WestVirginiaUniversity
THE RESEARCH REPOSITORY @ WVU

University Relations/Enrollment Management

4-2021

Type of Research: Faculty and Fall 2021

University Relations/Enrollment Management

West Virginia University

TYPE OF RESEARCH:

Faculty and Fall 2021

April 2021

Background

WVU's Coronavirus Task Force is working on finalizing plans for fall 2021. However, before doing so they wanted input from students, faculty, employees and parents on proposed plans and scenarios, as well as the University's decision to encourage, rather than require the COVID-19 vaccine.

Methodology

Four separate online surveys were developed and posted in eNews and uNews. The survey elicited responses from over 2,000 students, over 300 faculty members, over 700 employees and more than 400 parents.

- There is little consensus regarding WVU's decision to encourage rather than mandate the COVID-19 vaccine. Most argue that not requiring the vaccine increases the risk of community spread and increases anxiety for faculty, students and staff in the classroom and on campus. The more the virus spreads, the more it can mutate into different and potentially more dangerous variants. A handful suggested that requiring the vaccine when it has not been fully approved by the FDA would open the University up to liability.

- Those who disagree with the decision argue that since other vaccinations are required of students, COVID-19 should be as well. They view the virus as a public health crisis, and thus don't believe the decision to encourage rather than require the vaccine is based on science. They also contend that the University will not reach herd immunity if the vaccine is not required. Still others argue that the vaccine must be mandated so that faculty can provide safe, meaningful, in-person instruction.

- The idea that the University hopes to have as many in-person classes as possible, with the caveat that faculty members who have underlying medical conditions would be given the option to teach virtually, also causes some level of concern. The fact that the University will likely support classroom capacity at 100%, causes more substantial concern. The majorityof faculty advocate the continued use of masks, though some feel it impedes their ability to communicate effectively.

- However, faculty are apprehensive about the possible continuation of online classes as well, identifying issues such as being overburdened, lacking the proper technology and having an overall lack of understanding and support from the University. That said, most acknowledged and are willing to support the needs of students who experience a COVID-related event by offering a virtual alternative.

Issues regarding having <u>in-person classes</u> include:
- Faculty are also being mentally challenged
- Students follow guidelines in class, but not necessarily outside of class
- The mask requirement makes it difficult to teach and to read students faces for understanding
- It's cause for public safety concerns
- It will be stressful in large classes, without physical distancing practices
- Hard to communicate effectively with face masks/shields
- It's riskier for older faculty members

Issues regarding <u>hybrid teaching</u> include:
- Online learning does not, in all cases, provide the same quality instruction due to the difference in technologies, etc.
- Hybrid teaching requires a tremendous amount of extra work
- Many classrooms do not have the ability to do a hybrid (video recorded) session in addition to live lectures
- Having an online "option" may impact students' willingness to show up and, therefore, be able to learn

DETAILED FINDINGS

OVERALL SENTIMENT

Nine in ten 10 answered the survey are full-time faculty; 10% are adjunct. About the same number of faculty strongly agree or strongly disagree with WVU's policy to encourage, rather than require the vaccine, and all but 5% have gotten or plan to get the vaccine.

Got/Plan to Get Vaccine

95%

■ Yes ■ No

27%	15%	9%	20%	28%
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
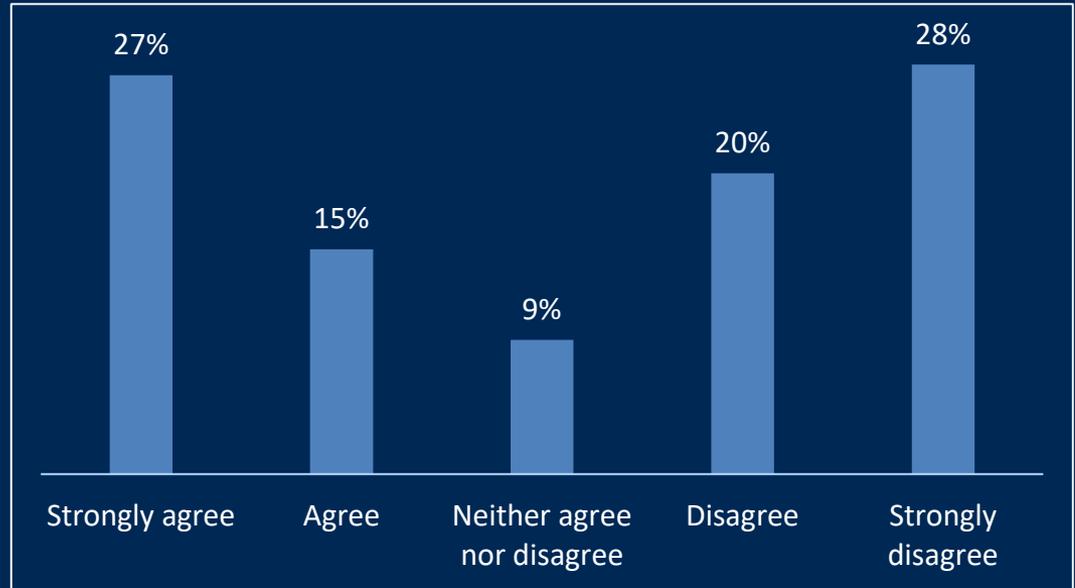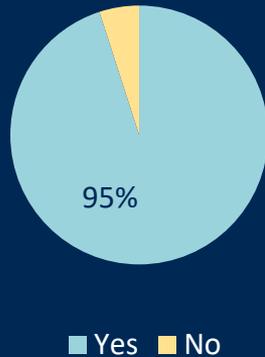
Q. Have you gotten or are you planning to get the COVID-19 vaccine before the start of the fall semester? Q. At this time, the University will strongly encourage all faculty, staff and students to get the COVID-19 vaccine prior to the fall semester, but it will not be required. How much do you agree or disagree with this strategy?

IN FAVOR OF VACCINE REQUIREMENT: VERBATIMS

Nearly 100 comments were made regarding the University's decision to encourage, rather than require, all faculty, students and staff to get the COVID-19 vaccine. About half spoke in favor of this decision and half spoke against it.

"I understand that some people cannot take the vaccine for medical reasons, and those are perfectly valid. However, if the university wants to create an environment where people feel safe to continue normal operations, they must do everything in their power to ensure that faculty, staff, and students do not need to worry about contracting the virus. I believe they must require the vaccine for those healthy enough to take it."

"We still don't know how long vaccination protects people and COVID is still spreading and evolving. While I believe that (in our highly politicized climate) requiring vaccination would be unpopular in WV and could hurt enrollment at WVU, I think it is important to consider the risk that vaccinated individuals are being asked to take. As vaccinations increase, I expect people (and requirements) to become more lax, and those who are not vaccinated have the potential to cause more spread."

"I teach several large enrollment sections of courses and am around ~750 students each day. I fear the more students we jam together (with me and other instructors) the more of a chance for viral mutation and spread. India is an example currently of what can happen when safety measures are relaxed and a large portion of the population has not been vaccinated."

"It would put me next to people who could very likely get COVID or might even have COVID. At this point, they are not sure how long the vaccine is good for. Thus, they are putting me as well as other faculty, staff, and students at risk because some people are too stubborn to get the vaccine. If you are not requiring it, I don't want to be on campus. I am older and high risk."

IN FAVOR OF VACCINE REQUIREMENT: VERBATIMS

"I strongly agree that all faculty, staff, and students should be required to get the vaccine before attending in-person in the Fall. I understand the concern of being "required" by an employer to be vaccinated if that is not the wish (due to religious or other reasons) or beliefs of the individual. But, for community-safety sake, those individuals need to understand that if they elect the "no vaccine" option that certain ramifications come with that, such as access to certain facilities and opportunities afforded to those who elect to be vaccinated for the sake of public welfare."

"I really think it protects everyone, and it is - as far as we can tell - extremely safe. I don't want to see what is happening in India happen here because people "don't want" the vaccine. We are an R1 research institution, and that means we believe in science and its potential to help humanity. I think we should require students to get the vaccine."

"Encouraging people rather than requiring vaccination will mean that people that are hesitant to be vaccinated may not get a vaccination. This leaves many people, students, staff, and faculty, susceptible to a new COVID-19 infection, especially by a new variant of COVID-19. Even a mild infection could lead to a long-hauler situation that can last for months. This would be devastating for anyone infected."

"I believe that this virus is something that should be required. At one time we were required to get vaccinated for before going to school for viruses that were a threat to us, and I believe we should have the same thought with this 100 year pandemic."

WV West Virginia University®

AGAINST VACCINE REQUIREMENT: VERBATIMS

"I think that it is the right way to go. If the vaccine is effective, then people who choose to take will be fine - and people who don't choose to take it are electing to weigh the risk of COVID vs. potential long term effects of the vaccine."

"I do not like any organization (government or private) mandating something that will not impact anyone else. Getting the vaccine will not affect anyone else, so WVU (and any other organization) should not mandate it. The flu shot is not mandated, so the vaccine shouldn't either. If the vaccine prevented the spread to others, then mandating it would be justified, like other vaccines."

"I have no concerns about encouraging vaccinations. I would be extremely concerned if the university required vaccinations for faculty, staff, and students and infringed on peoples' personal rights to their own health decisions. Do not overstep this boundary."

"I agree with the university's approach. Everyone in my family has gotten the vaccine and I think it makes sense that all adults should be strongly encouraged. However, until the vaccine receives final approval from the FDA as safe and effective (not just emergency approval), it would be wrong to require the vaccine of everyone and take away the element of individual choice."

"I think it is a fine line between individual rights and institutional rights. I hope most students/faculty chose to vaccinate. I have done my part to protect myself by getting vaccinated."

WestVirginiaUniversity.

Half (50%) are extremely/very comfortable with the goal of having as many in-person classes as possible, albeit allowing faculty with underlying medical conditions the option to teach virtually.
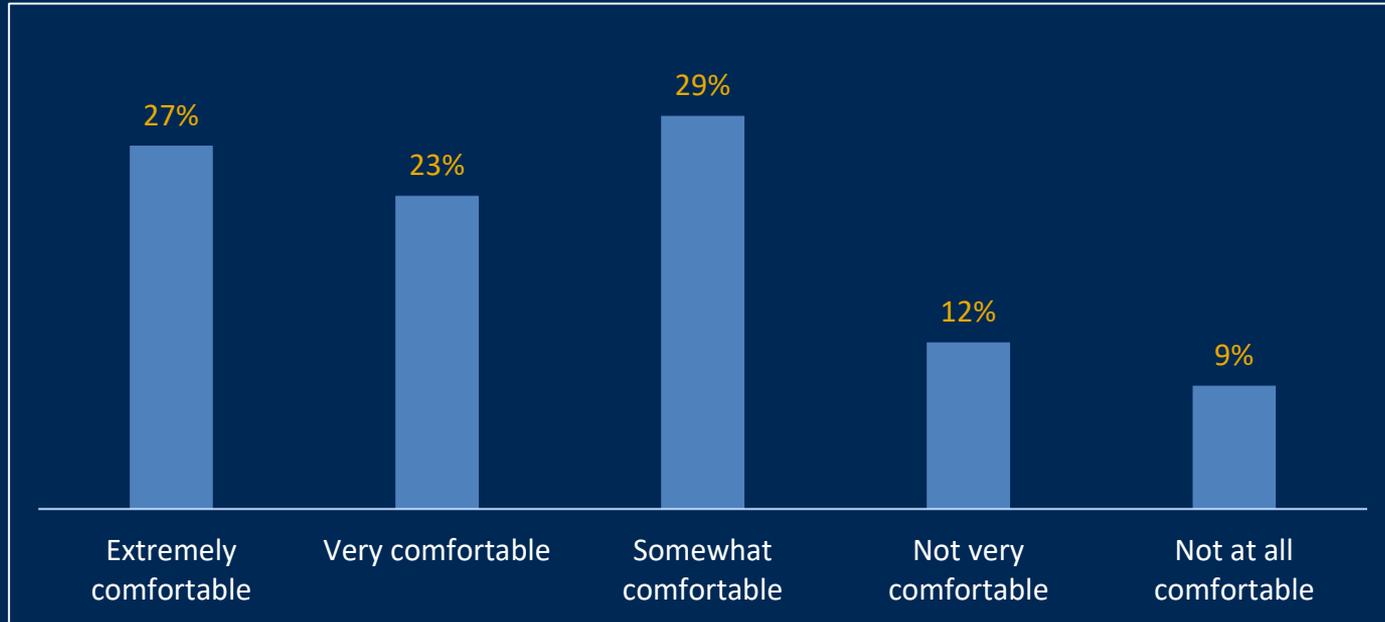
Q. the University is working with faculty who have underlying medical conditions with regard to virtual instruction. However, the overall goal is to have as many in-person classes as possible, albeit with a hybrid component. How comfortable do you feel about the University's decision to hold in-person classes this fall?

CONCERNS ABOUT IN-PERSON CLASSES: VERBATIMS

"I teach large enrollment courses. I am not yet comfortable in a room with a large number of students. We have been very successful at teaching this semester in an online environment. Please consider this for big classes if the trach record is above average. I have been double masking in public recently. I'm not sure how to teach and wear a mask, or use a community microphone, or handle 100 students in person while simultaneously working with 100 students online. I am not comfortable taking off my mask and teaching behind plexiglass. I cannot get to my students in a glass cage. I'd prefer richer interactions in an online environment where we all feel less isolated. Please consider the burden to the mental state of your faculty. Student mental health is extremely important, but we are going through this as well."

"I am worried that students may not be vaccinated. Even though I am, I could still transmit the virus to my partner or people I know. I am also worried that students will not wear masks. It has been shown to work to prevent virus spread, but some people don't believe it. I don't want to have that fight in my classroom. Plus, I don't know if we should be filling classes completely. I usually teach a class of 30 in a small space. I don't think we are getting 3 feet of distance, let alone 6 feet."

"I would still have rules in place for sickness and maintaining cleanliness. I think in person instruction is good as it promotes socializing and allows the students and faculty to connect better. The hybrid format does concern me somewhat as doing a class in person and online is like holding two separate classes in some instances. I would provide professors with resources for hybrid instruction if you require courses to be that way and provide as much time to plan ahead as possible."

West Virginia University

CONCERNS ABOUT IN-PERSON CLASSES: VERBATIMS

"Hybrid learning is very overwhelming for the instructor. The university left a lot for the instructor to do. This can have its toll especially on new instructors. Students expect that learning from home will have the same quality as in class learning, but all instructors have is a camera on top of a computer. It is overwhelming to pay attention to whether the class is being recorded, whether students on zoom are asking questions and if there are students asking questions in class. Students don't turn their camera on, or do not have quality technology at home, but still expect the instructor to guarantee quality classes. I would recommend not having hybrid classes or making students sign a form saying that they understand that watching a class online is not the same as in class and that this may impact their learning and the quality of the instruction. For instance, right now, hybrid does not allow an in person class instructor to write on the board because students at home cannot follow. Also, in small classes if all students but one decide to come to class on a given day this limits the instructors teaching, group work discussions will be very limited. It becomes very hard for an instructor to plan the class."

"I do worry that there are strains of the virus that can be more transmittable and I worry that the numbers of students in a classroom will make it more likely for some to get the virus .Perhaps classes with more than 40 students can be visited for more virtual options. If not everyone is vaccinated nor follows good social distancing practices, it puts others at risk. It could be that there is a population of students and teachers who are well suited to remain virtual. It would be good to use faculty input for ideas about which courses make sense. It seems that faculty in the dept. were not surveyed about their recommendations about specific courses. Rather blanket decisions were made."

"Enough space for physics movement required, risk of exposure from students who are following a lead that vaccines are required and therefore not entirely necessary so why get them, remaining masked in a the voice and speech class because not everyone can reveal or be required to reveal their vaccination status."

WestVirginiaUniversity.
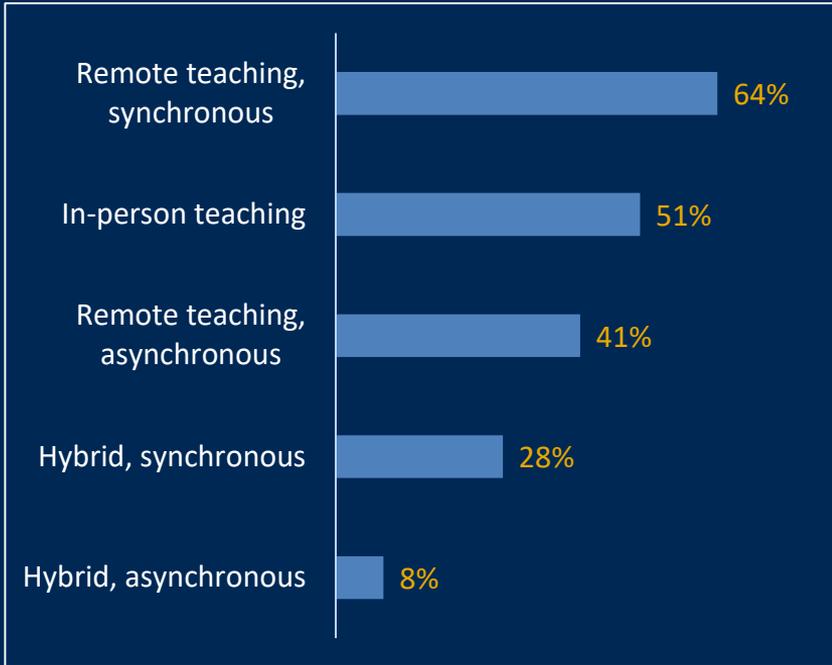
CONCERNS ABOUT IN-PERSON CLASSES: VERBATIMS

"I taught in person in the fall and it was SOOOOOO much more work than teaching fully online in the spring. In person professors essentially end up having to teach the same class both in person and online simultaneously because so many students could not attend live classes for either accommodations, out of state travel, or that silly health survey. The basically unenforceable attendance policy also complicated verifying legitimate versus non-legitimate absences. If a class is taught in person, then there should not be any online option for any reason for any student. The student should have to either take the class fully online when it is taught online or fully in person. Also, the attendance policy should be enforced like it normally would (no special COVID exceptions) and the out of state travel ban should be eliminated."

"That it is unrealistic, and we will be back to "pivoting" again. At this point the voicing of a preferred plan while knowing that we will most likely end up in a hybrid model is frustrating and speaks of a lack of appreciation of the difficulty of "pivoting" and effort expended by faculty."

"There is a sizable number of students who actually now prefer online education. Rightly or wrongly, I worry we are not going to be able to accommodate these students with the present online offerings."

"I hate the hybrid option. I understand that it extends the class opportunities to those who are unsafe coming to campus, hybrid severely impacts student participation for the other students, because they then view in-person class as optional, and the vast majority of students do not learn as much online."

TEACHING PREFERENCES

Remote teaching, synchronous — 64%
In-person teaching — 51%
Remote teaching, asynchronous — 41%
Hybrid, synchronous — 28%
Hybrid, asynchronous — 8%

Most faulty said they taught remote/ synchronously (64%) or in-person (51%). About four in 10 (41%) used remote/asynchronous teaching. Hybrid teaching was least popular.

Preferred methods of teaching, based on methods they used in the fall/spring are:

1. In-person
2. Hybrid synchronous
3 Remote synchronous
4. Remote asynchronous
5. Hybrid asynchronous

Q. Which teaching modes did you utilize to during the fall and spring semesters? (check all that apply)

COMFORT LEVEL

About seven in 10 (69%) are extremely/very comfortable with the notion that masks would be required in designated areas. About six in 10 (62%) feel extremely/very comfortable knowing that non-vaccinated students will continue to isolate and quarantine when diagnosed or exposed to someone with COVID-19. Fewer (50%) have this level of comfort regarding being able to use plexiglass in academic settings. Just (38%) have the same level of comfort with classes being at 100% capacity.

	Extremely comfortable	Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Not very comfortable	Not at all comfortable
If residence hall or non-res students are not vaccinated and diagnosed or exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19, they will be required to isolate and quarantine.	37%	25%	23%	6%	8%
Plexiglass will be available for faculty use in academic settings.	30%	20%	25%	13%	13%
Classes will likely be at 100% capacity.	23%	15%	26%	16%	20%
Masks must be worn inside buildings, classrooms, meeting spaces and other areas of campus.	43%	26%	21%	5%	6%

Q. We're finalizing health and safety protocols for the fall term. How comfortable do you feel about being on campus if the following protocols are in place?

LIKELIHOOD OF DEVELOPING ALTERNATE CONTENT

About two-thirds (67%) are likely to develop virtual course/instructional material for students who cannot attend class in person as a result of COVID. Another 20% are somewhat likely to, and 14% acknowledge they won't be accommodating to these students.

39%	28%	20%	8%	5%
Extremely likely	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely
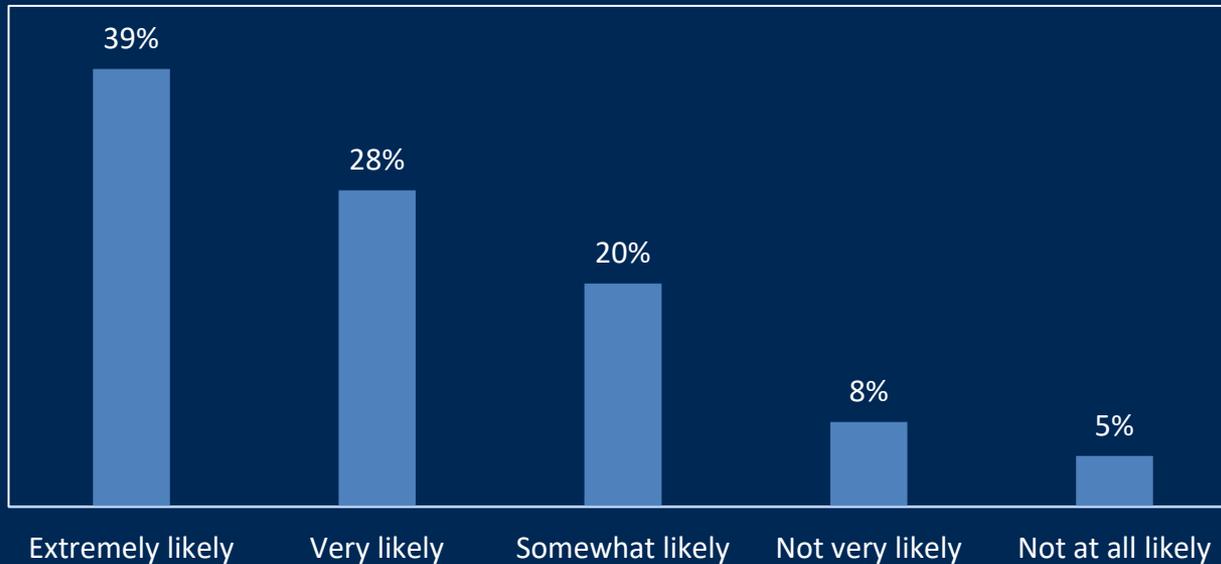
Q. Deans are encouraging faculty to continue to work with students who experience a COVID-related event, by providing them virtual course content and instructional materials when the student is unable to attend the class in person. If you have students who fit this criteria, how likely will you be to provide this form of virtual instruction during the period the students need to be in isolation or quarantine?

THOUGHTS ON ENGAGING STUDENTS: VERBATIMS

"Allow those that have found ways to engage their large enrollment courses in an online setting to continue to do so. We love our jobs, our students, and this University (or we would have left already - believe me). Please continue to show that we are supported in return. Also, have outdoor and safe socializing events. Bring back some Rec sports with precautions. Allow students to interact directly with faculty if both parties feel comfortable. Give faculty support to offer both online and in person instruction if required."

"I am happy to give assignments to students who are quarantined and also make all lecture notes available via eCampus. However, trying to teach an in-person class while also providing students online an opportunity to participate does not make me an effective teacher. Standing behind a podium/lectern on video severely limited my ability to connect with students and ensure that they are understanding the material. Additionally, I found this semester that students who attended virtually did not engage/participate. They would not turn on video and, often when called upon, did not respond to questions."

"I am very interested in continuing to work in a virtual format when teaching courses. Can departments survey faculty to determine which faculty members are interested in this mode of instruction and allow some courses/sections to continue in this way based on interest and success?"

"Have outdoor and safe socializing events. Bring back some Rec sports with precautions. Allow students to interact directly with faculty if both parties feel comfortable. Give faculty support to offer both online and in person instruction if required."

"Meet students where they want to meet...whether online or F2F. We need to be agnostic modality wise...and offer both online and F2F options to interacting with students. We have had some of our best student attendance at optional events this spring...and I think it was because participation was more convenient since it was done via Zoom."

WestVirginiaUniversity®

THOUGHTS ON ENGAGING STUDENTS: VERBATIMS

"Turns out that students do not really like sync online - so either do in-person or asyn online - unless a professor says sync online worked. cannot have two sets of rules for students who are vaccinated vs not and if this vaccine becomes approved you need to deal with it the same way you deal with other vaccines. Also - vaccine status is protected by HIPAA - stop asking people about it."

"Require online courses to be synchronous. I have taught had both syn and asyn courses, and the syn were much more engaging for both the student and the professor."

"Making students be vaccinated allows us the normal everyone keeps expecting of us. It's absolutely impossible to teach in person/online/ in between. It disrupts teaching and honestly is an awful model for students to actually navigate what is expected of them."

"I've taught in person during this whole pandemic and everything goes well. The students work hard and want to be there. Some are hesitant, but once they trust we are being safe, all is well. Students need in person learning, especially because that is what they signed up for. Not all people are made for virtual learning."

"I think continuing to stress that students should not attend if they are feeling sick in any way will encourage a safer learning environment. I also think that students should have the option to attend some classes virtually, and others in person. Some students may be hesitant to attend larger classes due to the risk, but still want that in-person experience in their smaller classes. It is crucial for students to have the opportunity to socialize. All of my students in-person were just excited to be able to be with their friends for at least one class, and I think that boosts their mental health and academic performance."

WestVirginiaUniversity.

TEACHING CONCERNS

Faculty were asked for ideas you as to what WVU can do to help them have a more engaging experience with their students. However they took the opportunity to express their frustrations with the situation. Those things they mentioned include:

- Not being supported by the University
- Not having the proper technology
- Inconsistent requirements of faculty
- Inconsistent effectiveness of online teaching
- Lack of detailed policies

The next four pages detail their concerns.

TEACHING CONCERN/QUESTIONS: VERBATIMS

"I offered virtual course content and delivered my lectures on Zoom and In-person at the same time. I feel that many students took advantage of this. Also I think the University should have a plan in place if students request remote learning or want to take a class 100% online when the delivery method of a course is suppose to be in-person."

"I am happy to give assignments to students who are quarantined and also make all lecture notes available via eCampus. However, trying to teach an in-person class while also providing students online an opportunity to participate does not make me an effective teacher. Standing behind a podium/lectern on video severely limited my ability to connect with students and ensure that they are understanding the material. Additionally, I found this semester that students who attended virtually did not engage/participate. They would not turn on video and, often when called upon, did not respond to questions."

"At some point, the university must recognize that some of us are working MUCH harder than our colleagues. More than a "we appreciate you" email is required. The above question highlights this issue -- of course I will do my job. But the job got a lot harder. For some classes, I have had to revamp 60+% of the content/activities because of some students being remote. Also, I am tired and I am more than a little disgruntled at the inequity across faculty, instructors and grad students, where some of us have been teaching in person (at risk) for an entire year. An occasional 'remember to engage in self-care' reminder is not sufficient."

TEACHING CONCERNS/QUESTIONS: VERBATIMS

"An investment needs made in the wireless capabilities across campus. Some classrooms are listed as wireless capable but it is so poor in quality that it is close to useless. We could live stream to students who are COVID isolated or quarantined from the classroom but as stated this is only as good as the wireless and equipment allows.

Without that, you are asking faculty to record lectures but how is the question. Depending on what is loaded on the computers in the classrooms, faculty have to manipulate multiple modalities and still try to teach and provide an adequate in class experience.

Example: IF an instructor uses Mediasite or Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate and tries to record while lecturing, the available record options will capture the slides and what you say - But if you show a video clip or engage in an activity that utilizes a website that is not static or utilize blackboard to conduct an activity, discussion, quiz, assignment; then, the recording skip or stalls and does not capture the lecture correctly. However, if the wireless worked properly and you had recording equipment (not just a web cam attached to a computer but a option to record the class), then you could simply live stream and the isolated student would simply "come to class" just like they were sitting in the classroom.

Basically, faculty are teaching the same course in two different formats which is 2 separate courses. This doubles the work loads and can be extremely stressful, especially for instructors who have 100s of students. Instructors with these types of work loads have a hard enough time keeping up with just the sheer number of students and administration there of in normal expectations. Add another layer to an already daunting assignment seems highly unjust and most likely un-achievable."

WEST Virginia University®

TEACHING CONCERNS/QUESTIONS: VERBATIMS

"I would really appreciate more help in defining "COVID related event." When are we required to make accommodations? If a student has a headache and doesn't come to a test? It's been very hard managing the number of events. While I understand the need to do so (in some cases), I honestly don't think I can continue with this pace for much longer. I am thoroughly exhausted. It would be nice to have a more detailed policy in place, and it would be nice to have help in dealing with the extra workload (TAs or undergraduate learning assistants to help)."

"Instructors need more time between classes to set up and clean the space. Students should be instructed and required to clean up their own space. WVU needs to ensure that classrooms are cleaned specially after students with Covid have attended that class. The whole class should go in quarantine not just the one student and the couple of students close to them. Everyone should be required to be vaccinated before fall."

"If you want faculty to provide a hyflex experience, we need better technology. Classrooms need to be outfit with microphones in ceilings so that students online and in person can communicate with one another easily. Integrated cameras throughout the classroom (one in front and one in back) should also be included."

"If a student refuses a vaccine and then has a COVID related event I do not feel that the faculty members should be expected to make accommodations to the mode of instruction for them. This is excess work for underpaid faculty and seems to remove any accountability for the students choice to not be vaccinated."

TEACHING CONCERNS/QUESTIONS: VERBATIMS

"Please consider accommodations with the faculty in mind as well - having faculty be required to teach in 3 different modes all at the same time to meet the accommodations of students is absurd. Faculty are struggling to keep all of these plates spinning while making sure to keep the integrity of the class. These remote learning accommodations are disruptive to the students in-person, and those online are not getting the same education of in-person students. It becomes a tremendous amount of work for faculty to teach both in-class and on Zoom at the same time.. there has to be a better answer."

"What you are not addressing are different type classes. For example, I feel comfortable teaching a small class in person that needs more on hands instruction. I also teach a large lecture class with no control over who is exposed, where the students have been, etc. I taught a large lecture class online (three sections) and it was more successful in many ways than when I taught it in person. I think if you were to survey the students, they would agree."

"I will be honest, saying "deans are working with faculty" to continue virtual education for students exposed to COVID is a bit much, especially when it's faculty who are teaching, reworking, recording, and grading this altered material, and communicating with students.

I wish everyone who can would get the vaccine."