

UF WORKS
BECAUSE
WE DO

July 2020

Faculty Feedback on UF's Fall 2020 Reopening Plan

UFF-UF Membership Committee





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Executive Summary

The United Faculty of Florida at UF has conducted a survey among its bargaining unit in order to gauge faculty sentiments towards the reopening of UF campus in Fall 2020. 193 faculty participated in this survey.

Overall, the majority of UF faculty disagree that UF's current reopening plan adequately accounts for the health and safety of the community and do not trust the University's ability to protect faculty, staff, and students from the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Specific concerns were raised in this survey. The majority of these concerns are related to the health and safety of both the Gator Nation and Alachua County community.



Introduction

Over the past several months, the University of Florida has had to consistently comport its policies and academic setting according to the needs necessitated by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Such necessary changes included implementing social distancing measures, providing facial coverings, and designing a reopening plan for the Fall 2020 academic semester.

While the University of Florida has affirmed its commitment to reopening campus in Fall 2020, faculty and students have voiced several concerns regarding UF's intent to open. Concerns range from worries about personal health and safety to the financial consequences of the pandemic. The number of COVID-19 cases within Alachua County has dramatically increased (2,809 as of July 23, 2020) while the number of available ICU beds and quarantine options has dwindled.

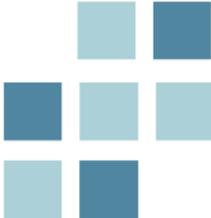
UF's Reopening Plan leaves faculty and staff to bear a significant amount of the risks of returning to work — the plan itself does not specify hazard pay, additional sick leave, or accommodations for at-risk individuals and caregivers. By bringing students back onto campus, UF poses a risk not only to its students, faculty, and the Gator Nation, but increases risk to the Gainesville community as a whole.

In this report, we have accumulated findings from a faculty survey conducted between July 02-23, 2020.

"MY VOICE/UF FACULTY'S VOICE WAS SOUGHT BY THE UF ADMINISTRATION REGARDING ITS REOPENING PLAN THAT WAS APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES LAST WEEK."



75.8% of survey respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.
(190 responses)



"UF'S REOPENING PLAN ADEQUATELY ACCOUNTS FOR THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE UF COMMUNITY."

68.2% of survey respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.
(192 responses)

"FALL 2020 IS TOO EARLY TO REOPEN THE UNIVERSITY."



71.0% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed with this statement.
(193 responses)

"I TRUST THE UNIVERSITY'S ABILITY TO PROTECT OUR FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS FROM THE CURRENT COVID-19 PANDEMIC."

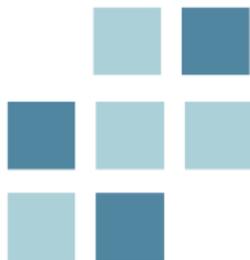


72.9% of survey respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.
(192 responses)

"I AM WELL INFORMED BY THE UF ADMINISTRATION ABOUT WHAT TO EXPECT IN FALL 2020."



62.7% of survey respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.
(193 responses)



"I KNOW WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FOR ME TO RETURN TO WORK IN FALL 2020."

50.8% of survey respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.
(193 responses)

"WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE HANDLING OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, I THINK THAT SHARED GOVERNANCE HAS BEEN WELL PRACTICED AT UF."



63.1% of survey respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement.
(190 responses)



Faculty Concerns

The Faculty Feedback Survey posed an open-ended question to survey respondents: **What is your biggest concern for Fall 2020?**

Below are the most poignant answers to this question. Respondents will remain anonymous for their own protection.

"Given the alarming and still-growing COVID numbers in Florida, and the fact that most of our students come from elsewhere in the state, it seems inevitable that bringing students back will lead to a spike in COVID cases and deaths in Gainesville."

"As someone with a prior medical condition, I am extremely concerned that I will catch COVID-19 and having lasting medical issues as a result. Additionally, I am worried that I will unintentionally spread it to others. Choosing between my medical health/safety or returning to work is a choice that I never thought I would have to make."

"A surge in the pandemic, with catastrophic results for campus and community and long-lasting impact on the perception of the university administration's management and, particularly, its concerns for most of the undergraduate population and those who teach them. All of this will negatively impact further attempts to recruit students, strengthen the university's reputation, and support the economic recovery in Gainesville and Florida."

"Because of the nature of my field, remote instruction is inadequate and I fear my students will not truly master concepts and skills, thus preventing them from being fully prepared to enter the teaching field."



Faculty Concerns (Continued)

"...I'm scared that I'll be forced to return to the classroom regardless of my health and safety concerns, including living with a higher-risk individual..."

"Given the poor communication and top-down decrees by administration, I feel that decisions are being made without faculty, staff, or student input."

"Students will be coming to Gainesville from literally everywhere in the nation - and perhaps the world depending on US border policies. The virus will inevitably spread throughout Gainesville"

"My biggest concern for Fall 2020 is an explosion of COVID-19 among the Gainesville population."



Faculty Questions

Survey respondents posed questions to both UFF-UF and UF administration regarding UF's plan to reopen in Fall 2020.

"What will happen when a student or faculty member contracts COVID, will we be contact tracing then having those individuals self-quarantine?"

"What are the exact fatality numbers that UF has explicitly stated as acceptable, meaning no change in operation standards?"

"Do we know why UF does not officially allow people to work remotely from outside the state of Florida?"

"I would also like to know how UF plans to address asymptomatic students?"

"What if individuals don't comply with social distancing or face coverings? How is that going to be enforced?"

"How the university will evaluate research productivity in light of the covid-changed environment-- including faculty's need to take time away from research to learn how to effectively teach remotely; faculty's increased care work within and outside the university; travel restrictions that make it impossible to travel for research, collaboration, or conference presentations; and dwindling access to publication venues as they close or shift focus to publish only topical material."



Conclusion

The University of Florida's commitment to quality education and research is commendable. However, from the perspective of UF faculty, reopening the University for the Fall 2020 Semester is cause for significant concern, particularly among faculty who are immunocompromised, caregivers, and/or parents.

As such, the UFF-UF Membership Team, speaking on the behalf of UF faculty, urges the University to do the following:

- Commit to equitable access to learning technology, and an accessible plan for online learning, so everyone has a fair chance at an education.
- Provide hazard pay, additional sick leave, or accommodations for at-risk individuals and caregivers, especially custodial, non-teaching employees.
- Develop a clear and concise plan for contact tracing within the UF campus and surrounding areas.
- Design a competent and sufficient plan of support for individuals who sustain post-COVID-19 disabilities.
- Guarantee employees will return to a workplace with adequate social distancing, free and available Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and best-practices cleaning procedures.
- Establish clear communication practices and shared governance with faculty on decisions that impact faculty, students, and staff.
- Remove the Conditional Clause re: Ownership Transfer Requirement for UF's \$2000 stipend offered to faculty for developing online courses for the fall semester of 2020. (An online petition has been signed by 324 UF faculty. The list of signatories will be available upon request.)