

Details of the Survey

The survey consisted of 25 questions. All questions were optional. The survey was anonymous and was distributed via email distribution list to all classified staff and APSOU faculty. The survey remained open from 07/14/2020 to 07/23/2020.

133 classified staff completed the survey

131 faculty completed the survey

3 respondents identified their status as “other,” neither classified staff nor faculty. Since they were such a small group and were beyond the intended scope of the survey, their responses have not been included in this report. Their responses remain in the raw data.

We redacted some of the open-ended comments in the report and in the raw data that included details that risked identifying the respondent. The redacted versions of those comments appear in the PDF report with black bars covering the identifying comments. The raw data set does not include the redacted text because we had no other way to redact it in Excel. We redacted no more than four (4) comments.

Summary of the Results

The majority of both groups frequently or sometimes have in-person interactions with students and colleagues on the Ashland campus. (Q2.2)

Approximately half of respondents identified that they are high-risk for COVID-19 according to the CDC guidelines. (Q2.5) Approximately half of respondents identified that they live with somebody or care for somebody who is high-risk for COVID-19 according to the CDC guidelines. (Q2.6)

32% of classified staff and 80% of faculty are uncomfortable or extremely uncomfortable returning to campus in the Fall. (Q3.1)

Both groups are concerned about public health regulations being followed in the Fall and whether SOU will have adequate plans in place to manage the risks. Both groups are nervous about having in-person interactions with others on-campus. People who are high-risk for COVID-19 or who live with someone who is high-risk for COVID-19 are especially concerned about their risk of exposure. (Q3.3 and Q3.4) Many respondents indicated in their comments that they would not feel comfortable returning to work until a vaccine is widely available. (Q3.2 and Q5.5)

Faculty were less likely than classified staff to agree with the statement that they understand how SOU is planning to protect everyone in the Fall. (Q3.6) Similarly, faculty were less likely than classified staff to agree with the statement that SOU has communicated clearly about changes to operations due to COVID-19. (Q4.1)

Both groups cited “seeing other people” and “better collaboration with colleagues” as their top reasons for wanting to return to on-campus work. (Q3.7)

Neither faculty nor classified staff feel adequately involved in the reopening decision making process. Only 16% of classified staff and 12% of faculty agreed with the statement that “Employees like me have been sufficiently involved in the reopening decision making process.” (Q4.2)

Classified staff and faculty do not fully trust SOU to prioritize safety over financial incentives. Faculty indicated more outright mistrust, whereas classified staff were more ambivalent. (Q4.3)

Faculty were much more likely than classified staff to indicate that they do not feel comfortable traveling. (Q5.1) Both groups were comfortable with the idea of requiring a mandatory quarantine period after traveling for all groups. (Q5.2)

Both groups indicated an overwhelming preference to continue to work remotely. (Q5.3)

Faculty were less likely than classified staff to indicate that they feel comfortable with changes to their roles on campus due to COVID-19 (Q5.4), and that they feel like they have the resources they need to get back to work quickly and safely. (Q5.5)

Classified staff were much more likely than faculty to indicate that they understand what is expected of them to maintain a healthy and safe environment at work. (Q5.7)

Faculty are concerned that although there are general governmental guidelines in place, there is not a system to enforce them. A common concern is the likelihood that the students will maintain safety protocols. Specifically, faculty mentioned appropriate mask wearing and social distancing when students are outside of the classroom.

The ability of faculty to perform well is impeded by uncertainty and fear. Having something more tangible to work toward (developing remote content) and having confidence that it is possible to engage campus safely (enforcement of protocols) are essential. Faculty expressed specific concerns about the administration taking government regulation and safety protocols seriously.

Notable Comments

There were several places in the survey for respondents to share their open-ended comments with us. We have selected a few notable comments from various survey questions that we feel represent the overall mood of the classified staff and the faculty. The full report contains all the comments.

Classified Staff

“I need some sort of reassurance, backed by seeing action, showing me that the steps to improve safety are being DONE and not merely talked about. In other words, there is a trust issue to address.”

“I have a husband who is high risk and a newborn baby. Other people who don't follow the rules make me nervous. Even though my job sometimes requires other people 90% of what I do could be done from home, which is preferred.”

“We need safety to be our first priority. I worry that more employees than absolutely necessary will return to working in-person. These are unprecedented times and need to be treated as such. There isn't a need to rush back to anything remotely close to normal, especially when remote work can be done well and efficiently. Many other universities are not returning to in-person status, and I am not entirely sure why SOU has made the decision to do so, considering that the risks around Covid19 are not being well managed by public officials. The risks of death and serious harm greatly outweigh the benefits of students getting to attend in-person classes. Perhaps SOU is in a dire financial circumstance, but ideally we would be motivated by keeping individuals safe rather than by economic need. It is unfortunate that as a nation we do not have enough support from the government to survive these times of economic hardship. I worry that the mass-migration of students back to Jackson County is inherently risky for everyone in the county, not just the SOU community. I'm grateful that our Union leaders want to hear our thoughts and for the work you have all done and continue to do.”

“I am worried that people will eventually become complacent and less careful about limiting their exposure and how much they expose others. I am especially concerned about how the students will behave. As a demographic, people in their age group do not seem very concerned about COVID: catching it or spreading it. I am worried that we will open up only to have to close again anyway after many people become ill, and some of them may die.”

“We have proven that we can do our work efficiently at home, so why don't they leave us here. I cannot control my coworkers actions, but I certainly can control mine. We work close together and have frequent meetings. There is SO much that is unknown about this virus and it's longterm effects on the body!. I do not want to be a statistic... LET ME STAY HOME AND BE SAFE! My anxiety level is increasing more and more each day as the date of our on-campus work gets nearer.”

“For those of us with school-age children, the local schools are currently planning a 2 day per week schedule. The remaining days will be online, which means in addition to maintaining our workload at SOU, we have additional duties at home PLUS more exposure via students' school connections PLUS the potential exposure from students attending oncampus SOU courses.”

“I am already on campus 32-hours per week and can confirm that no one is wearing masks on a regular basis and are NOT practicing social distancing. I am uncomfortable.”

“Studies showing how infections were spread in a restaurant and a call center demonstrate the importance of air flow. In addition to requiring masks (properly worn, not below the nose) and sanitizing, we need to improve air

exhaust systems so that our HVAC is not spreading the disease. This is especially critical in areas where people are spending a lot of time in close proximity. Another concern is the recent discovery that flushing toilets sprays germs into the air. Air flow in restrooms is pretty stagnant. It's hard to image how SOU can address these issues before fall, especially given economic challenges.”

“Enforcement of CDC guidelines, especially among students, will require substantial investment from SOU. I don't see a budget for this. I see suggestions and naive hope that people will follow guidelines.”

“They can say 'do this' and 'do that'.. but they cannot enforce it! Why should I be at risk if my coworkers do not follow protocol?”

“No one has actually said anything about what the expectations are, what changes there are going to be. Nada.”

“We've had little to no communication in our department about what is expected, and zero plans for how to return.”

“Please wait until the virus is under control. It feels insane to me that we have been so focused on getting back to campus. Yes, we all miss and value human interaction. Yes, the school (us) will suffer economically. Our health and safety are more important.”

“When the time is right and if things ever get back to normal, allowing a transition where employees work part of the week from home and part of the week on campus-specific schedules to be worked out with their supervisors- could be extremely helpful and beneficial. I also think that we have proven that remote work is indeed possible and that it should become more of an option and not so difficult to do in the future. Allowing employees to work from home either all of the time or some of the time depending on campus needs should not have to be something that we have to fight HR about and jump through hoops. It should be as simple as the supervisor agreeing it is possible.”

“Allow those positions that require little to no on-campus presence to remain remote. Clearly outline expectations for students, staff and faculty with regard to PPE use, and consistently and fairly enforce those expectations with definable sanctions for violations. Be transparent in all aspects of this. Allow those who cannot wear the required PPE to work remotely if at all possible, or provide a dedicated, isolated space on campus for those people to work. Lids on toilets to prevent COVID fountains with every flush. To be fully plain and simple, I will fight tooth and nail to remain remote until there is a vaccine, including physician's records if needed.”

Faculty

“Teaching remotely would make me feel comfortable.”

“Under no circumstances should we be opening campus. It's surreal we are actually having this conversation. Look at what is happening around the US when places are reopening. Reopening campus would be insane. Please stop being insane. “

“Wearing masks and keeping a minimum of 6 feet apart is not conducive to the work done in my discipline. We can't share computers safely, not to mention the other spaces and equipment we use routinely. “

“I am concerned about the ethical and legal implications of choosing, unnecessarily, to return to face-to-face instruction under COVID and then infecting others. I am also concerned about the ethical implications of having others put themselves at risk, unnecessarily, for SOU to reopen campus (e.g., custodians, financial aid and admissions service staff, Student Life staff, residence hall staff, etc.). “

“I am concerned about the ability of faculty, staff, and students to maintain social distancing and proper use of PPE under face-to-face instruction. I also worry about the ethics of requiring custodial staff, faculty, students, and residence hall staff to constantly maintain "just-in-time" disinfection of all common areas.”

“There is simply no way to control that many people in one place (see: COVID parties at Alabama - don't think we're immune to this by any means). The public, of which students are members, have demonstrated that they are not equipped to deal with the stressors of a pandemic - cognitive psych research supports this. It will be impossible to account for all of these variables with in-person delivery. But, hey, gotta get those tuition dollars!”

“No university can address the issues. The government is in a shambles with no single voice leading the country during this health crisis. The COVID numbers are rising like crazy. Please make the smart decision NOW to say remote learning this fall and encourage all faculty and staff to start working on their courses. “

“I would not trust students (or anyone else) to clean thoroughly before and after they occupy a classroom space. Even if I disinfect my office, other people have access (janitor, chair, former chair, FMP, etc.) so I will never feel secure working in my space.”

“My close social and family networks have been following strict masking and social distancing practices since the middle of March. My interactions with people beyond my germ bubble have been limited to completing essential tasks and visiting in small groups in private outdoor spaces (with masks and social distancing.) While I realize I don't have full control, I feel comfortable with my risk of exposure to Covid-19. I worry that my risk of exposure will greatly increase the moment I step into my building to teach an in-person class. “

“For class lectures and discussions, I cannot imagine any scenario where I could feel safe delivering course content in a face-to-face setting in a way that would be better than using Zoom tools. I could put

on PPE and stand behind a plexiglass barrier, but I do not believe that I could teach more effectively in those conditions than using Zoom tools.”

“Please trust faculty to determine the best mode of course delivery. Mandating HR approval based on incomplete CDC guidelines is inhumane and reflects a lack of understanding of science and public health.”

“Do not force a return to false normalcy. Conditions do not warrant a return to in person classes. Such a direction is irresponsible and ignores the obvious evidence of virus transmission, exposure to exposed people from many places outside of the region, and the added stress of constant concern and vigilance on students, staff, and faculty. The belief that enrollment will be positively affected by returning to campus in the fall underestimates students' awareness of the health risks.”

"SOU should delay reopening campus until COVID no longer poses a significant risk to the campus community; all staff, faculty, and administrators should be allowed and encouraged to work remotely, whenever possible. SOU should offer all courses online or remote for the fall term and should not decide whether to reopen campus in the winter term until fall data is available to adequately evaluate the risk posed by COVID heading into the winter term.

“My workload has tripled. Teaching from home is MUCH harder than teaching in person. I have been working nearly full time while technically off contract, just in preparation for my summer online classes. Teaching face-to-face (and redesigning my courses to support social distancing) with the possibility of having to also run parallel courses online for each section sounds exhausting and I'm already exhausted. There is no version of this (online, face-to-face with restrictions or hybrid) that results in a reasonable workload at the moment. ”

"I don't know that SOU can do anything to address them, and that adds to the existential dread. I feel like we are held hostage: we need to take a risk on an enterprise that is likely to flounder against the threat that we will be in such bad shape financially that we will lose our jobs.”

“My children will be in school less than 5 days per week, I am not comfortable with childcare outside of the family. My mother, who is our main childcare provider, is in a high-risk category - I am concerned about exposing her with my exposure to students. Based on the decisions of other universities to teach primarily online, I feel like this decision is rushed.”

“I am still unsure about expectations and resources to support students who would choose not to come to campus but still sign up for in-person classes. I need confirmation that I can continue to hold my office hours via Zoom as my office is small and does not have a window.”

"We do not yet know enough about the spread of COVID-19 to understand what we would need to do as a campus to maintain a healthy and safe environment at work. Understanding that the virus is airborne and spread through aerosols is a relatively new understanding that is leading many workplaces to change air filtration systems, for example. I do not believe that in my capacity as a faculty member I can ""maintain a healthy and safe environment"" at work, as that would require expertise beyond my education and training.

“I am not on salary right now yet I am expect to correspond with every email from every person at SOU. I can't keep up with the back and forth.”

“Stop trying to recreate everything the way higher education has always been. Think of different instructional strategies not as stop-gap measures or "lesser-than" impediments to good learning but as potential assets for personalization and outreach to larger communities of learners. There was nothing perfect about the ways SOU delivered instruction before the pandemic, so the past cannot be looked to as the "ideal" or only way to create an energizing, inclusive, accessible instructional environment. The only way to move forward is to prioritize a collaborative environment that honors people's concerns and their ability to adapt constructively, that builds trust, and that emphasizes relationships over budgets.”

“I have students that are enrolled for fall but are not returning to campus because they care for parents and/or live in deeply affected areas. I am concerned about the overload of work in making those students feel like they belong in the classroom.”

“Please mention to Summer Chairs that though they might feel it is necessary for us to have long planning meetings throughout the summer, it is really not appropriate, as we are not being paid, and I would like to focus on professional development (now specifically geared towards teaching remote/hybrid) and curriculum planning for the Fall.”

“I would like to assure the administration that faculty have done a fantastic job this past Spring on the transition to remote instruction. Although there are aspects to remote instruction that are challenging to specific disciplines (e.g. the sciences), the general health and well-being in the SOU community is paramount to maintaining a vibrant and well-respected university for years to come. Therefore, it is important not to rush into reopening plans that require face-to-face instruction. We see what early opening has done around the country in states that weren't patient with their economic reopening plans, and now in most of those states, hospitals are overwhelmed with COVID cases that have resulted in needless deaths or incomplete recovery of health and well-being. I would respect an administration that focuses on the long-term health of this university rather than this misplaced "can-do" attitude that would compromise the stature of this institution.”

We have our priorities backwards - should be health and safety first, in-person instruction a distant second.”

“Where available, returning to campus should be a personal choice. For instance, I can teach remotely without a negative impact on enrollment. I view our current level of Covid precautions as temporary, but I also think reopening now is too early and unnecessary. “

“Quite simply, allow faculty to determine how they want to offer their courses. Require that -- for classes originally designated "in person" in the catalog, students be available during scheduled times. Provide tech equipment and access to soundproof (or semi-sound proof) computer lab spaces for students who can't work remotely from home. Give faculty the autonomy to teach as they see fit, and provide necessary support (as CATL did so well during spring term).”