

POST COVID ACADEMIC INNOVATION TASK FORCE STATUS UPDATE

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PCAITF Co-Chairs
Wednesday May 5th, 2021
Post COVID Academic Innovation Task Force

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Task Force Process

4 Working Groups Focused on Different Constituencies

- Faculty – Led by Billy Mullins
- Staff/academic Support – Led by Gaetano Lotrecchiano
- Undergraduate Education – Led by Gayle Wald
- Graduate/Professional Education – Led by John Warren
- Each group identified themes that arose during data gathering and identified possible suggestions.

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Website and Timeline

- [Post-COVID Academic Innovation Task Force | Office of the Provost | The George Washington University \(gwu.edu\)](#)
- Wednesday, May 12th – subgroup reports submitted - these will be shared with EPT, ASPP, Research, and Libraries Committees for comment.
- Wednesday, May 26th – final report submitted to Provost Blake
- Focus will be on enabling academic innovation, not prescribing or requiring particular innovations.

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Undergraduate Education Academic Innovations (*work in progress*)

- As every recent GWU Strategic Plan has found, [the university's location in Washington, DC is one of its strongest assets](#) and is central to its mission.
- The committee found strong undergraduate support for [making recordings of lectures available after synchronous classes](#). Even students who attended synchronous classes appreciated being able to review the material. The committee recommends that faculty consider making lecture recordings available to students even when GW moves to “in person” learning.
- Preserve the [“culture of empathy”](#) that emerged during the pandemic by including the input of students in GW’s culture initiative.
- Deliver more [student services through online platforms](#) (office hours, telehealth, etc.)

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Undergraduate Education Academic Innovations (*work in progress*)

- University units and departments should [assess ways to make their curricula available to students on virtual platforms](#) during the fall and spring semesters. (There are already robust virtual learning opportunities in the summer.) The goal would be to accommodate student desire for flexibility, accessibility, and convenience.
 - select sections of a required large lecture course could be virtual
 - select breakout (discussion) sessions led by TAs could move to online spaces, freeing up space on campus
 - some classes could be flipped, incorporating online components
- GW should [consider offering unique online summer learning opportunities](#) for undergraduates to complete requisite coursework while living on campus or in the city. A required summer term works well for NYU, a frequent point of comparison for GW.
- [Use very efficient COVID testing as a model for “customer service”](#) that can be used as a best practice.

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Graduate/Professional Education (*work in progress*)

- Bolster efforts to [create community](#) within schools, departments, in interdisciplinary and university-wide inter-school community-building.
- Provide [virtual options for graduate courses](#).
- Encourage faculty to [record lectures, discussions, activities](#), and class meetings, when appropriate.
- Facilitate students' ability to [take courses for credit from different schools and programs at GW](#).
- Consider [expanding combined degree programs](#) (BA/MA), cross disciplinary certificate programs (MA + Certificate), and dual degree programs (MA + MA) when appropriate.

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Graduate/Professional Education (*work in progress*)

- Develop a [consistent and well-resourced plan for IT, AT, and LAI](#), in consultation with faculty, recognizing the crucial role of technology and technology training in the modern university.
- Develop and invest in strategies to [ensure the university's physical and online spaces are accessible to students, faculty, and staff](#).
- Identify whether the [net impact of the pandemic has improved diversity, equity and inclusion](#), by making course work more flexible, or has detrimentally affected DEI by creating a system in which students are limited by their resources in making the most of an online experience.
- In the transition period of the next two years, GW should [clearly explain its timeline for decision making, the constraints it faces](#), and the work it is doing to ensure a successful reopening.

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Faculty Academic Innovations (*work in progress*)

- Technology
 - [Enhance IT support services](#) for more timely responses
 - Consider use of federal work study students to assist with tech support
 - Create interactive classrooms
 - Continue Zoom and Webex accounts
 - Continue and enhance online exam/proctoring programs and services
 - [Invest in IT hardware/software for faculty \(FWI continuation\)](#)
 - [Provide faculty with technology and pedagogical training](#)
- [Provide Technology and Training To Enable Hybrid/HyFlex Classes](#) to provide and promote flexibility
- Smaller class sizes with virtual courses to allow for [student support and community](#)
- [Seek input](#) from professors to determine if courses are more suitable for in person versus online

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Faculty Academic Innovations (work in progress)

- [Design and teach online courses leveraging the strength](#) of the modality
- Encourage students to have cameras on during online synchronous classes when appropriate to strengthen the classroom community
- [Investigate expanding options \(pass/fail or incomplete\)](#) based on individual student circumstances (consistent with academic program requirements)
- Encourage the use of [flipped classrooms \(when pedagogically appropriate\)](#)
- Improve faculty/researcher support from the research PODs
- Provide a [flex work schedule for faculty](#)
- [Provide online or in person teaching options](#)
- Continue [faculty and committee meetings virtually](#)
- Consider teaching load adjustments ([change load from 3-2 to 2-2](#)) which is the current norm for research universities) and understanding that faculty cannot continue to work at the levels that COVID has demanded.

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Faculty Academic Innovations (work in progress)

- 1. [Extend Tenure Clock](#)
 - 1 year pause may be insufficient, process should be cognizant of unconscious penalization and account for caregiving and service in response to racial unrest.
- 2. [Reassess Faculty Evaluation Process](#)
 - Reduce numbers of letters needed for promotion and develop a less arduous process of formative goal setting
 - Prioritize annual reviews for junior faculty and focus on what they need
 - Develop a faculty-centered approach
 - Assess quality and impact of published research alongside service commitments and teaching
 - Register invisible service
 - Compensate fairly and equitably and Consider a pay-workload adjustment to account for some of the increased workload
- 3. [Recognize and acknowledge the impact of pandemic on faculty](#) and the massive increase in workload it took to teach remotely and pivot formats
- 4. [Acknowledge that research agendas and careers deferred](#) (most affected were women, parents, early career, BIPOC faculty)
- 5. Faculty reported range of job roles: research, fundraising, teaching, administrative, editorial, clinical duties). Pandemic had greatest effect on research (working hours on research down 24%; although 21% of researchers reported spending more time and 9% reported no change)

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Staff/Academic Support (work in progress)

- Provide [institutional policies](#) that are more open to remote working. Develop tools that secure accountability while relying on trust that teleworkers are equal partners in the university mission.
- Provide necessary [teleworking equipment and software](#) to perform the job well. [Invest in modern tools](#) to expedite, automate and make approval workflow processes more efficient and people-friendly. Develop a robust orientation model that includes digital literacy and administrative technology training for staff.
- Encourage a [culture of hybridization](#) that requires equal access and inclusion no matter if one works F2F or remotely. Develop hybrid campus systems for all aspects of campus life: events, advising, meetings, study abroad, etc.
- [Cross-train IT and Academic Support staff](#) to provide a higher level of support to environments with flexible learning spaces and active learning.

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Staff/Academic Support (work in progress)

- Improve the [help desk solution](#) to make it more efficient and people-friendly. Put [staff training at the forefront](#) of the transformation to a hybrid campus. [Employ and train student workers](#) to assist IT staff with immediate technical support for both classroom and hybrid/HyFlex classes.
- [Further develop GW Online Learning Standards](#) that are common to all schools to ensure the quality and rigor of online learning.
- Invest in instructional and multimedia staff to support faculty in transitioning course content to on-demand, hybrid experience. ([Educause, Top IT Issues, 2021](#)). [Hire and up-skill professionals](#) (instructional designers, instructional technologists, multimedia producers, animators, eLearning developers) to provide adequate academic support in line with the growing demand of teaching and learning needs. [Offer faculty certification](#) and/or on-boarding to develop and teach online at GW and prior to using GW academic tools. Offer online courses to be reviewed by a central office for alignment with GW online learning standards and policies. Invest in digital literacy programs to up-skill current staff on standards of teaching and learning.

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