty and staff are encouraged to seek them to seek testing from their usual health care provider. Employees who do not have a primary care physician can receive testing and care at the Lonestar Circle of Care at UH clinic on the first floor of the Health 2 building, and staffed by physician faculty members of the UH College of Medicine.*

- Many in the UH community want face masks required for all individuals on campus. Can this be made an official requirement?

*The University has instituted a mandatory face covering policy.*

- How much "campus life" should we expect to return this Fall?

*While it is difficult to predict how normal our lives will be inside or outside of the campus this fall, we must prepare for different scenarios. Our goal is to have a full campus experience available for those who want one without jeopardizing the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff. Our plans are being developed with the assumption that many faculty, staff and students will prefer to remain online and should have the opportunity to do so.*

- Will there be flexibility and consideration provided to the faculty and staff in the Fall based on variable childcare, eldercare availability, and impacts to local K-12 schools?

*Since mid-March, we have followed two principles: compassion and flexibility. We want people to have options to balance their work and life during these difficult times. Faculty and staff can choose to work remotely as long as they are able to perform their work and have supervisor approval.*

## **Financial Situation**

- With regard to the 25% sweep of funds that would normally be carried over to the next fiscal year, it was indicated that funds taken from academic units would be used for academic programs. How are these funds being used?

*Most comprehensive research universities sweep unit reserves annually to invest in universitywide initiatives. This year's sweep was necessary to cover the one-time financial losses for FY 20. In future years, the sweep will fund universitywide initiatives—academic and otherwise. Funds from academic units will support academic initiatives to support research and instruction.*

- The budget reduction will require deep cuts into current TAs/RAs, faculty and staff positions. Can you walk us through the rationale for a 7.5% cut and the fund sweeps when the governor has requested a 5% cut and summer enrollment is at an all-time high? Are all units, including the College of Medicine and Athletics, part of the 7.5% budget cut?

*Budget reductions are always painful. In addition to the state mandated cut, the 7.5% budget reduction was to support the following: (1) permanent funding for Summer School; (2) permanent funding for Graduate Tuition Fellowship; and (3) permanent funding for the Hobby School for Public Affairs. Any remaining funds will be used to support the Dare to Dream Strategic Plan that will be completed in December.*

*On another note, the state's economy is under a triple threat: oil and gas prices, COVID-19 related revenue shortfalls, and a slowdown turn in the global economy. Our most important task at this point is to assure the legislature of the University's role of providing workforce and new technology from research in supporting today's economy and in rebuilding tomorrow's economy.*

*All units will participate in the 7.5% budget cut. Athletics' institutional support amount will be reduced by 7.5%. The College of Medicine does not receive centrally allocated funding. They do receive special item funding from the state, which is being cut by 7.5%.*

- It seems as though we run a deficit on athletics in a "normal" year. How is this deficit being managed in a "bad" budgetary year such as FY21?

*Institutional support for Athletics in FY21 will be reduced through the 7.5% budget cut, and Athletics will increase its self-generated revenue due to the renegotiated television contract between the American Athletic Conference and ESPN. The institutional support in FY21 will come from unexpended budget balances managed institutionally. Academic funds have not been, and will not be, used to cover losses in Athletics.*

## Instruction and Fall 2020

- Many faculty and staff on campus have young children at the UH Daycare Center, which is currently closed. Are there plans to reopen?

*The UH Daycare Center has not yet announced a date when they will resume operations. They are currently developing their plan for reopening which will be aligned with on-campus social distancing requirements and the phased university reopening plan developed by the Reopening Task Force.*

- Please provide an update on the instructional faculty survey?

*As of June 16, the Provost Office has faculty instructional preferences for 4,243 individual classes currently scheduled for fall 2020. Based on this data 40% of classes will be taught using a Hyflex mode, 36% of classes will be taught in an online synchronous mode, and 25% of classes will be taught in an online asynchronous mode. Further information will be coming from the Provost.*

- How much flexibility would faculty have regarding the implementation of the instructional delivery methods?

*The Office of the Provost intends to honor the instructional preferences of all faculty members. However, based on the availability of limited classroom space and current student enrollments, some classes that a faculty member wishes to teach using an in-person Hyflex mode may have to be moved from its original timeslot in the schedule to accommodate in-person instruction, or, because of a lack of appropriately sized classroom space, may have to be moved fully online.*

- Related question: For the teaching laboratory environment, the Hyflex option is challenging. For these courses, would it be possible to have instruction done online and practical experiments done on campus with social distancing and disinfection measures?

*In recommending delivery mode options, the Fall Instructional Delivery Task Force prioritized providing students and faculty with the choice to accommodate health and safety concerns and the ability for the University to respond quickly should a COVID resurgence occur requiring a return to fully remote operations. With the Hyflex option, students who choose online learning will not be required to engage in face-to-face components. The Fall Instructional Delivery Implementation Working Group will be developing further guidance regarding lab classes.*

- University guidance and policy are needed for faculty offering online lectures/discussions/activities in regard to student and faculty rights, in general. For example, on issues such as intellectual property, rules regarding recording and subsequent dissemination and saving of recorded information, student and faculty privacy, etc. How much will be mandated by the administration and how much will be up to the discretion of the faculty?

*At the recommendation of the Fall Instructional Delivery Task Force, faculty will be provided with guidance to address potential intellectual property and privacy concerns associated with livestreamed, recorded, and posted lectures. The Office of the General Counsel is assisting with*

*drafting recommended cautionary language to include in course syllabi, which will be provided to faculty when it is complete.*

- There is concern on the delivery of exams via online methods, both in terms of security during the testing and also the possibility that these exam questions are now available online forever. Is there any guidance on how to remedy the exam situation?

*Online exam options including Respondus Monitor, Zoom proctoring, and CASA Monitor have been identified. Training in minimizing cheating will be an element of best practice documents developed through the Faculty Engagement and Development Services (FED). Training will also be provided through Faculty and Departmental Instructional Support (FDIS) and Centralized Instructional Design.*

- International students have limitations in the amount of online coursework that is allowed. Is there any guidance from the U.S. government regarding temporary adjustments to these requirements?

*In the spring semester, Student and Exchange Visitors Program (SEVP) issued guidance with a temporary provision to allow students to take more than one online class. SEVP has indicated that they will provide updated guidance for Fall 2020, but this information has not been released yet. There are efforts (Council of Graduate Schools, APLU, etc.) to extend this into the fall semester.*

- When do you anticipate the hiring freeze to be lifted, and will Academic units be able to complete the job searches that began in spring 2020?

*Effective June 9, each Vice President has the authority to approve all hiring and procurement activity within their Division. Vice presidents will be making decisions about critical hires within the context of budget reductions as well as additional challenges that the economy may present in future years.*

- Is the University thinking about how to address the significant negative mental health impact that this crisis has had on some faculty?

*These are unusually anxious times and we realize the need for additional support for faculty and staff. Human Resources and the Faculty Education and Development Services (FED) maintain a curated resource guide on mental health and work/life balance issues on their website. In addition, the FED is also planning additional resources and sessions exclusively for the faculty and these will be announced shortly.*

- Please provide an update on the Non-tenure Track (NTT) Policy?

*General information on faculty-related policy changes due to the current COVID situation (including extensions to the probationary period for both NTT and TT faculty members) can be accessed through the COVID Resource page on the Office of the Provost's website: <https://uh.edu/provost/policies-resources/covid19/>. Specific information on updates made to the NTT policy (effective May 1, 2020) can be accessed on the Provost's website:*

<https://uh.edu/provost/faculty/current/non-tenure-track/>. Deans and department chairs received electronic copies of the updated NTT policy prior to May 1 for distribution to their department faculty.

### Infrastructure

- Ventilation is a challenge in many buildings, particularly for older facilities. Can you comment on what we will do to keep faculty and students safe who are teaching in buildings where air will likely circulate around throughout the day?

*Safe working environment is important at all times but it is absolutely essential during a health crisis. UH buildings are designed per ASHRAE and other building codes and maintained and operated with the health and safety of the campus community in mind using guidance from the CDC and ASHRAE. Facilities and Construction Management monitors the status of buildings through a Building Management System for issues and responds to any service requests when they are called into FIX-IT. Lines of protection such as social distancing, touch point cleaning, and electrostatic fogging of classroom areas creates a three-layered defense against the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Faculty may reach out to FIX-IT for any perceived ventilation issue so that the system can be checked and re-checked.*

- What systems will be in place to assist students who do not have computer technology or internet capacity to participate in online Fall instruction? Can students use parking lot spaces (free of charge if they are in their vehicles) to tap into UH Wi-Fi?

*The University Information Technology (UIT) serves will offer, as they did during Spring and Summer, loaner computers for students who do not have them. The University is negotiating reduced fees for internet services from a limited number of providers that students may subscribe to on their own. Use of UH parking spaces to connect to Wi-Fi remains under discussion.*

### Research

- What measures is Division of Research taking in order to lessen the impact of budget cuts and continue its goal of supporting R1-quality research?

*It is the responsibility of the entire university to ensure that our commitment to research is not lessened because of the health crises or budget impacts. Our goal of 50-in-5 remains intact, just as our goal of increasing graduation rate to 70%. We will continue to benchmark ourselves against our peers and aspirational peers in terms of resources and outcomes. The President has just announced an additional fund of \$1 million to support faculty grants to promote research and discovery. Half of this fund is designated for research on race relations and the other half to support research related to COVID-19. Detailed information will be forthcoming from the Division of Research.*