

Teaching in Fall 2020: A Snapshot of Faculty Opinion

Sponsored by the Office of Faculty Governance

Survey Background and Purpose:

The *Teaching in Fall 2020* snapshot survey came about because members of the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) were concerned that faculty had not been able to give full voice to their concerns and questions about the return to teaching in the fall of 2020 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. After the administration published the website *Carolina Together* which houses the *Roadmap to Fall 2020*, the need to understand faculty perspectives became even more urgent. Lloyd Kramer (History), Chair of the Faculty, convened a working group including Julie Byerley (Pediatrics), Nancy Fisher (Microbiology and Immunology), Cary Levine (Art and Art History), and Beth Mayer-Davis (Nutrition) all of whom were members of the FEC. The group was led by Mimi Chapman (Social Work), Chair-Elect of the Faculty. We hope the findings of this survey will be used to understand faculty comfort and concerns about face-to-face teaching on campus, to identify areas in which more information is needed, and to promote constructive dialogue among the faculty and the administration as we move toward Fall 2020.

Survey Design:

In order to be responsive and timely, over the course of one week, the working group convened and created a brief survey aimed at understanding faculty perspectives on teaching in the fall. The survey was not designed to examine faculty concerns about all aspects of a return to campus. In addition, the survey was completely voluntary. There was no attempt to recruit a representative sample. All members of the voting faculty were invited to participate and those who chose to respond did. Therefore, this data provides a snapshot into faculty thinking but cannot be generalized to the entire voting faculty.

Before launching the survey, the final draft was reviewed by all members of the FEC. Lynn Williford in the Office of Institutional Research also reviewed the survey to ensure that the survey was formatted to promote ease of use. The survey was sent by the Office of Faculty Governance to all members of the voting faculty on June 3, 2020 and was closed on June 10, 2020. The working group reconvened to review the data very soon after the survey was closed. Presented here is a first review of the findings.

A few notes. The working group elected not to include a wide range of demographic variables beyond age, because we did not want to create heightened conditions for potential deductive disclosure. Respondents were not required to answer the question about age (or any question in the survey). Out of 3720 members of the voting faculty 1263 responded providing a 34% response rate.

In addition to the survey questions, the survey provided space for open-ended comments. There were over 400 comments to consider, and those are currently being organized in order to facilitate a rough content analysis. As new findings from this work become available, they will be published on the Faculty Governance website (<https://facultygov.unc.edu>).

Findings: As we examine the findings, several issues are clear. Individuals scheduled to teach undergraduates in the fall, no matter their rank or age, are considerably less comfortable with the idea of teaching on campus this fall than the total sample of respondents. There are some extreme positions within the faculty with 25% of those aged 60 or over saying that there is no information they could be given that would allow them to feel safe teaching on campus this fall. Likewise, there is a very small group that currently believes they have all the information they need to feel safe teaching this fall. For many faculty members, more information in almost every domain listed on the survey is needed. In particular, faculty are interested in specific information about how classrooms will be organized, traffic flow in and out of buildings, building ventilation, contact tracing and testing procedures, and masking enforcement. Among those answering this survey, there is also deep concern for the well-being of graduate students who will be teaching undergraduates.

Almost half (47%) the faculty who responded to this survey and will be teaching undergraduates in the fall chose remote teaching as their preferred method of instruction. The second highest preference was for a hybrid option.

The most encouraging data in this survey is the high percentage of faculty, in every category thus far considered, who believe they will be able to make choices about their courses based on pedagogical needs and believe they will be able to work out reasonable teaching arrangements with their chairs or deans.

Although the comments have not been analyzed, an overview mirrors the desire for much more detailed information on every aspect of re-opening. Other areas of concern focus on undergraduate behavior and whether or not young people can commit to the community standards being proposed. There were expressions of gratitude toward the administration as well as criticism both of the plans for fall and the process of developing them. More information will be forthcoming on the comments section of the survey.