

Narrative Data Summary Faculty COVID Impact Survey

Across both Faculty survey administrations, 22-25% of respondents offered narrative comments to open-ended questions. Themes from the comments on remote instruction are summarized by successes, challenges, and changes. (Note: The timing of the June 2020 survey was 14 weeks into the pandemic. The December 2020 survey was collected pre-vaccine, during the holidays, and during a post-Thanksgiving virus surge.)

Successes

Across both survey administrations, faculty reported successes in virtual teaching, such as the technology tools, students comfort and familiarity with the use of technology, some initial increases in student engagement, attendance, and accessibility. Faculty reported course-level improvements, as a result of redesigning course content for the virtual environment. Strong educational technology support from educational technology teams in law, social work, and the graduate school were noted. In the December survey, some faculty comfort or “acceptance” with the process emerged in the comments.

Faculty reported that students demonstrated patience, attention, attendance, positive attitudes, were accommodating of faculty adjustment to virtual environments, even helping some faculty with technology. Changing instructional practices including being more creative or innovative with instruction, flexible, decreased barriers to accessing content, and new opportunities for teaching were also reported. Instructional supports including personnel, peers, staff, teamwork, faculty collaborations (e.g. sharing instructional materials/resources). Some faculty reported technology was a success; learning to use new tools, comfort and confidence with the technology, technology that “worked”, and that the university was responsive to providing the tools needed to execute virtual instruction.

Challenges

Despite the success many faculty reported with technology tools for remote teaching, other faculty reported that technology was a significant challenge for them. After 6 months, faculty continued to report challenges with technology adoption and use. These challenges ranged from updated hardware, home office environment or set up, connectivity issues, learning to use tools, comfort and confidence with technology, and having enough time to learn tools in order to prepare for course delivery. While some faculty reported being creative with instruction, others expressed concerns regarding the effects of virtual instructional practices, including the variability in educational experience, student engagement, perceptions of online learning as subordinate, faculty ability to “read the room” to gauge learning, and denigration or absence of clinical instruction. Concerns or perceptions of future knowledge and skills gaps, readiness for clinical practice, poor engagement, lack of presence, inability to gauge understanding, and reduced quality of learning were also reported.

Faculty well-being and stress was a challenge which was reported over both surveys during the remote work period. For example, faculty ability to work from home was hampered by children requiring schooling support, or lack of childcare to allow for working, overall work life balance. Faculty repeatedly stated they experienced workload increases, anxiety and uncertainty, online fatigue, blurring of home and work life, and difficulty maintaining attention to personal health. Challenges persisted in the December survey, a continued blurring of work-life boundaries, long days staring at Zoom screens. Faculty reported decreases in student engagement, where competing home or personal circumstances were distractions from school work. Insufficiency of virtual environment for clinical training.

Changes

Following a review of the narrative comments from both survey administrations, faculty appear to fall into three categories for changes going forward with respect to remote instruction. These are converts, hybrids, and rejectors. Faculty converts report that the COVID experience has changed how they will teach permanently and they will champion online education to others. Faculty hybrids will integrate some of the strategies learned during COVID once they return to campus, in order to optimize coursework. For example, some faculty may use Blackboard enhanced courses, where content is delivered online but in-person learning is reserved for active, clinical, community-building, or lab-based activities. Faculty rejectors just want to go back to how things were and see online teaching as an unnecessary, poor quality education.

Cross-cutting Themes

1. **Time** including comments about schedules, time in teaching, duration of activities, time sequencing of instruction, and the openness or fluidity of time to engage in teaching and meetings; working all hours, loss of time bounded work day.
2. **Effective communications** including positive praise for school and university level communications and from profession-specific accreditation bodies, with students, more collaboration with colleagues.
3. **Learner inclusion** included hearing from more voices in chats, leveling of hierarchies, increased accessibility, accommodations, decreasing barriers to participation, and social inclusion.
4. **Sense of community and team effort.** Faculty offered many comments, including “...teamwork in terms of everyone chipping in and getting things done, so our graduating students can finish their requirements” (Nursing) , and “...very dedicated team of colleagues to deal with the immense amount of work to find alternative clinical experiences for our students not able to be in the actual 'sites' (Medicine), “...we work very well together which was essential to handling the huge amount of work in such an urgent/ emergent time” (Social Work).