

## FC Feedback to Draft Scenarios for Fall 2020

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### General Comments

#### In-Person vs. Online Teaching

Faculty are divided about whether the university should plan on teaching in person or online.

Some feel that we can teach safely and effectively with classroom social distancing measures in place, with appropriate hygiene, and with lecture-capture technology in all classrooms to make classes available to sick or quarantined students. Faculty who teach labs, first-year seminars, and other courses that rely heavily on hands-on experience or in-person interaction are particularly concerned with the limitations of online teaching.

Other faculty express serious concerns about safety. Asking faculty to teach in person when no vaccine is available and no reliable testing regimen has been established puts them at substantial risk. Some of these faculty are concerned that they will feel pressure—from students, from the university, from department chairs, or from their own high standards—to teach in person nonetheless. This is a particular concern for those with less job security, especially junior faculty, CNT, and adjuncts.

Many respondents underscored that faculty **MUST** be allowed to teach online if they so choose. Going through HR struck many as inappropriate; notifying one's chair was suggested instead. Given that different courses require different kinds of contact with students, faculty should also have the flexibility to choose to teach some classes online and others in person (when possible). Further, the university should develop a common statement that all faculty add to their syllabi stating that faculty can exercise their judgment to adjust class format as needed to ensure the health and safety of themselves and their students.

#### Covid-Imposed Care Obligations

Faculty are very concerned about our capacity to teach Villanova-quality courses while caring for others at home. Faculty firmly supported the accommodations mentioned in the draft plan, reduced service obligations, and reducing preps for faculty with outside care obligations.

#### Women and Minoritized Faculty<sup>1</sup>

Women and minoritized faculty face particular challenges that must not go unacknowledged or unaddressed. Studies show that these faculty often carry heavier service burdens than their white male peers, have less access to mentorship and professional networks and, in grant-driven disciplines, begin their careers with smaller initial grants. These inequities are likely to be exacerbated by the Covid crisis.<sup>2</sup> Women are already likely to shoulder a greater share of domestic responsibility, a problem that new Covid-imposed care imperatives has only exacerbated, as evidenced by alarming disparities between the rate at which men and women are submitting to

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<sup>1</sup> The issue of DEI impact was raised and here we elaborate.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/05/13/ensuring-pandemic-doesnt-negatively-impact-women-stem-especially-those-color>

scholarly journals during the Covid outbreak.<sup>3</sup> This is a reminder that these events have gendered implications. They also have racial, class-based, and ethnic implications. As is well documented, the United States' Covid outbreak has had more devastating effects on less affluent populations and on African Americans, effects that may increase the likelihood of minoritized faculty dealing with the stress of illness in their immediate or extended families, in addition to the outsized burden they carry as mentors to our students. Faculty urge the university to be attentive to these disparities and to make proactive, appropriate adjustments in teaching load, service load, and research support to address them.

### Job Security and Compensation

Several faculty expressed concerns about job security. Others argued that any needed sacrifice be shared, for example, by drawing on available endowment resources (in a transparent way) rather than maintaining pre-crisis policies that focus exclusively on growing the endowment. Furthermore, faculty requested additional transparency about current and projected shortfalls.

### New Faculty

Attention must be paid to faculty who have been at Villanova for a short time or who will be joining us next year. Departments, colleges, and the university must make concerted efforts to acclimate these colleagues to the institution and help them feel connected to a community, particularly if that community currently resides in virtual space. This concern should affect any planning for new faculty orientation. VITAL might be enlisted to provide some support in this regard, and additional support—sharing online resources, mentoring, housing information, etc.—to help new faculty and graduate students as they move into the area should be created and/or strengthened.

### Intellectual Property Policy

In communications with Faculty Congress, faculty express heightened concern about Intellectual Property policy, given that they are being forced to move online (rather than choosing to do so). For example, in face-to-face instruction, some faculty have shared with students their unpublished material, rights over which they would not be willing to sign over to the university. Further, faculty ask the university to make explicit that we are not required to record our lectures in the event of student absence but, rather, are required to provide extensive instructional material in whatever form we deem fit.

### Graduate Students

Faculty express concern that the draft scenarios did not sufficiently address the needs of graduate students. Specific suggestions for accommodating graduate student needs include making virus testing and mental health services available to them.

The draft also does not take into account how graduate research assistants in funded research programs would be affected by the different proposed options. This is a vulnerable population, and their ability to work affects faculty research productivity. Such research productivity and the graduate students on whom it depends need to be considered as integral to any decisions about fall teaching (e.g., allowing them on-campus to do research even if classes are online).

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/may/12/womens-research-plummets-during-lockdown-but-articles-from-men-increase>

### Student Absences

The Health Center should provide students with documentation for Covid absences. Concern was expressed that without this, or without documentation from other health care providers or public health officials, the proposed policy of allowing excused absences for Covid will be abused.

### Blackboard

If faculty using Blackboard are required to abide by a particular minimum framework within Blackboard, the suggested five-item menu should come standard in the course shell (i.e., be the default setting rather than something faculty must construct). Faculty and programs making use of other platforms—choices that they have made with considerable reflection about what features are essential for instruction in their fields (e.g., Microsoft Teams and OneNote for the online Masters in Classics, Top Hat in Engineering)—must be free to continue using these platforms.

### Scenario Preferences

Faculty are generally not in favor of 4B (no fall classes) or 5 (block scheduling); otherwise, preference over the options were mixed. One respondent did suggest a related option with three full semesters (Fall, Spring, Summer). Individual students would be given the choice of returning for Fall 2020 or waiting until Spring 2021 and staying for Summer 2021. Faculty might be given the option to shift some of their Fall 2020 courses to Summer 2021.

## **Comments Regarding In-Person Teaching**

### Labs and Field Work

Plans for labs and for field work requiring transportation must be attentive to spatial requirements and temporal staggering that reduce the chance of infection. This may mean running more lab sections with fewer students per section, even for courses with modest enrollments. Such an approach may require hiring more TAs.

### Out-of-Class Teaching

Faculty note that in some disciplines, a lot of instruction occurs outside of class, particularly in office hours. Any in-person options need to consider how this type of interaction would be addressed and to establish a common standard for managing these pedagogical encounters.

### Contact Tracing and Notification

Faculty express concerns about contact-tracing: how it would work, what arm of the university would be responsible for it, and how privacy would be respected. Faculty have questions about who will be liable if systems in place to test community members, trace contacts, and quarantine individuals break down. And we have questions about the extent of notification and disclosure that will happen when someone tests positive, as this was not handled adequately this past semester. Students who had been in class with those who later tested positive were not considered close enough contacts to be notified, likely resulting in a widening circle of infections.

### Student Social Life

Greek life and other social organizations that encourage group gatherings, particularly involving alcohol, should be suspended for the '20-'21 academic year, and students should be strongly discouraged, if not prohibited, from traveling into Center City, especially to socialize in bars or restaurants.

### Transport and Quarantine Lodging

Concern has also been expressed for the wide number of faculty who depend on public transit—a well-established infection vector—to commute to campus; the university might support ridesharing. Also, given the risk of spreading infection to others at home, university quarantine lodging should be available to faculty and staff as well as students. Faculty and staff should have the peace of mind of knowing that if we're exposed, we have access to a cost-free way to avoid exposing partners, children, roommates, or others with whom we live.

## **Comments Regarding Online Teaching**

### Merits of Online Instruction

Faculty desire certainty so that they can plan for next year. Many express concern about beginning a new semester without a clear idea of how it will unfold, noting that any semester-in-flux plan will add significant stress to what is already a deeply unsettling time. The health and safety guidelines described under Maximum Mitigation—which some faculty deem necessary for any return to campus—would add a layer of stressful protocols. Some faculty feel that teaching via Zoom would be more effective than teaching in person with masks and social distancing. Working around the mask requirement, e.g., a plexiglass barrier between students and professor, such as has been proposed by Merrimack College, will not protect students from each other and will not address the problem of infected droplets circulating in a room.

### Faculty Preparation

Faculty express the need for training in online teaching, including training that addresses tools and best practices for particular disciplines. Some faculty request that we be paid for such training and/or for preparation for online teaching, an investment that will pay off in the even that we are forced by the pandemic to teach online for the foreseeable future.

### Campus Access

In addition to having lab access (government mandates allowing) to prepare for courses, faculty should also have access to offices and scanning/copying equipment. Some faculty may prefer to teach online courses from their campus offices if this environment is more conducive to course delivery (e.g., no appropriate quiet space at home). To support both teaching and research, we would ideally also have access to the library via a system by which we order books online and pick them up curbside, request scans of chapters to be emailed, or the like.

### Student Schedules and Internet Access

Faculty cannot be expected to teach a course synchronously for some students and asynchronously for others (e.g., who are in a different time zone). We must have available to us the full range of pedagogical modalities that we deem appropriate for each course rather than having pedagogy determined by the preferred schedules of a few students. In selecting courses, students should take into account the time zone in which they expect to be residing. The university needs to ensure that students have access to high speed internet connections should they have to complete any part of the academic year remotely. If instruction is online, the university should support students with subpar internet connectivity by subsidizing broadband accounts, providing students with wifi hotspot equipment, or the like.

### Student Support

Resources directed to students to educate them about effective online learning should specifically address how to be engaged in different platforms and what decisions (turning on video vs. turning off, for example) lead to the best learning outcomes.

### Labs

Some lab courses cannot be taught online, such as those that teach students how to use sophisticated scientific instruments. These courses could not be offered in an online semester, and four-credit courses with a lab component would likely need to be changed to three credits with no lab, the lab portion being postponed to a later semester. This would have potential implications for graduation, but we cannot fulfill degree requirements by offering bogus online labs that do not offer substantive lab content.

### CATS

Faculty raise concerns about how CATS will be weighed, given that most faculty do not have training for or experience with non-emergency online teaching. We are especially concerned for untenured faculty and how CATS for semesters beyond Spring 2020 that coincide with the pandemic will be weighed when faculty undergo tenure review.

## **Scenarios Involving Both Online and In-Person Instruction**

### Either/Or

Many faculty expressed serious concerns about the workload involved in any plan that requires instructors to simultaneously run both in-person and online versions of a course. Any such scenario was therefore deemed unworkable by several faculty. Attentiveness to faculty workloads is especially crucial given that faculty are taking a pay cut and face many other challenges.

### Mid-Stream Move to Online

If courses are moved online after an in-person start, students and faculty should be given more time to make this move (one week was suggested).

### Split Student Population Scenario

Scenario 2, which proposes that first-year students and seniors would be on campus and sophomores and juniors off campus,<sup>3</sup> poses problems for the substantial number of courses that include students from different graduating classes. Again, faculty cannot be asked to develop an online and in-person version of the same course for two different audiences unless that course is to be treated as two different sections and therefore counted as two courses in calculations of faculty teaching load.

**Note from Chair of Faculty Congress:** *The comments in this report are synthesized from the many anonymized comments and suggestions gathered by Faculty Congress members from faculty who expressed a wide range of concerns regarding the planning process for Fall 2020. As such, these do not necessarily represent a collective viewpoint of the Faculty Congress nor of individual faculty members, and should not be construed as doing so. Rather, this document represents a broad collection of viewpoints from faculty as gathered and summarized by Faculty Congress representatives.*