# WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

**COVID-19 and Planning for Fall 2020:
Report on the Survey of Faculty**


**June 8, 2020**

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In response to projected lower rates of infection, illness and death stemming from the COVID-19 Pandemic, Wright State University, the City of Dayton, and the State of Ohio are each grappling with how and when it might be best to safely reopen. Balancing the needs of public safety with the needs of our students and academic communities presents many challenging scenarios. Certainly, many of the faculty feel some trepidation about Fall 2020. We are educators and researchers.  The time away from face-to-face instruction, as well as student and colleague interactions have been difficult for many.

Thus, to better gauge the concerns of the faculty, the Wright State Faculty Senate Executive Committee (EC) administered a brief survey to measure some of this sentiment. This survey was similar to an effort sponsored by the Ohio Faculty Council,[1] an organization that includes the elected faculty representatives of Ohio's 14 public universities.

The Wright State survey was approved and administered by the Faculty Senate EC, and consisted of 11 questions of different formats.  **Question 1** asked faculty to rank the top three most pressing issues about Fall 2020. **Question 2** asked for responses about faculty members' comfort level with face-to-face instruction in the fall, presenting a Likert-type scale from 1 to 4 (the fifth option was to reply with a specific, text, response).  **Questions 3 and 4** listed potential responses (nine responses for question 3—concerns about returning to campus, and seven responses for question 4—what faculty members are looking forward to about returning to the workplace), and asked the respondent to select all responses as applicable.  Both questions included an option to supply a user-specific text response, as well.  **Question 5** posed 3 different protocols which may be adopted or required (symptom checking, wearing masks, and social distancing) and asked the respondent to respond via a 6-item Likert-type scale.  **Question 6** queried the amount of worry or anxiety experiencing regarding the return to campus. Responses to this question were collected via a 4-item Likert-type scale.  **Question 7** addressed faculty perspectives concerning the pros and cons of teaching remote (or online) during the fall semester.  Nine options were listed (faculty were asked to select all that apply); additionally, an open ended "other" response was an option, as was the option of "I have no concerns." **Question 8** sought to uncover faculty concerns regarding research and creative scholarship in the coming semester.  The question, indicating a directive to select all that apply, included 5 supplied options, as well as an "Other (please specify)" open-ended option.  **Questions 9, 10 and 11** were open ended questions, asking participants to reply in their own words.  [**Question 9**: Do you have any suggestions on how to make the transition back to campus easier?  Please explain.  **Question 10**:  Please share your experiences to date using technology from home for teaching, research, and service.  **Question 11**:  Are there any other comments, concerns, or suggestions that you would like to relay to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee about the University's response to COVID-19?]

The survey was conducted online via the Qualtrics software.  WSU Human Resources supplied a spreadsheet of faculty. This included regular faculty, part-time faculty, administrators with faculty rank, and Dayton Regional STEM School faculty (the STEM School faculty are housed

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[1] https://www.ohiofacultycouncil.org/home

under the College of Education and Human Services).  An invitation to participate in the survey was emailed to 760 faculty members on May 21, indicating that the survey would close at 5:00 p.m. on May 26.  From this group, 400 surveys were completed (a response rate of 52.6%).[2]

The following section walks through the survey responses.  We realize that there are limitations to our discussion of the results.  The survey results are anonymous, and have been provided to the Senate EC members in the aggregate only.  In many questions, it is easy to share a count of the options chosen, and to choose the top three choices as indicative of the faculty mindset (this data is provided by Qualtrics).  We also recognize that this survey captures a moment in time, in the midst of a global pandemic during which perceptions of health and well-being may change quickly.  In this report, when possible, the discussion of responses will focus on the top three options selected by the faculty.  The open-ended questions will follow, summarized to the extent possible given the time frame, and the lack of multiple evaluators to undertake a full content analysis of the responses.  Anyone desiring a complete set of all responses should contact the Faculty Office with their request.

**Question 1**:  Please rank your top three the most pressing issues about Fall 2020.  Respondents indicated the following three top issues:
   a.  Concern for vulnerable students, staff, faculty, and community members (253 responses, or 253/400 = **63**%)
   b.  Economic viability of university (233 responses, or 233/400 = **58%**)
   c.  Preservation of the University's educational mission (202 responses, or 202/400 = **50.5%**)
The data indicate that the faculty are placing the health of all university constituents and stakeholders as their top priority.  However, as the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in dramatic changes to education, the faculty are highly concerned with the future of the University and its ability to carry on with its stated mission of providing a quality education to our students.

**Question 1, "Other (please specify)"**:  20 respondents (or 5%) provided their thoughts in response to this question.  Throughout the responses, two themes emerge: ensuring the health and safety of the students, and preserving the academic programs of the University.  There is a sense of doing what is best for our students, whether this pertains to health, to education, or to just being there for students.  Mental health and financial health and stability were listed, as well as the need to master new formats so that learning does not suffer.

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[2] However, since some questions indicated only 396 responses, a suggestion that all respondents did not answer all questions (the response rate would drop to 51% if 396 responses were used as the official number of respondents).  However, since only aggregate data was supplied to the EC members, it would not be possible to weed out the four incomplete responses.

## 1 - Please rank your top three the most pressing issues about Fall 2020

| Field | Mean | Count |
|---|---|---|
| Concern for vulnerable students, staff, faculty, and community members | 1.80 | 253 |
| Personal health | 1.88 | 150 |
| Preservation of the University's educational mission | 2.18 | 202 |
| Economic well-being of self and family | 2.22 | 148 |
| Economic viability of university | 2.24 | 233 |
| Learning/educational gaps in remote/online format | 2.36 | 134 |
| Other (please specify) | 2.45 | 20 |
| Research productivity | 2.78 | 72 |

**Question 2**:  If face-to-face instruction resumes at any point during Fall 2020, which option best describes your comfort level and anticipated work time between home and campus?
Question 2 was written with four potential levels of comfort; participants were asked to choose the one which best fit them as an individual.  (396 responses were received for this question. The percentages shown below sum to 99.6% due to rounding; the number of responses shown sum to 396.)

| Option | Response % |
|---|---|
| Slightly comfortable (I will resume my pre-COVID pattern assuming adequate health protocols and implementation) | **33.5%** (133/396) |
| Slightly uncomfortable (I will likely spend more time working remotely compared to previous semesters) | **23.7%** (94/396) |
| Uncomfortable (I will continue working from home unless required to be on campus) | **22.7%** (90/396) |
| Comfortable (I will return to my pre-COVID pattern) | **16%** (64/396) |
| I will not return to campus until (please specify) | **3.7%** (15/396) |

Health concerns show the greatest focus in the responses above, with 33.5% and 16% being slightly comfortable or comfortable about returning to campus and face to face teaching and interactions.  This is reflected in the 15 answers specified in the open-ended option to this question.  The availability of a vaccine shows up in 8 of the 15 responses; others specified ongoing health concerns, and the advice or directives of a physician as to how to proceed.
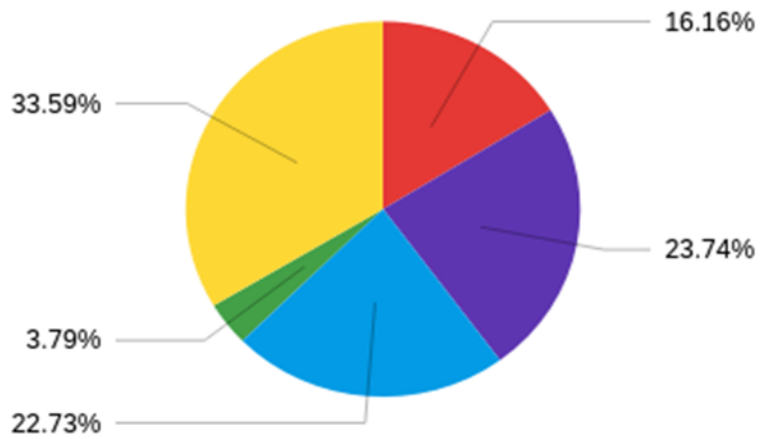
Comfortable - I will return to my pre-covid pattern

Slightly uncomfortable - I will likely spend more time working remotely compared to previous semesters

Uncomfortable - I will continue working from home unless required to be on campus

I will not return to campus until: (please specify)

Slightly comfortable - I will likely resume my pre-covid pattern assuming adequate health protocols and implementation
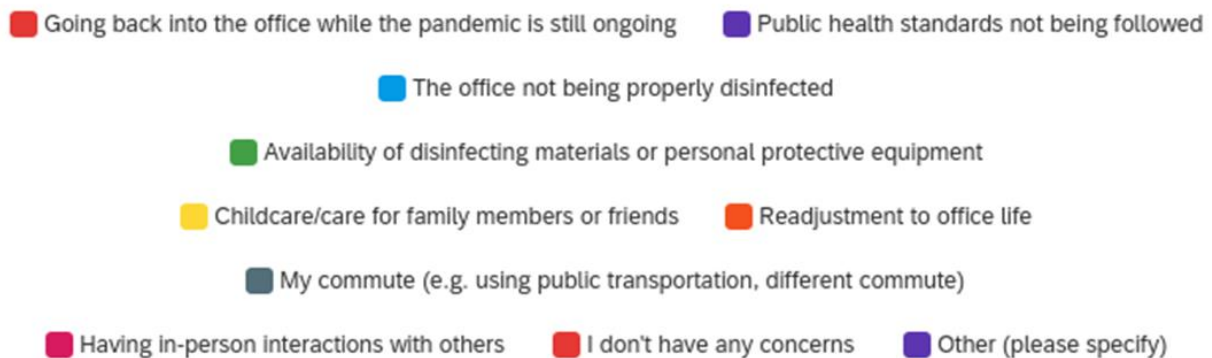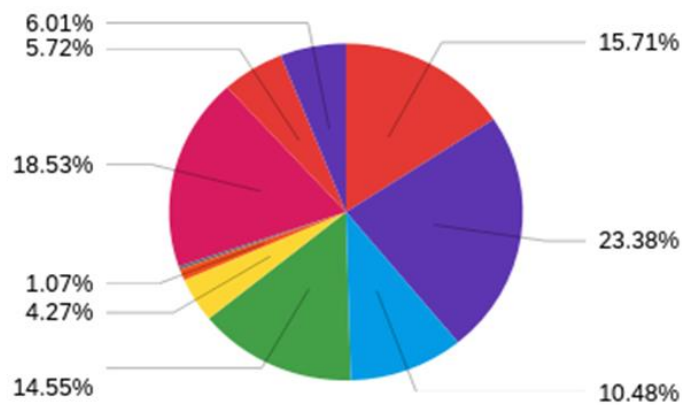
**Question 3**:  What are your main concerns about coming back to campus?
Please select all that apply.
This question supplied respondents with nine different options from which to select responses.
In addition, a response of "Other (please specify)" was presented.  The three options selected
by the majority of respondents are shown below.  When a respondent's ability to select
multiple answers is considered, the number of responses received jumps from 400 to 1,031
(although the number of respondents remained constant, and is assumed to be 400).  This
higher rate of responses is utilized in the calculations presented.
  a. Public Health standards not being followed (**23.38%**, 241/1031 responses)
  b. Having in-person interactions with others (**18.53%**, 191/1031 responses)
  c. Going back into the office while the pandemic is still ongoing (**15.71%**, 162/1031
     responses)
Once again, issues regarding health and the desire to avoid contracting the illness while on
campus dominate the concerns expressed.  This is not surprising as all but three of the nine
supplied potential responses were shining a light on maintaining individual health and well-
being.  The option stating that "I don't have any concerns" was selected by 59 (or 5.7% of 1031)
responses.  Finally 11 responses indicated that "Readjustment to office life," or their commute
to campus (3 responses) were among their concerns.



6.01%
5.72%                                    15.71%

18.53%

                                         23.38%

1.07%
4.27%

14.55%                    10.48%

🟥 Going back into the office while the pandemic is still ongoing     🟪 Public health standards not being followed

🟦 The office not being properly disinfected

🟩 Availability of disinfecting materials or personal protective equipment

🟨 Childcare/care for family members or friends     🟧 Readjustment to office life

⬛ My commute (e.g. using public transportation, different commute)

🟥 Having in-person interactions with others     🟥 I don't have any concerns     🟪 Other (please specify)

**Question 3, "Other (please specify)"**:  **6.01%** (or 62/1031) responses were supplied in the submitted surveys.  The concerns raised via this open-ended question focused on adherence (or non-adherence) to PPE guidelines, to university sanitary conditions, given the number of staff who have been separated from the university or who have seen their hours cut, and to potential impacts on students.  The student impacts envisioned some students attending class without PPE (due to health concerns or other reasons); faculty are unsure how they will be able to deal with such situations.  Others raised the concern of students coming from different states and countries where the COVID patterns are or likely will be different from the trends in southwest Ohio.  Sanitation must extend to the classroom, for the health and well-being of our students.  How will desks, tables, and computers be cleaned and sanitized from one class to the next?  Will it be safe to conduct breakout group activities?  Many students (and faculty) venture into the community to work with some of the University's partners as part of a course.  A common sentiment is that nothing, other than the date on the calendar, has changed from where we were when the stay at home orders were issued in March.  Social distancing, masks, and other PPE have helped to decrease the COVID numbers; but concerns remain about the return, or another wave, of COVID.

**Question 4**:  What are you looking forward to about returning to your workplace?  Please select all that apply.  Question 4 supplied seven potential responses, and an additional "Other (please specify)" response.  Because respondents were encouraged to select all that apply, the data concerning question 4 will use the number of responses, 1114, rather than the number of respondents (assumed to be 400).  The top three responses chosen by participants are shown below.
   a.  Interacting with students / Being in the classroom (**27.47%**, or 306/1114)
   b.  Access to office/department equipment (**16.52%**, or 184/1114)
   c.  Easier collaboration with colleagues (**14.54%**, or 162/1114)
The responses to question 4 highlight that faculty enjoy interacting with students, conducting class on a face to face basis, and collaborating with colleagues.

**Question 4, "Other (please specify)"**:  **2.96%**, (or 33/1114) responses were recorded for this question. Many of the respondents indicated a desire to remain on a remote teaching basis, or to continue working from home, as doing so eliminated the need for a commute and increased productivity.  Some activities, however, such as lunching with colleagues, having informal conversation with students, or taking advantage of the University's pool or workout facilities, cannot be met with a work at home experience.

**Question 5**: I am comfortable with new protocols, like symptom checking, wearing masks, and social distancing, that may be required because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Question 5 asked participants to respond to these three different protocols, on a 6-point Likert-type scale, their degree of comfort with these protocols. (The scale included options of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Slightly Agree, Agree, and Strongly Agree.) It is difficult to gauge an actual number of respondents for this question. Each participant could select one response for each of three rows. However, instead of summing to 400, or to 396, for each row, the Symptom Checking row sums to 395, the Wearing masks row sums to 390 responses, and the Social distancing row also sums to 390 responses. This notwithstanding, the data indicate that a strong majority of participants either Agree or Strongly agree with all three of the protocols listed. Adding these two response categories together results in a sum of 939 respondents indicating a high degree of comfort with the protocols.

| # | Question | Strongly disagree | | Disagree | | Slightly disagree | | Slightly agree | | Agree | | Strongly agree | |
|---|----------|-------------------|----|----------|----|-------------------|----|----------------|----|--------|-----|----------------|-----|
| 1 | Symptom checking | 32.00% | 24 | 38.78% | 19 | 31.43% | 11 | 42.86% | 33 | 33.49% | 72 | 32.60% | 236 |
| 2 | Wearing masks | 38.67% | 29 | 40.82% | 20 | 31.43% | 11 | 33.77% | 26 | 30.23% | 65 | 33.01% | 239 |
| 3 | Social distancing | 29.33% | 22 | 20.41% | 10 | 37.14% | 13 | 23.38% | 18 | 36.28% | 78 | 34.39% | 249 |
| | Total | Total | 75 | Total | 49 | Total | 35 | Total | 77 | Total | 215 | Total | 724 |

**Question 6**:  In general, how much worry or anxiety are you experiencing when you anticipate returning to campus?

Question 6 requested that participants respond by selecting from one of four supplied responses, "Rarely or not at all," "Some or a little bit," "Occasionally or moderate amount," or "Frequently or a lot."  395 respondents completed this question.  29.37% (or 116 of 395) replied with "Rarely or not at all," and 104 of 395 (or 26.33%) selected the option of "Some or a little bit."  However, it is worth mentioning that there is not tremendous variance between the four responses. The responses "Occasionally or moderate amount" garnered 89 responses (or 22.53%), and the fourth option, "Frequently or a lot," secured 86 responses (or 21.77%) All four of the options placed between 21.77% as the least chosen response and 29.37% as the most chosen response.  Hence, the anxiety experienced by the faculty may be something which requires additional exploration.  With almost equal proportions of the faculty falling into the four categories, overlooking this factor would be unwise.
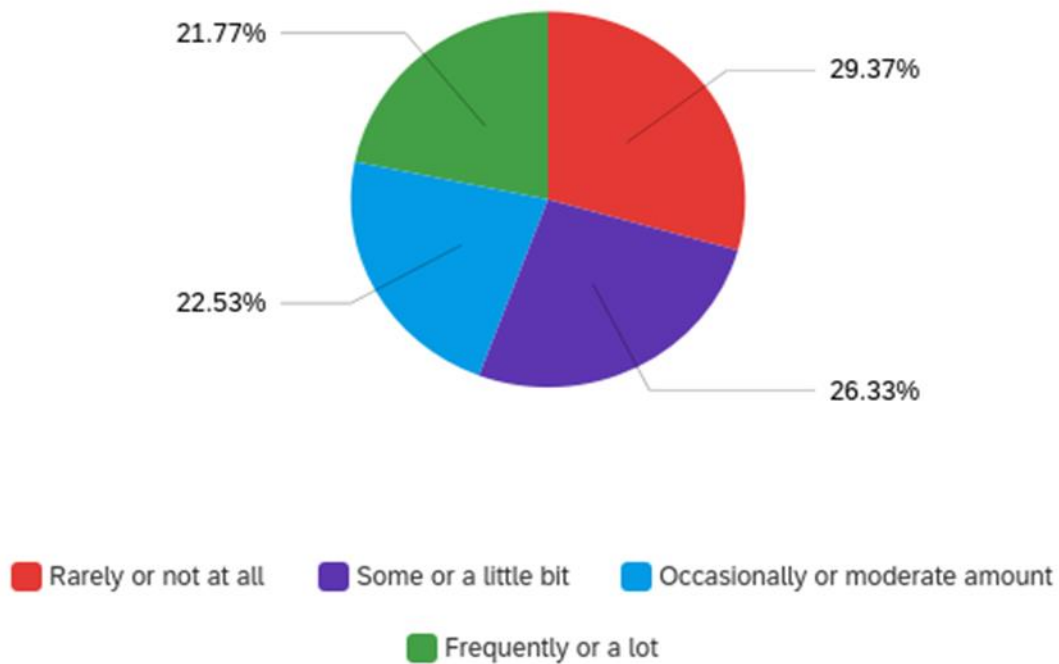
**Question 7**:  In your view, what are the pros and cons about teaching remotely or online in the fall semester?  Please select all that apply.

Question 7 presented respondents with 10 options (one of which indicated "I have no concerns"), and an open-ended option ("Other (please specify)").  Qualtrics tallied 1263 responses for this question, which is in-keeping with the ability to select multiple responses.  One difficulty in dealing with the responses to this question is that the "pros" aren't separate from the "cons."  Hence, each individual may have to decide whether a response falls into the pro or the con category.  (In general, the supplied options tend to one side or another, with the exception of "I have no concerns," although this may cloud characterizing some of the "Other (please specify)" responses.)

The three responses with the highest count of selection by survey participants are as follows.
   a. Decrease in potential exposure/transmission of virus, **20.11%** (254 of 1263 responses)
   b. Students (and faculty) are experiencing online burnout, **15.04%** (190 of 1263 responses)
   c. Remote and online delivery will provide the flexibility I and my students need, **11.70%** (173 of 1263 responses).
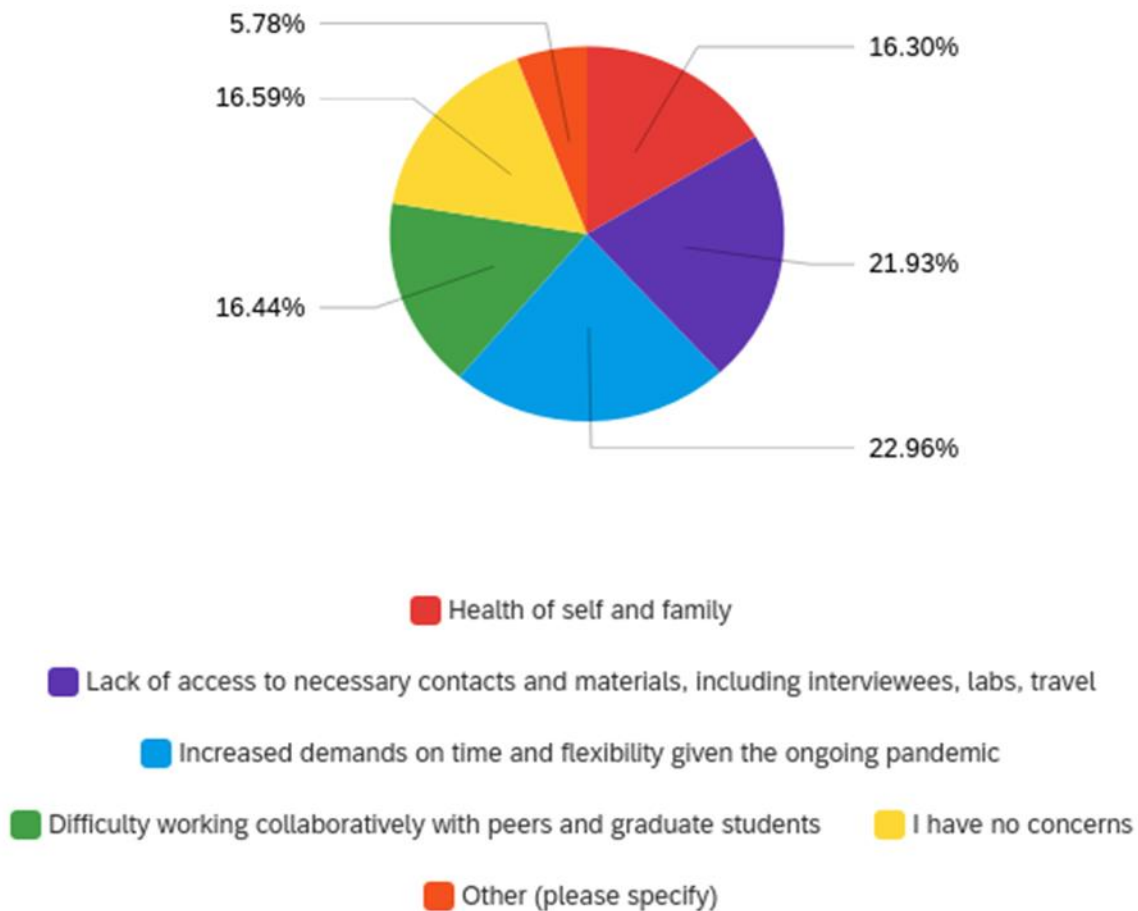
Of the three answers highlighted above, only one seems to fall into the "con" category (response b); both a and c can be perceived as highlighting positive aspects of teaching remotely.  One interpretation of the possible responses might indicate 5 of the responses would likely be seen as being on the "pro" online side, while 4 of the responses would fall on the side of being against remote teaching.  (This summary categorization does not include the "Other" response or the "I have no concerns" response.)

**Question 7, "Other (please specify)"**:  This response received 71 responses (**5.62%**, or 71 of 1263 responses).  The responses cover both positive as well as negative aspects of teaching remotely.  The "Con" responses highlighted such as poor connections, and the realization that students (and faculty) may not have the needed equipment to effectively participate in an online experience.  Additionally, there were comments concerning some experiential learning scenarios which are best when completed face to face, such as service learning courses, courses with labs, or whether freshman students should be thrown into an online experience as their introduction to Wright State.  A concern was many respondents voiced was having the time to sufficiently transition a course from previous face to face delivery into an online format.  Some raised a concern over students potential cheating on quizzes and exams in an online and unsupervised setting.  Lower levels of student engagement were raised as an issue associated with online delivery.

Others saw a remote format as beneficial to the University in being a cost saving measure (fewer offices needed, few classrooms, no utilities being used, easier parking, and less cleaning needed).  Remote teaching was endorsed as providing a higher level of safety for all involved parties.  Endorsements of a remote format focused on the health and safety aspects of teaching online (avoiding social distancing issues, avoiding crowded classrooms, etc.).
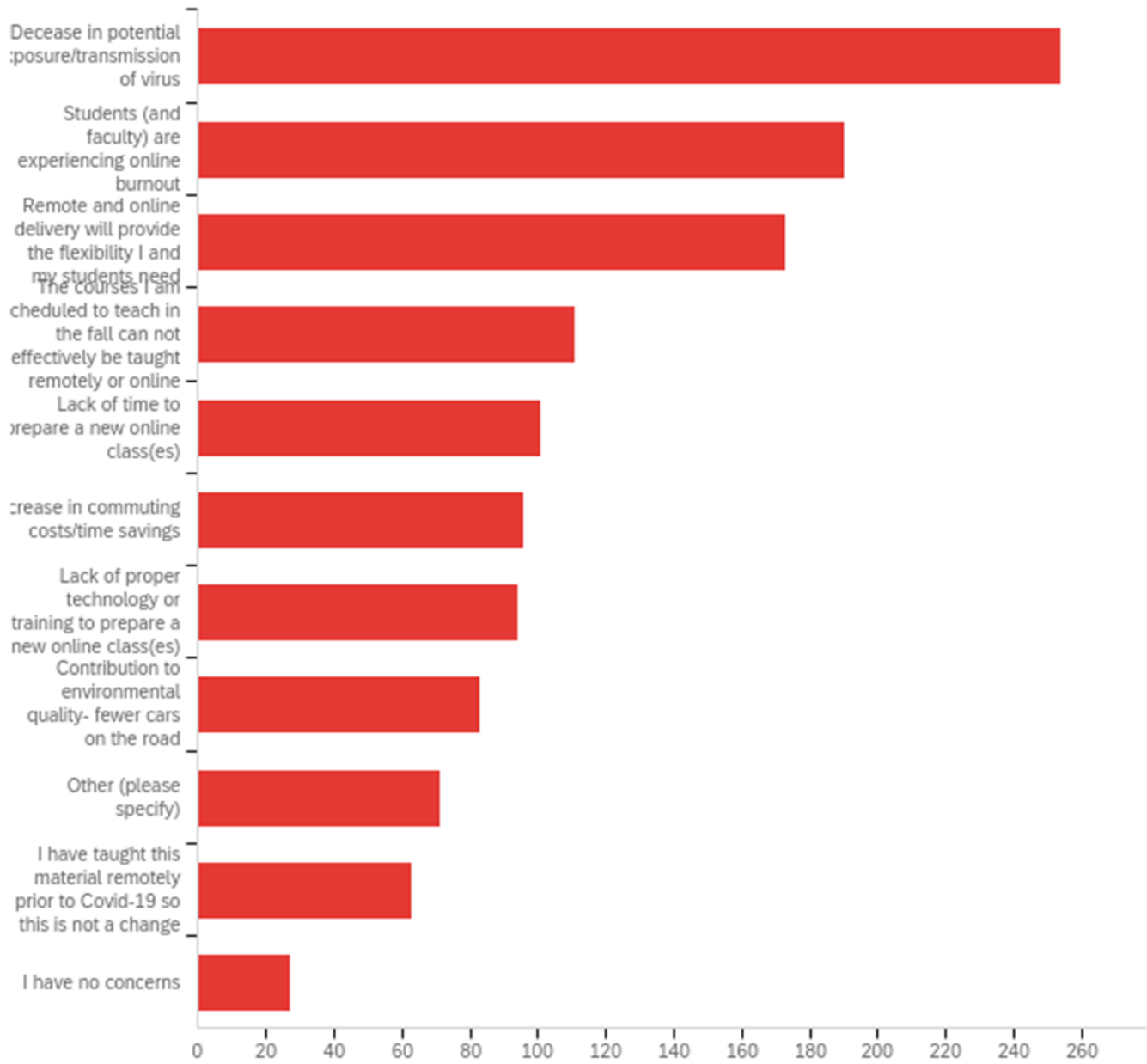
**Question 8**:  What concerns, if any, do you have about continuing your research and creative scholarship in fall semester?  Please select all that apply. Question 8 presented respondents with 5 options, as well as an option of "Other (please specify)."  675 responses were recorded for question 8.  Two factors, "Increased demands on time and flexibility given the ongoing pandemic," and "Lack of access to necessary contacts and materials, including interviewees, labs, travel," dominated the responses, coming in with **22.96%** (155 of 675 responses) and **21.93%** (148 of 675 responses), respectively.  The remaining three responses, "I have no concerns," "Difficulty working collaboratively with peers and graduate students," and "Health of self and family" came in neck and neck with one another, as Qualtrics indicated **16.59%** (112 of 675 responses), **16.44%** (111 of 675 responses), and **16.30%** (110 of 675 responses) for these options.  The results suggest that while all of these factors are important to the responding faculty, time and access to necessary materials rise above the other factors when asked about concerns relating to continuing research and creative scholarship.



■ Health of self and family

■ Lack of access to necessary contacts and materials, including interviewees, labs, travel

■ Increased demands on time and flexibility given the ongoing pandemic

■ Difficulty working collaboratively with peers and graduate students      ■ I have no concerns

■ Other (please specify)

**Question 8, "Other (please specify)"**:  Qualtrics indicated that 39 (**5.78%**, 39 of 675) respondents took advantage of the ability to identify individual concerns.  A concerned raised again and again through the responses was that of time for research and creative scholarship.  The respondents believe that remote teaching is more time consuming than face to face delivery, and that teaching responsibilities are cutting into the time available for research.  A number of respondents mentioned that a lack of access to the library and library materials was a hindrance to ongoing as well as new research.  A small number of responses mentioned the viability of the University moving forward, and the drying up or unavailability of resources to support research.

Questions 9, 10, and 11 pose a challenge for simple presentation as these questions sought open ended responses.  To summarize data obtained from questions 9 and 10, categories of responses were formulated based upon a survey of the responses.  Following this, a more careful reading of the responses permitted placing an individual reply into one of the created categories.

This procedure was not possible with question 11.  The nature of the question was such that responses were not directed to any particular topic, such as a return to campus, but rather encouraged any topic which a participant wished to share with the Senate and the EC.  A summary of question 11 is presented based upon topics which were mentioned again and again, rather than a count and categorization of responses.

**Question 9:  Do you have any suggestions on how to make the transition back to campus easier?**

COVID-related (protocols, PPE, social distancing symptom checking, health, etc.)  **(63)**
Flexibility of continuing online or perhaps hybrid  **(53)**
Information Transparency, Administration  **(26)**
Physical/Campus Issues (i.e., unlock the doors, outdoor classrooms, large rooms for smaller sections, etc.) **(22)**
Timeframe (and notification lead time) of offering remote classes in the fall  **(19)**
Speed of re-opening  **(12)**
Realistic expectations (teaching load, research requirements, service expectations, etc.)  **(7)**
Technology issues (better connections, better support, testing center for online courses) **(3)**

The picture drawn from the responses to question 9 indicate that many of the faculty are ready and eager to return to campus. However, this must take place under circumstances fully conforming to guidelines for interacting under COVID-19.  This includes a pressing need to address the availability of PPE for faculty, as well as policies being put in place regarding whether or not students should wear face coverings (and how the situation should be handled

should a student or colleague not comply). The responses indicate that the faculty are ready to come together, but also wish for some flexibility with regard to how course offerings should or will proceed. Some responses stressed the importance of not forcing the return to campus by any faculty who believe that it would jeopardize their health and well-being. Others support the idea of hybrid classes, but believe that in conjunction with hybrid offerings, and the possibility of splitting a course into smaller sections to accommodate social distancing, the requirements for research and service must be adjusted accordingly.

A recurring comment focused on the amount of effort required to move from face to face teaching to remote teaching, while many others make the point that remote teaching cannot be treated as a one size fits all across different Colleges and disciplines. Two concerns which echo throughout the responses concern the timeliness of information, and a need for information transparency from the administration. Timeliness of information points again to the effort required to take a classroom experience and transfer this to remote delivery. Given this effort, there is a desire to have a decision from the University as to whether Wright State will operate on a face to face basis during the fall, mostly remote, or on some form of a hybrid system. Information transparency is crucial. If faculty, staff and students return, and people begin testing positive for COVID-19, the hope is that the Administration will make an honest and transparent reporting of cases, within federal guidelines. In short, the overarching sentiment which emerges from the responses is that our faculty enjoy – and miss – their face to face interactions with students, staff and faculty colleagues. However, they do not want the University to rush into an opening and then be forced to close again during the fall (recognizing that the latter decision rests largely in the hands of local governmental authorities).


**Question 10:  Please share your experiences to date using technology from home for teaching, research, and service.**

Positive experience  **(84)**
Technology Issues (Internet connection, personal equipment issues, CTL great, but stretched thin, etc.) **(54)**
Both positive and negative (student engagement, harder to prep, safety, health, etc.) **(45)**
Negative experience  **(32)**
Quality teaching (student engagement, test proctoring, etc.)  **(27)**

The responses submitted to question 10 are overwhelmingly positive. The data indicate a faculty who realize that while it is unfortunate that the pandemic altered the world and created a "new normal," the best response is to react positively and to do the best job possible in fulfilling our core mission as an education and research institution. While the responses indicating a positive experience with utilizing technology from home are more than double the number of negative experience responses, there are many who reported a mixed bag, where some was positive and some aspects were negative. Some faculty felt a sense of accomplishment for quickly mastering a technology and using it to offer class (many responses indicated that even when face to face teaching returns, the ability to record videos for students

is worth continuing, as it added significantly to the educational experience).  On the other hand, however, student engagement is sorely lacking in remote offerings.  Asking the class, "are there any questions?" is a poor substitute for looking at the students to see if their expression betrays a question.

Technology itself was an issue to be dealt with; many faculty have older equipment which they discovered was not up to the challenge of using video conferencing / class meeting software.  While we've come a long way from dial-up Internet connections, a surprising number of faculty found their service lacking; their classes were disrupted because of faulty connections (and, as was remarked upon, this was a common issue with students.  Far too many students, and a few faculty, were connecting via their phone rather than through a computer software).  However, notwithstanding technology issues, mentions of support from CaTS (Computing and Technology Services) and CTL (Center for Teaching and Learning) were extremely positive, and faculty included many expressions of gratitude to the support these units have provided.

Faculty recognize the need to provide a high-quality teaching and learning experience to our students.  There are concerns about how to conduct testing, and test proctoring, that many respondents will be exploring should remote offerings continue into the future.


**Question 11**:  **Are there any other comments, concerns or suggestions that you would like to relay to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee about the University's response to COVID-19?**

Comments here included:
> COVID, testing, protocols, vaccine, "new normal"
> Class sizes
> Quality of education as offered online, but let faculty choose their preference
> Concerns about sanitation, especially restrooms
> Timeframe of the decision to go online or face to face for the fall
> Health and safety
> Poor communication
> Budget issues – no cuts to faculty and staff
> Not a one size fits all solution
> Prioritize safety, not budget
> Administration should not use the crisis to ask faculty to do more for less
> Likewise, AAUP should not make this a political game.
> Advocate for flexibility (families of faculty and students with children)
> Desire to return to campus/office

The responses to question 11 addressed many different topics.  Attempting to do a hand count and categorization of responses was less feasible.  Instead, a simple laundry list of emerging topics and concerns seems to promise a greater payout.

At the top of this list is the realization that no one is completely "safe" until there is a vaccine for COVID-19. Given this, many faculty contend that it is important for the University to prioritize safety over economics, and that a focus on health and safety should permeate the campus.  There was repeated concern expressed about the cleanliness of the restrooms across campus, given cuts to custodial staff, during the past couple of semesters.  Given the pandemic, these concerns must be addressed, and a plan for consistent cleaning and disinfection is needed. Classrooms, too, will need cleaning attention before and after every class, with many faculty questioning how tables, chairs – and keyboards – will be adequately sanitized.

The Senate – and especially the EC – were thanked for administering the survey to gather information and data from the faculty. Faculty hope that these data help inform the difficult decisions facing our University for Fall 2020 and beyond.