REPORT *of the* POST-COVID
Academic Innovation
TASK FORCE

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON, DC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prior to March 2020, the university did not need to be explicitly concerned, all at once, with the physical and emotional well-being of all students, faculty and staff. Faculty did not need to consider that the physical and emotional health of every student, all at once, might make it a challenge for them to learn and succeed. And the university, faculty, staff and students did not need to consider transforming the fundamental modalities of instruction at a moment's notice. The COVID 19-pandemic made that a necessity, and the GW community rose to the challenge.

The pandemic has required higher education institutions to adapt and innovate more rapidly and comprehensively than any other event in modern history. Transforming from the long-time model of in-person classes and residential students to a virtual one necessitated a wide range of innovations and accommodations across the university.

To examine both the innovations that emerged as a result of these enormous challenges and how we can customize these innovations to advance GW's academic mission, Provost M. Brian Blake convened the Post-COVID Academic Innovation Task Force.

The faculty-led task force worked throughout the spring semester. It held town halls, surveyed the GW community, met with key constituencies and reviewed literature to assess the impact of the pandemic and remote learning on students, faculty and staff and to make recommendations for the future. It is very important to acknowledge that due to the very short timeline of this work, that it is critical that further community discussions be conducted prior to any major changes being implemented.

Chief among the findings is the importance of the in-person, Washington, D.C., experience for undergraduate, graduate and professional students alike. Students put high value on the university location, and having an in-person experience is key to fostering a sense of community.

That said, students, faculty and staff expressed a desire for continued flexibility when it comes to some elements of learning, teaching and working. While online learning overall received mixed to bad reviews, students felt

Key Findings

- **Importance of having an in-person experience in Washington, D.C.**

- **Desire for continued flexibility in learning, teaching and working**

- **Support for a continued "culture of empathy"**

- **Engaged university community eager to be consulted on the future of GW**

they benefited from recorded lectures and virtual office hours, for example. Staff cited benefits to teleworking and advocated for the university to allow for more flexible schedules going forward. Lecture recording is an example of an area where there exists tensions between constituencies. While students appreciate having the recorded lectures as a resource, faculty expressed concerns regarding intellectual property and potential detrimental impacts on student learning.

The university community also supports continuing the "culture of empathy" the university fostered during the pandemic. In the past, students have called their relationship with the university "transactional," but this year they often cited the empathy of their professors when it came to assignment deadlines and concerns for student well-being. Faculty and staff members also cited the need for continued compassion, recognition and respect.

Other themes that emerged and are addressed in the following pages include faculty research and evaluations, expanding summer academic offerings, diversity and inclusion, and accessibility.

Finally, one key finding of this effort is that community members from across GW were very active when engaging with the Task Force even in the midst of a pandemic. This suggests a highly engaged population that is eager to be consulted regarding the future of the university.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Formation of the
POST-COVID ACADEMIC INNOVATION TASK FORCE

Provost M. Brian Blake announced in December 2020 that the university would create a task force to examine the innovations that emerged during the period of virtual learning necessitated by the pandemic and the implications of these innovations for the future operations of the university.

At Provost Blake's request, schools and academic departments nominated GW community members who were named to the task force in January. Pamela Jeffries, dean of the School of Nursing, and Jason Zara, professor of biomedical engineering and associate chair for academic affairs for the School of Engineering and Applied Science Department of Biomedical Engineering, were named co-chairs of the task force after consultation with Faculty Senate leadership.

As envisioned, 75 percent of the membership was composed of faculty. The task force also included student and staff representation.

POST-COVID ACADEMIC INNOVATION TASK FORCE
Membership

Pamela Jeffries, Professor and Dean, School of Nursing, 2015-2021 **(co-chair)**

Jason Zara, Professor of Biomedical Engineering and Associate Chair for Academic Affairs for the Department of Biomedical Engineering, SEAS **(co-chair)**

Donald Braman, Associate Professor of Law, GW Law

Cynthia Dowd, Professor of Chemistry, CCAS

Erica Gralla, Associate Professor of Engineering Management and Systems Engineering, SEAS

Mike Guy, Graduate Student, Corcoran School, and Studio Technician, The Textile Museum

Tamara Henry, Teaching Associate Professor and Practicum Director of Prevention and Community Health, GWSPH

Lionel C. Howard, Associate Professor of Educational Research, GSEHD

Srinikhila Karri, Undergraduate Student, Seven-Year B.A./M.D. Program

Russell Korte, Associate Professor of Human and Organizational Learning, GSEHD

Miro Liwosz, Assistant Dean, Online Learning and Instructional Technology, SON

Guy Lotrecchiano, Associate Professor of Clinical Research and Leadership and of Pediatrics, SMHS, and Associate Dean, Innovative and Collaborative Pedagogy, LAI

Michael Moore, Director of International Economic Policy Program and Professor of Economics, ESIA

Billy Mullins, Clinical Assistant Professor, SON

Liesl Riddle, Associate Dean for Graduate Programs and Associate Professor of International Business and International Affairs, GWSB

Victoria Shanmugam, Director of the Division of Rheumatology and Professor of Medicine, SMHS

Sarah Wagner, Associate Professor of Anthropology, CCAS

Gayle Wald, Professor of American Studies, CCAS

John Warren, Director and Associate Professor, MPS in Publishing, CPS

Charge to the
POST-COVID ACADEMIC INNOVATION TASK FORCE

Provost Blake charged the task force with considering and recommending new and innovative ways of fulfilling GW's academic mission. The task force was asked to investigate experiences and lessons learned both within GW and the broader higher education community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on that investigation, it was tasked with developing data-driven recommendations outlining potential innovations that can fulfill GW's academic mission.

Methodology of the
POST-COVID ACADEMIC INNOVATION TASK FORCE

The task force held regular meetings throughout the spring semester. The scope of its work included examining both GW's experience during the pandemic as well as that of other higher education institutions. The task force solicited input from university leadership and key constituencies to gather information about the ways the pandemic has affected our university.

It reviewed previous academic innovation work from the GW community, particularly recommendations from the Strategic Plan's High-Quality Undergraduate Education Committee and the Distinguished and Distinctive Graduate Education Committee. The task force also examined the results of surveys sent to university community members during the pandemic.

Members studied emerging literature on the post-pandemic higher education landscape and focused on topics such as course delivery, short-term academic experiences like certificate programs, the university's academic calendar and the research enterprise.

The task force solicited information from community members on its website and via an online survey; 176 community members responded through the website form, and 732 responded to the survey.

It also held a focus group with deans to gather information on the impact of the pandemic on academics and to home in on challenges and opportunities. Leadership participated from the Elliott School of International Affairs, School of Engineering and Applied Science, Milken Institute School of Public Health, School of Business, School of Medicine and Health Sciences, GW Law, School of Nursing, Graduate School of Education and Human Development, College of Professional Studies, and Libraries and Academic Innovation. The task force also solicited input on draft recommendations from Faculty Senate committees.

To inform the university community of its work, the task force provided regular updates on its progress through its website and infomails as well as monthly updates to the Faculty Senate Educational Policy and Technology Committee, a town hall open to all faculty members on May 5, which 99 faculty members attended, and a report to the Faculty Senate on May 7.

Methodology of the
TASK FORCE WORKING GROUPS

In February, the task force decided to form four working groups to solicit input from and focus on key constituencies of faculty, undergraduate students, graduate and professional students, and staff and academic support personnel. (See Appendix A for the lists of working group members.) The working groups met over the remainder of the semester to learn more about the gaps, concerns, innovations and opportunities the constituencies have experienced during the pandemic. Their work, detailed below, included examining existing reports, data, surveys and external resources; seeking new sources of information to inform their work; and reviewing data in order to formulate the recommendations requested in the charge.

FACULTY WORKING GROUP

The faculty working group held two information gathering sessions with approximately 30 faculty in attendance for both sessions. The faculty working group also met with Faculty Senate Educational Policy and Technology Committee members. In addition, the faculty working group obtained information from the 2020 faculty survey and the faculty survey conducted by the task force (196 faculty responded), and it conducted a literature search for publications on academic initiatives based on the COVID pandemic's impact on faculty.
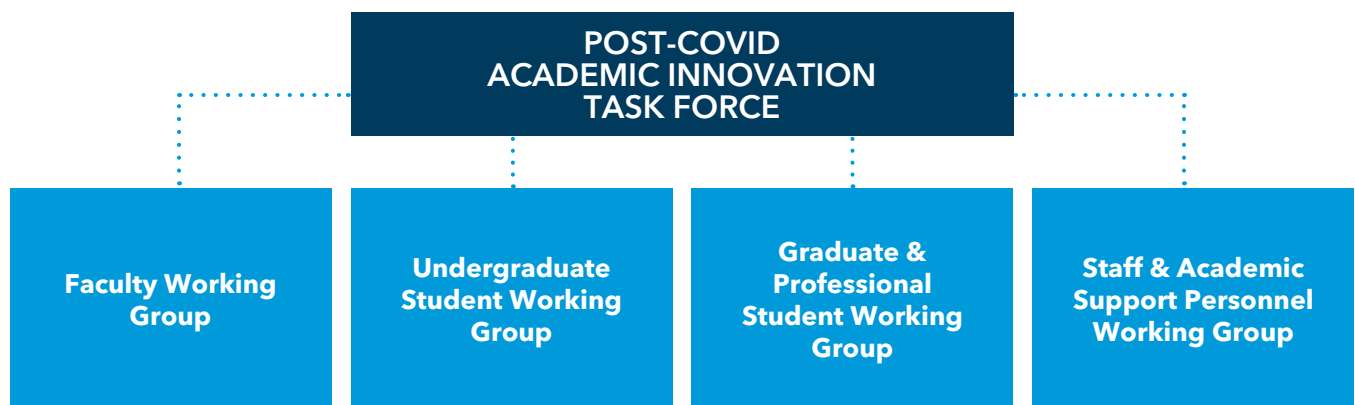
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT WORKING GROUP

The working group met with the CCAS advising team, the CCAS Undergraduate Dean's Advisory Council, CCAS Undergraduate Dean's Advisory Council and the director of Disability Support Services. It also held focus groups that included students from schools with undergraduate enrollment. In addition, data was culled from the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment as well as the task force survey.

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT WORKING GROUP

The working group engaged graduate and professional students, staff and faculty through six town halls and focus groups, a campus-wide survey (which included 155 responses from graduate and professional students) and one-on-one meetings. Responses from the survey and town halls were supplemented by reviews of literature and additional surveys conducted at GW.

STAFF AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT PERSONNEL WORKING GROUP

The working group engaged academic support staff through an online survey, which received 212 responses, and a town hall with more than 70 participants in which task force members conducted break-out sessions. The town hall was designed to elaborate further on written responses collected during the survey. Data from the survey was analyzed through frequency analysis of keywords and coding.

POST-COVID ACADEMIC INNOVATION TASK FORCE

| Faculty Working Group | Undergraduate Student Working Group | Graduate & Professional Student Working Group | Staff & Academic Support Personnel Working Group |

Themes and Recommendations from the
WORKING GROUP ON FACULTY

Theme 1: Teaching

SUMMARY/DESCRIPTION

"Since the start of 2020, 50 percent of faculty reported a decrease in their enjoyment of teaching, and 70% stated an increase in workload. Nearly 70% of faculty reported thoughts of leaving academia for a different career, changing jobs within academia, or retiring," according to the Chronicle of Higher Education.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Faculty members reported issues with student engagement teaching remotely, specifically, that it was difficult to get to know students and keep them engaged in class (both with the instructor and with each other). It was also challenging to assist students who were struggling academically and emotionally.

GW faculty members raised issues with technology, including lost connections and lack of IT support, and the need for a unified policy and process for taking exams and using webcams during lectures to deter cheating. The working group found many faculty members were concerned about offering hybrid/HyFlex courses given their limited training, equipment and IT resources and the inherent difficulty of maintaining quality while simultaneously instructing in class and online students.

Faculty members also expressed that rigidity in policies, such as deadlines for grade submissions and dropping and adding classes, created obstacles to providing empathy and support. Teaching demand overwhelmed some faculty, especially adjunct and part-time faculty whose extra time preparing for virtual learning was not compensated.

Faculty members noted some benefits to online learning, including students appreciating having lectures to refer back to and to use if they were unable to make it to class, and virtual office hours seeming to work well because some students felt more comfortable in a virtual office hours environment. WebEx/Zoom platforms made online learning more flexible and reliable, while features such as breakout rooms, polling and chat boxes improved the online learning experience.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

The Chronicle of Higher Education, "Burned Out and Overburdened: How to Support the Faculty"

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In cases where the academic unit identifies that remote options are appropriate, the university should invest in interactive classrooms and equipment to facilitate hybrid/HyFlex courses and provide training in advance so faculty are prepared before the fall semester starts. The university should also provide sufficient IT support.

- The university should provide more flexibility, giving faculty members the ability to make decisions about teaching and learning at the department level and for a relaxation of restrictive policies and deadlines for students and faculty, such as deadlines for grade submission, dropping and adding classes and withdrawing from classes. Faculty should be allowed to choose between teaching in-person or online depending on which modality best suits the academic mission.

Theme 2: Research

SUMMARY/DESCRIPTION

The pandemic has adversely affected faculty members' ability to conduct research.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Over half of faculty survey respondents (57%) reported they had lost some of their work because of institutional shutdown (there were differences reported between researchers with wet and dry laboratories). They also reported that their research agendas and careers were deferred (hardest on women, parents, early career, BIPOC).

The pandemic had the greatest effect on research (working hours on research down 24%, although 21% of researchers reported spending more time and 9% reported no change). In this study, slightly over half (55%) reported a decline in hours worked per week. Faculty reported having to fulfill a range of job roles, including research, fundraising, teaching, administrative, editorial

and clinical duties. Early career researchers with short-term contracts/pre-tenure worry about future careers.

Faculty experienced challenges of collaborating on research with virtual media, and faculty members often shifted their focus and activities. Early career researchers often took advantage of e-learning to develop skills and knowledge. Many researchers shifted from lab work to data analysis, manuscript and proposal writing and changed their focus from their regular topics to studying COVID-19.

LITERATURE

Genome Biology, "Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on life scientists," (largely based on survey across Europe and U.S., April 2020).

Nature Human Behavior, "Unequal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on scientists"

PLoS Biol, "Rebuild the Academy: Supporting academic mothers during COVID-19 and beyond"

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Further develop mentoring relations, especially for researchers who are early career, women and people of color.

- Re-examine tenure timelines; remove or extend expiration of start-up funds; increase flexibility in service expectations, course loads and scheduling; strengthen supporting infrastructure for research (OVPR, IRB, etc.).

- The university must expand outreach to broader communities (e.g., scientific societies, publishers, funding agencies) to help mitigate negative effects of the pandemic on research productivity, careers, as well as women and minority researchers.

Theme 3: Service Requirements and Work-Life Balance

SUMMARY/DESCRIPTION

Faculty members reported increased workloads during the pandemic and difficulty balancing work and personal lives.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Faculty members reported emotional overload due to COVID-related illnesses and death. Faculty also said they were overwhelmed by the amount of emails from students who required additional advising due to increased needs for learning support and work-life imbalances.

Faculty members thought the university should provide clarity on service requirements and consider halting or reducing external service workload requirements due to increased workloads within the university or challenges to balancing work-life responsibilities due to the impacts of COVID.

Faculty members reported that the number of meetings has increased significantly during COVID and recommended evaluating existing committees to determine their relevance and disbanding them as appropriate. Some faculty reported that online meetings seemed more efficient and that working remotely removed commuting time and resulted in more time for other projects.

In terms of shared governance, faculty members wanted to ensure that they have the opportunity to participate in committees and in shared decisions within their school and the university as a whole.

While WebEx provided the ability to meet with people from other areas, some faculty lamented the inability to walk into a colleague's office impromptu and that everything had to be scheduled.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue with virtual office hours.

- Re-evaluate the faculty external service requirement.

- Provide in-person and online options for attending meetings, committee activities and large events.

- Evaluate the relevance of current committees and meetings, streamline or disband as appropriate.

- Implement and/or enhance a shared governance model.

- Provide a flexible schedule for faculty to enable greater time efficiencies and increase productivity.

- Allow flexibility for teaching online or in-person classes. Some courses are best taught in one modality or the other. This flexibility can increase faculty productivity and wellness by freeing up time that would otherwise be spent commuting.

- Keep faculty meetings virtual. Many faculty members noted that school and department level meetings were better attended in the online environment—and many observed that participation in these online meetings was greater.
- Conduct check-ins to enhance faculty support. During the pandemic, the university checked in with students and staff with surveys, etc. Faculty would also like to see school and university administration doing the same for faculty.

Theme 4: Career Development

SUMMARY/DESCRIPTION

There is a major risk of faculty attrition in the next two to five years due to the impact and repercussions of the pandemic. Based on a national survey conducted by the Chronicle of Higher Education, 35% of faculty are considering a change of career, 31% are considering a change in role, and 38% are considering retiring.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

To remain nimble and responsive in the pandemic and post-pandemic era, GW needs to consider a number of issues focused on faculty development and retention, and also address concerns related to tenure time clocks, which even despite an institutional pause could result in the unconscious penalization of women and faculty of Black, Asian and Hispanic descent.

Our most valuable and precious asset is our people, and we need to nurture them back to health.

The pandemic and post-pandemic era will likely last two to five years, and the university's response needs to recognize that there is no "one and done" solution. The institution should be mindful about setting in place the correct scaffolding that will allow us to rebuild better, but the process will need to be iterative and to evolve. We will need to adapt systems and solutions to the new realities as time goes by.

The trajectory of the pandemic, and the post-pandemic period will not be linear, and the GW community is made up of hundreds of individuals each processing grief and recovery at different rates.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

The Chronicle of Higher Education, "Burned Out and Overburdened: How to Support the Faculty"

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Extend the tenure clock. A one-year pause may be insufficient. The university should also exercise caution regarding unconscious penalization and account for caregiving and service in response to racial unrest.
- Reassess the faculty evaluation process. The university should reduce the numbers of letters needed for promotion and develop a less arduous process of formative goal setting. Instead, GW should develop a faculty-centered approach that assesses the quality and impact of published research alongside service commitments and teaching. The university should register invisible service since equity of compensation is important and consider a pay-workload adjustment to account for some of the increased workload.
- Provide several small institutional grants focused on "recovery of operations/research." The university should also waive letters of recommendation for small institutional grants and ensure diversity in the review committees and a clear charge to ensure grants serve purpose.
- Study the pandemic's influence. Consider forming a research group to scientifically study the impact of the pandemic and the aftermath. Use this data to inform decisions in the post-pandemic era.
- Address faculty who feel disregarded. The university should use clear and consistent communication to publicly acknowledge faculty and remember that empathy and humility go a long way.
- Improve institutional resilience. GW needs to develop a fiscal plan to ensure there are sufficient financial reserves. Leaders should be cross trained operationally, and GW should invest in leadership training and succession planning throughout the institution. We should invest in our people and develop them into leadership roles.

Themes and Recommendations
FROM THE WORKING GROUP ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Theme 1: Value of the residential experience

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

Undergraduate students overwhelmingly value the residential experience and value face-to-face learning opportunities.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Evidence: Discussions with stakeholders; direct input to the task force website; qualitative data from four undergraduate town halls.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

The New York Times, "What We're Learning about Online Learning"

RECOMMENDATION

As every recent GW Strategic Plan has found, the university's location in Washington, D.C., is one of its strongest assets and is central to its mission.

Theme 2: Online learning receives mixed-to-negative reviews

SUMMARY

Students appreciate some aspects of online learning, but a majority of students voice moderate to strong dissatisfaction with the online platform as the sole platform for learning, citing concerns about engagement, retention and fatigue.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Evidence: Discussions with stakeholders; quantitative data from university surveys of undergraduates; input to the task force website; and qualitative data from four undergraduate town halls.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

The Chronicle of Higher Education, "A Year of Remote Teaching: the Good, the Bad and the Next Steps"

The Chronicle of Higher Education, "It's Time to Rethink Higher Education"

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The committee found strong undergraduate support for making recordings of lectures available. We heard frequently from students that recorded lectures (usually from Zoom) were helpful even if they attended class, to review before exams. Some said they can pay more attention in class if not taking notes, knowing that the lecture is recorded. And especially if they have a childcare issue, a work/travel issue or are sick, recordings are useful.

- Recording lectures is NOT easy, but they can be a benefit to students. The committee therefore recommends that faculty **discuss and weigh in on** student desires for recordings of lectures even when GW moves to in-person learning.

Strategies

- Faculty will need to consider questions of intellectual property.

- Faculty may want to collect data on whether the availability of recordings has a positive impact on learning.

Resources

- We will need to invest in ways to safeguard the intellectual property of faculty.

- If embraced, making lecture recordings available will require significant university commitment to upgrading technology in classrooms. Zoom recordings are relatively straightforward, but once we move to on-campus instruction, we will be relying on A/V tools in our classrooms.

Theme 3: Students want to preserve the "culture of empathy" that emerged during the pandemic.

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

Students praised their professors for their empathy during the pandemic. Students specifically cited their professors' flexibility with assignment deadlines, understanding of demands on student time, and overt concern for the physical and mental health of students.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Evidence: Discussions with stakeholders; direct input to the task force website; and qualitative data from four undergraduate town halls.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

The Chronicle of Higher Education, "Teaching"

The Chronicle of Higher Education, "Seven Practices for Building Community and Student Belonging Virtually"

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategies

- This finding falls in line with GW's "Culture Initiative." While that initiative largely focused on corporate culture and issued what many faculty, students and staff found to be corporate platitudes, we find qualitative evidence that faculty empathy plays a role in students' satisfaction with college. Our findings are in line with other qualitative and quantitative data dating to before the pandemic that shows that students often think of GW as a **transactional** institution.

A caveat: Faculty were "front-line workers" in dealing with students during the pandemic. The "culture of empathy" that students value, however, is not solely the responsibility of faculty but of the university as a whole.

- We therefore recommend that GW revisit discussions about university culture to reflect **the input of students**, who value institutional appreciation of their unique challenges, especially as college tuition rates force them to juggle jobs, internships, classes, and extracurriculars.

Resources

We do not suggest spending more money on outside consultants. We suggest bringing students and faculty together to develop further ideas for developing a culture of empathy and respect. This would replace or supersede the previous "Culture Initiative."

Theme 4: Many student services can be effectively delivered via online platforms.

SUMMARY

Students appreciate opportunities to meet with faculty and TAs virtually. They also appreciate meeting with advisers and other student support services (e.g., financial aid and college-level advising) virtually. Students cited **flexibility** and **accessibility** as major advantages of the online platform.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Evidence: Discussions with stakeholders; quantitative data from university surveys of undergraduates; input to the task force website; and qualitative data from four undergraduate town halls.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

The Chronicle of Higher Education, "Teaching"

The Chronicle of Higher Education, "A Year of Remote Teaching: the Good, the Bad and the Next Steps"

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Faculty should be strongly encouraged to offer some online office hours via Zoom or other platforms.

- Other offices that serve undergraduates should provide opportunities for online meetings or consultations; Gelman Library services (which include chat, online scheduling opportunities, etc.) could be a model.

- GW should explore possibilities for the delivery of undergraduate health care via telehealth platforms. This could include non-emergency student health visits and counseling services. Students sometimes use Student Health to obtain medical "proof" of an illness to avoid penalties for missing a class.

Strategies

More study should go into generating a series of priorities: Which services could expand to online platforms? Student input is crucial to this process.

Students in one town hall cited the excellence of the university's COVID testing program (ease of online sign-up, efficiency of process) and offered it as an example for ALL university services. What went into the planning around COVID testing and could be the model of service for other student-facing services, including financial aid.

Resources

The university will need to ensure that faculty and staff have access to secure technology to support virtual meetings.

Theme 5: Even if students have mixed opinions about the efficacy of online learning, they place high value on the flexibility of virtual classes and would value opportunities for such classes/ courses in the future.

SUMMARY

Students primarily valued online platforms as a source of flexibility, especially in **scheduling**. For example, in the virtual campus, students don't have to sprint from Mount Vernon to Foggy Bottom for a chemistry class. With the return of students to campus, students will encounter conflicts between work, internships, and community service and class scheduling. This is an ongoing issue for students that could be partially addressed through more online options and/or creative approaches to university scheduling.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Evidence: Discussions with stakeholders; quantitative data from university surveys of undergraduates; input to the task force website; and qualitative data from four undergraduate town halls.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

The Chronicle of Higher Education, "Teaching"

The Chronicle of Higher Education, "It's Time to Rethink Higher Education"

The Chronicle of Higher Education, "Faculty Collaboration and Technology in the Liberal Arts"

RECOMMENDATIONS

- University units and departments should assess whether there is value in making part of their curricula available to students on virtual platforms during the fall and spring semesters. (There are already robust virtual learning opportunities in the summer.) This would be done on a case-by-case basis, since online learning is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. Some examples:
    - » 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. This idea was floated in June 2020 by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, which projected a conservative estimate of an increased annual revenue of $10 million. A summer GW program would offer curricular and co-curricular opportunities not normally available during term time, especially if undergraduates are taking only one class at a time.

Strategies

- Based on what we have learned during the pandemic, deans and faculty should explore possibilities for the integration of virtual learning into the regular curriculum. There may be benefits for faculty in exploring online course delivery.
- At the same time, the faculty and provost should explore the implementation of expanded academic offerings (possibly including a required summer term at GW). A required summer term would include classes that take advantage of opportunities in and around D.C. Students and faculty should be engaged in this discussion, since there is likely to be resistance to a mandate that does not have significant community buy-in.

Resources

The university could encourage schools and departments to offer more virtual learning opportunities with small grants or other incentives. IT infrastructure and support are crucial to any initiative that increases online learning opportunities.

Themes and Recommendations from the
WORKING GROUP ON GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

Graduate and professional students—as well as the faculty and staff who support these students and their academic and professional pursuits—are a diverse constituency at the George Washington University, studying and working in business, education, engineering, the humanities, medicine, the natural and social sciences, nursing, law, a wide range of professional specialties and many other fields.

Three unifying ideas emerged. The first was community. GW must recognize that graduate and professional students attend GW because of its in-person, Washington, D.C. experience. Students want community and that needs to be the central building block for the university's academic and strategic plans. The second idea was flexibility. Many expressed a desire for a more integrated and flexible learning environment across departments, schools and programs.

Third, was modernization and services. GW reduced student services, advising staff, IT support staff and other technology services precisely when these services were needed most. The university, and its graduate and professional students, will benefit from prioritizing, modernizing and expanding GW's commitment to modern technology and robust student services.

The findings in this report are tentative. The 155 responses from approximately 14,000 graduate students is a low response rate (about 1%), and the response rate from faculty specific to graduate education was even more limited. In addition, we are concerned about the possibility of selection bias influencing the results; students experiencing online fatigue may be less likely to attend online fora or take online surveys than students who enjoy online experiences.

Additionally, while beyond the charge of the working group, there are concerns that attitudes and experiences during the pandemic may not accurately predict students' attitudes or the quality of students' experiences post-pandemic, and that robust data to evaluate issues such as student learning, retention, and post-graduate outcomes is not yet available. The working group would also have benefited from additional time to identify further university stakeholders and consult with them on potential innovations.

Theme 1: Community

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

Recognize and support community-building among graduate and professional students at GW.

Graduate and professional students are the heart of community building at GW. They are both the beneficiaries of university community-building programs and also perhaps the most important agents in generating feelings of community among undergraduate students and faculty.

GW's physical space does not have a traditional campus, yet its location provides a competitive advantage by providing a Washington, D.C. experience. The university's physical location provides opportunities for graduate and professional students in a wide range of fields, making the brick-and-mortar GW experience important for recruitment and especially retention. Online learning due to COVID-19 restrictions has exacerbated the challenges of community-building, networking and interactions critical to the graduate school experience. Graduate research and mentoring are more difficult because of the lack of informal, physical interactions that are critical to community, learning and discovery. In-person events are often critical to gaining professional experience in many subject areas, such as business. These are difficult to replicate online, especially given current staffing levels.

Beyond developing a community for graduate students, the working group concurs with the findings of the GW Strategic Planning Final Committee Report: Distinguished and Distinctive Graduate Education, which found that the graduate student population needs to be recognized as one of the most important resources for accomplishing the educational and research missions of the university.

Graduate students serve as teaching assistants and are therefore the primary sources of contact for thousands of undergraduate students each year. They also contribute vital research support in the humanities, social and natural sciences and other fields, helping faculty successfully win grants and complete research. Their in-person connections make them our front-line workers in education and research. Training doctoral students in small groups and individualized in-person classes is

necessary because by teaching them in this way, we are helping them realize their own aspirations to become faculty at other universities. Ensuring that resources are provided to support talented, capable graduate students is necessary for community building, today and in the future.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Through surveys, town halls, other meetings and working group discussions, we identified the following concerns:

- All stakeholders appreciate the importance of interactions in physical spaces, both formal and informal.

- Online interactions only partially filled this gap; graduate and professional students and faculty do not find these to be a substitute for in-person interactions. Online interactions nevertheless play a role for graduation and professional students who work full time or join GW's programs from distant locations.

- Deans, faculty and staff stressed the impact that layoffs have had on their staff, reducing the resources necessary for enabling and developing graduate communities.

- Challenges in building community in virtual spaces included communicating and engaging in virtual sessions, in gaining access, engaging in research during the pandemic and Zoom fatigue.

- Graduate and professional students suggested thinking about innovative ways to connect students if GW continues to have a substantial online footprint and appreciate some opportunities for engagement that opened during the pandemic, such flexible arrangements and remote work, reductions in commutes and so on.

Evidence:

As stated in the [GW Strategic Planning Final Committee Report: Distinguished and Distinctive Graduate Education](#), GW "lacks strategic focus in fostering excellence in graduate education, promoting cross-school synergy and interdisciplinarity, and advocating for graduate students. Perhaps not coincidentally, GW is the only one of nine market basket schools investigated that currently lacks a graduate dean and graduate school or a vice provost or associate vice provost for graduate studies."

In our town hall meetings and in survey responses, graduate students mentioned that group work was difficult to coordinate, that establishing connections with professors and faculty was difficult, and that it was difficult to get a sense of community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategies

- Focus on community building as a foundation of GW's plans for growth and a central selling point to potential students.

- Bolster efforts to create community within schools and departments as well as in interdisciplinary and university-wide community-building programs for graduate students.

- Recognize the central role played by graduate and professional students, especially doctoral students, in building a sense of community across all aspects of the university. Invest in doctoral programs and ensuring GW is able to compete for the best students by matching the aid provided by rival institutions.

- Enable faculty and schools to plan for the community building projects of tomorrow by sharing the master campus plan in full with faculty and administrators.

Resources

- Permit schools and colleges to invest in the staff they find necessary for community building.

- Ensure doctoral programs have the resources needed to recruit and retain high-quality students to ensure that we have talented and trained students in the classroom.

- Consider a mechanism to allow departments and programs to suggest innovative proposals to use graduate and professional students in community building activities across campus and in our local community.

Theme 2: Flexibility

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

GW should study options to enhance flexibility in the classroom and with respect to its academic policies.

The pandemic forced the university, its schools and departments, administrators, faculty, staff and students to adopt more flexible arrangements. Graduate and professional students, as well as faculty and staff, benefit from an increased flexibility in course offerings, programs and policies. University policies became increasingly flexible, with the addition, for example, of pass/fail grades. The most popular innovations occurred in the classroom. The most cited example was recordings of lectures, which provided students with more flexibility in attending classes and enabled students to review lectures before exams.

Post-COVID GW should study its academic and classroom policies to enhance flexibility. For example, some graduate programs require students to commit to either being online or in-person, rather than permitting a flexible mix that caters to an individual student's interests, needs and schedule. In addition, there may be reasons to reduce barriers between programs to permit students to take elective courses in other disciplines or pursue certificates in other programs or across schools. Some barriers to flexibility will always remain salient and important, such as differing admissions standards across units or the need for prerequisite coursework or specialized training. Barriers to interdisciplinary learning created by budget models and incentives inherent in revenue structures, however, seem like problems to be solved rather than legitimate roadblocks.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

- Flexibility was a common theme in our town hall and focus groups, as well as in survey responses. Students appreciate the in-class experience but appreciate the flexibility of not needing to commute to and from campus from classes.

- Students frequently mentioned that childcare issues, illnesses, work schedules and personal/business travel were additional reasons for appreciating the flexibility of recorded lectures.

- In addition, students appreciate having guest lectures from experts across the U.S. and from other countries and spending class time in discussion and activities instead of lectures.

- Students also appreciated the flexibility of virtual office hours.

- Students expressed frustration that online seminars, guest speakers and other community-building opportunities are often not held with the working students in mind.

- Students found a lack of engagement with the virtual class setting and missed the sense of community of in-person learning and activities (see Community, above).

- Students expressed frustration (echoed by faculty members) that many faculty were unprepared to lecture and teach in online formats.

- Students appreciate flexible enrollment options, yet some also expressed a perceived lack of value in online versus in-person instruction.

- Faculty also expressed fatigue, as some students expect them to be on call 24 hours a day, and some faculty believe this level of flexibility is unsustainable post-pandemic.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

The hybrid campus is not a new trend—in fact, it should be emphasized that virtually nothing over the course of the pandemic, in terms of academic innovation, is completely new—but the pandemic has illustrated some of its benefits and liabilities. The hybrid model, keeping the best of both in-person and online, is manageable and preferred by many students. More study is necessary to evaluate the role of the hybrid model in fields that emphasize research or have substantial in-person components necessary for academic training, as well as to evaluate how the hybrid model relates to discipline-specific accreditation rules. The 2021 EDUCAUSE Horizon Report, Teaching and Learning Edition, among other reports, points to the widespread adoption of hybrid learning models as well as the corresponding increased use of learning technologies.

A spring 2021 "Check In" survey to graduate students, conducted by the GW Office of Survey Research, reported that 79 percent of doctoral students and 67 percent of master's students report some or a very strong connection to their department or school. These students also reported concerns about the progress of their research (61% of doctoral students versus 11% of master's students); COVID-19 and educational plans (45% and 48%); coursework and exams (39% and 62%); and financial hardships (31% and 37%).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategies

- Provide additional virtual options for graduate courses. When balancing a full workload, virtual classes provide flexibility.

- Encourage faculty to record lectures, discussions, activities and class meetings, when appropriate. Recorded lectures have two benefits. First, they provide flexibility for working students to view class material, even when ill, working or engaging in childcare. Second, students believed that recorded lectures are also useful for study before important exams. Recorded lectures, however, have limitations, and may be less effective overall than in-person lectures. Students viewing online lectures on a regular basis may be less likely to attend class, feel part of the community and engage with the course material. Studies of educational outcomes and retention, therefore, are important before adopting recorded lectures as a university-wide norm. Some faculty also express concerns about the technology, skills or time involved in recording lectures as well as concerns about intellectual property.

- Facilitate students' ability to take courses for credit from different schools and programs. The current budget model eliminates incentives for inter-school enrollment by keeping revenue with the original school.

Resources

- Provide state of the art technology in classrooms to allow faculty to more easily record and share lectures.

- Provide increased training and professional development to professors, with incentives to faculty to take these trainings.

- Provide incentives for faculty to keep recorded lectures up to date, revising them consistently.

- Increase the number of instructional designers available to assist faculty in moving to hybrid or flexible learning models.

Theme 3: Technology

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

Develop a robust plan that meets students where they live online (e.g., Discord), rather than where the university wishes they lived (e.g., Outlook and Blackboard). Create a GW stretch goal of investing in computers, software and support for students, staff and faculty to bring us into the 21st century.

Although a core value proposition for GW is its premier Washington, D.C. location, the university's students, faculty and staff believe it needs a more robust IT infrastructure to be a preeminent location for graduate training and research. Its technological resources lag behind competitors. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need to invest in technology and support in all areas. Comparisons between universities and the obvious strain on the AT/IT/ITL infrastructure and resources led to a substantial discussion among faculty, staff and students that reveals shortcomings in GW's technological capabilities that limits graduate education and research.

Generally, most graduate students and faculty expressed appreciation for ITL and IT staff during the transition to online learning. They also often expressed concerns that the reorganization of our information technology staff led to a decline in timely support services and expressed concerns that senior leadership positions in this area remain open.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Evidence

Students, faculty, and staff expressed frustration with the university infrastructure regularly. In this section, we list what we found the most common concerns, though a more thorough assessment may reveal more problems:

- Faculty and staff expressed frustration that many academic and technology support staff were laid off when their support was needed most.

- Students expressed some frustration with professors who struggled to adapt, who were not used to technologies and were not prepared for or engaged in online learning; conversely, however, many students found the transition to online learning and remote working went well.

- The move to provide Zoom was appreciated in light of the numerous problems and limitations of WebEx, however, students also expressed frustration with the multitude of different platforms (Collaborate, WebEx, Zoom, MS Teams, etc.).

- Access to team and collaboration software is a challenge, and the variety of different tools can become overwhelming.

- Signing on to GWeb can be frustrating, requiring multiple attempts, different browsers, restarting computers and so on.

- Technologies that do not recognize campus users are also frustrating to faculty and students. For example, simply sharing a Google drive or Google doc with a classroom requires navigating through cumbersome access issues; students are not recognized by GW Google as being in the same institution. Sending a GW calendar invite to students brings up two "warnings" about inviting users outside the institution, even though it is going to a GW email.

- University-wide systems appeared to have no plan—or the plan had no expressed rationale or justification. This generates anxiety and some fear promises to set us back in time (e.g., by shifting from Google—which has its own limitations—to dated Outlook).

- The resources the university provides faculty are inadequate and declining. GW has made little investment in software for faculty and students. The university purchased software has limited licenses and are insufficient for a modern university.

- Faculty expressed frustration with the Faculty Workstation Initiative (FWI) program. Options are limited and not fully appropriate or capable of online teaching.

- The transition to online learning further reduced confidence. Faculty expressed frustration due to the need to purchase equipment for online learning, including laptop or other computers when offices were locked down with computers inside, printer cartridges and the like; these were not reimbursable items for most faculty. The university provided no support for faculty with limited or inadequate internet access or older computer equipment not updated via the FWI process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The university needs a coherent approach to making decisions about technology that recognizes that the field is rapidly changing, and rewards will accrue to the best resourced universities who are able to engage students in familiar, comfortable platforms.

Strategies

- Develop a consistent and well-resourced plan for IT in consultation with the faculty, recognizing that IT is a crucial part of the modern university.

- Consult with faculty and students, recognizing that transitioning basic university functions such as email creates anxiety and may lead to substantial workflow disruptions across the university.

- A university of the future needs to meet students where they live online and attempt innovative partnerships with trend setters such as Discord. It should avoid relying on the technology of the past, such as Outlook. However, GW needs to maintain training and support for several older platforms as well, including Zoom, WebEx and Collaborate.

- Consider a "basket" approach to software for students and faculty, depending on the needs of particular schools. For graduate students and part-time faculty, being able to download and install all required software for a particular program would be beneficial.

Resources

1. Faculty, staff and students need preeminent technological resources if GW wants to provide a preeminent education. For any mode of delivery, GW needs to enhance or provide additional:
   - » staffing in academic technology, information technology and instructional design;
   - » updated software licenses;
   - » FWI machines; and
   - » library resources (print and online collections as well as staffing).

2. If GW seeks to provide quality online learning, it also needs to:
   - » provide more instructional designers;
   - » develop studio quality courses to successfully compete;
   - » obtain state of the art technology in every classroom if classes are to be recorded or become HyFlex;
   - » hire a robust support staff dedicated to training faculty, students, and staff in this new environment; and
   - » purchase high-quality tools for assessments and to monitor academic integrity.

Theme 4: Accessibility

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

In the post-COVID landscape, the university should invest in resources to make courses (both in-person and online), communities, spaces and support services more accessible. The pandemic also reinforced the importance of access to well-being initiatives that are necessary to ensure students are able to learn and succeed.

Online learning emphasizes accessibility issues that are omnipresent in the physical space. Many related themes—community, flexibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion and technology—touch on important aspects of accessibility. However, students also address additional issues such as access to facilities and resources that address physical, mental health and financial challenges.

Faculty experienced issues related to lack of access to technology, connectivity and other resources that impacted their ability to deliver online learning, while access for students to physical, mental health and financial resources impacted their learning.

Students and administrators highlighted the reduction of staff at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) during a period when their services were most needed. Many CAPS staff are serving in multiple roles and are overburdened, making the provision of high-quality services difficult and the retention of qualified staff hard for GW.

Transitioning courses to online/hybrid models has increased accessibility in some respects, while emphasizing the importance of providing resources to ensure materials are accessible to all students, faculty and staff.

The pandemic underlined the fact that accessibility to online research resources is key to graduate education, and these issues of access will continue post-COVID (especially in terms of the high cost of research journals and databases).

A related issue, for both in-person, online, and hybrid courses is a growing importance and need for Open Educational Resources (OERs). OERs, including open textbooks and other materials, increase access to instructional materials to all students but especially to students with limited incomes. GW Libraries and Academic Innovation, as well as the MPS in Publishing program, have been encouraging the adoption of and publication of OERs at GW.

Administrators believe that there has been a dramatic growth in the need for Disability Support Services since moving online last March and expressed concern that the unit cannot keep pace with demand, given the diversity of students and types of support they require in an online space.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Evidence

Access to hardware, software, and other computing issues, access to facilities and resources, disruptions at home, and physical or mental health issues come up frequently in our conversations.

Students frequently mentioned that mental health took a toll during the pandemic, such as in this survey response "The stress of the pandemic, combined with the same workload as we had during in-person classes is really difficult to manage. Every day is spent inside, on a computer. All the assignments, readings, essays, exams. Mental health took a massive hit, which made classes harder than they would be."

LITERATURE/TRENDS

The 2021 EDUCAUSE Horizon Report, Teaching and Learning Edition, among other reports, points to the increasing importance of OERs as well as the challenges of ensuring accessibility to students with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategies

- Develop and invest in strategies to ensure the university's physical and online spaces are accessible to students, faculty and staff.

- Increased training and resources are needed to ensure those with visual and auditory disabilities have

access to high-quality online learning; it should be understood, however, that these accessibility issues are also relevant in the in-person classroom.

- Ensure students have access to career services by providing schools with the flexibility to hire the career services staff necessary for successful programs that attract talented graduate and professional students.

- Increase support for identifying and publishing OERs.

- Increase support for and awareness of services to support the emotional well-being of students, faculty, and staff and academic support.

Resources

- Consider ensuring universal access to high-quality internet by students, faculty, and staff if online.

- Expand access to mental health resources by ensuring that CAPS is fully staffed.

Theme 5: Program and Course Quality

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

As GW considers post-COVID innovations, it should continually monitor programs for quality, reward programs that achieve high levels of academic distinction, and provide help to programs that are struggling.

While by no means universal, students appreciate the efforts by GW faculty and staff to move online quickly during the onset of the pandemic, but there is less forgiveness for low-quality online instruction on an ongoing basis. Level of instruction varied greatly, depending on individual professors' level of experience and familiarity with technology. Professional development is needed to ensure quality online learning opportunities; training such as Quality Matters also improves in-person learning and hybrid models.

It is worth underlining that while many faculty members have expressed concern and challenges about the transition to online learning over the past year, there are areas, such as within the School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Clinical Research and Leadership Department, and in the College of Professional Studies, where the online transition has been very successful. GW would be well served to identify areas of excellence and leverage successes as resources for others.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Evidence

As found in the [GW Strategic Planning Final Committee Report: Distinguished and Distinctive Graduate Education](#), quality is paramount.

The evidence available to the task force was limited to anecdotal reviews of teaching by students and faculty, especially from the task force's survey. More systematic evidence related to the quality of courses, retention of students, mentoring of students and post-educational outcomes needs to be collected before making confident recommendations about online education.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) combined with culturally responsive pedagogy, can help ensure that online and hybrid learning are inclusive and equitable to all students. UDL principles are effective when planning courses from the outset, to lower barriers to learning for students with certain needs, while benefiting all students.

GW has many successful online programs, however, some students and faculty are skeptical that online learning programs can replicate the in-person, GW/D.C. experience in most fields of study. To some extent, programs and faculty that moved online quickly during the pandemic may have been "given a break" by students, and therefore past evaluations of quality may be an unreliable guide to their future appraisal of classes or programs. More uniformity in best practices in pedagogy will improve both online and in-person experiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategies

- Create and make available uniform data for the evaluation of quality across schools to serve as the basis for future evaluation and reforms.
- Conduct regular reviews of new programs to ensure consistency and quality.
- Encourage a culture of quality by rewarding faculty and schools who provide innovative, high-quality educational experiences for students.
- Enable and provide resources for schools, departments, and programs to expand their online programs if they believe they will usefully serve and attract students in a specific area of study.

Resources

- Increase the number and availability of instructional designers to work with faculty.
- Ensure that offerings such as the Course Design

Institute have sufficient resources to accommodate all interested faculty, are offered more often, or are able to otherwise accommodate demand.

- Ensure schools have sufficient staff and the data necessary to evaluate their courses in comprehensive ways.
- Provide resources to incentivize Quality Matters training.
- Provide training and resources in Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
- Incentivize quality teaching through additional awards, recognition, and promotion and tenure.

Theme 6: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

GW needs to bolster its efforts to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion at the university by investing in diversity and enhancing the resources necessary for recruiting and retaining diverse students.

It is important to consider how different or marginalized groups may have had disparate educational experiences during the pandemic. While some students have enjoyed the flexibility to take courses online, making it possible for students to work full-time and also get an education, this also poses problems for diversity, equity and inclusion and most likely negatively affects the neediest of students.

More study is necessary to evaluate the net effect on the recruitment, retention and post-graduate placement of graduate students and whether online education has a beneficial or detrimental impact on diversity, equity and inclusion with respect to underrepresented minorities in the U.S.

The more immediate and obvious effect has been to make GW more of an American rather than a global university, as international students have not been able to enroll in, or have departed from, GW. They are interested in GW for the hands-on, in-person Washington, D.C. experience. The loss of international diversity may limit the ability of our domestic students to experience diverse cultures, perspectives and learn from others' experiences.

GW also needs a forward-looking plan to enhance support and generate diversity in its doctoral training. It is rapidly falling behind the competition in the level of financial support it offers. The predictable result is a loss of diversity.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Evidence

While the university as a whole has reportedly become slightly more diverse during the pandemic, the working group does not have access to enrollment data specific to graduate students to evaluate the issue. Data on the percentage of underrepresented minority students in online programs and changes from pre-pandemic conditions would be helpful. Targeted, focused outreach to solicit additional feedback and ensure inclusive decision making is warranted.

Many programs cited the loss of international students as a substantial challenge. The working group believes that this may be related in part to issues of equity and inclusion (as well as visas) as international students may struggle in online fora, especially when English is not their first language.

Students expressed concern with financial aid in M.A. programs. Students and faculty also noted that the population of doctoral students is not diverse and that there appears to be declining resources available for valuable programs such as McNair Fellowships and other diversity-related programs. The rapid reorganization of graduate funding in 2019-20 left some of our doctoral programs with insufficient resources. There was an immediate, attendant decline in diversity, equity and inclusion. Doctoral students also noted that the quality of packages is declining in quality relative to GW's market-basket schools, making it difficult for students to attend GW without the support of families. Specific issues cited included lack of summer funding and programs.

In addition, graduate students who had previously been employed by GW departments and programs were barred from continuing their work if living outside of the U.S. during the spring 2021 semester by GW Student Employment. This caused disruptions to ongoing research projects and departmental operations and required faculty and staff to quickly identify and train new assistants or increase the responsibilities and workloads of existing assistants. By limiting the employment opportunities of international students in this manner, GW thus also reduced the diversity of its student workforce, as well as the range of subject matter expertise these students could have provided to GW departments and research projects.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

[Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters](#), a May 2020 report from McKinsey & Company provides a business case for inclusion and diversity (I&D) and reports that diversity winners are adopting systematic, business-led approaches to I&D. The report also stresses that "in the COVID-19 crisis, inclusion and diversity matter more than ever" and that "the shift to technology-enabled remote working presents an opportunity for companies to accelerate building inclusive and agile cultures."

A February 2021 Pew Report says that, in the U.S., 72 percent of adults report that the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting their everyday lives by a great deal/or fair amount but also reports that this is 11 percentage points higher for women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategies

- Enhance the reputation of graduate programs by paying substantial attention to issues of diversity, equity and inclusion, recognizing that the reputation of the university as a whole depends on the reputation of its graduate programs.

- Identify whether the net impact of the pandemic has improved diversity, equity and inclusion by making course work more flexible, or has detracted by creating a system in which students are limited by their resources in making the most of an online experience.

- Recognize that enhancing graduate and professional student diversity requires more efforts to enhance faculty diversity

- Detailed studies of diversity, equity, and inclusion should be undertaken prior to making decisions about future modalities of education.

Resources

- Provide the necessary resources and data for a working group to evaluate the impact of the pandemic on diversity within the institution and also provide resources to address and mitigate potential long-term effects on the students and programs.

- Continue and enhance financial aid in ways that promote diversity, equity and inclusion, such as its current partnerships with historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and minority-serving institutions (MSIs).

- Consider reintroducing and rebranding the global initiatives program to enhance international diversity and build GW's reputation abroad

- Provide resources to schools to enable them to offer competitive funding for doctoral programs, fixing the basic package rate to that of the National Science Foundation's fellowship rate.

- Provide training and resources for culturally responsive pedagogy.
- Consider summer pay to enhance retention of underrepresented minorities and first-generation students in doctoral programs in order to reduce summer attrition.
- Reconsider the use of metrics such as test scores in awarding merit packages, as they contribute to disparities in compensation and aid for graduate students.

Theme 7: Communication

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

Improve transparency in decision making, communication and messaging throughout the university.

On balance, graduate students, faculty and staff expressed serious concerns about GW's communication and messaging during the pandemic. Graduate students, faculty and staff express appreciation for communication by programs and schools during the transition to online learning but also expressed frustration at communications concerning financial aid, layoffs and technology changes. Some cited a perceived lack of transparency surrounding decision making during the pandemic.

Many current and prospective graduate students in the coming fall will need to relocate from around the world to Washington, D.C., set up apartments and prepare for classes. These students need clear messaging related to what the experience will be like, whether there are online options for courses, and whether in-person coursework will be required. Given their likely academic and in-person schedules, these announcements need to be made soon and have clear and consistent messaging.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Evidence

Students, faculty and staff expressed frustration and lack of confidence in the university due to lack of communication, especially regarding layoffs and budget cuts. Town hall meetings and survey responses included comments such as, "The university and departments did virtually nothing to encourage increased communication"; "The [university] failed to communicate changes in a timely manner, especially with regards to staffing"; and "People losing their jobs and their health insurance during a global pandemic because of budget deficits made me rethink GWU implicit values and moral guidance during this incredibly stressful and traumatic global event."

Graduate students found it difficult to understand why tuition rates were lowered for undergraduate students but not graduate students. "It was very unfair that GW refused to lower tuition rates for grad students the same way they did for undergrads." Students also expressed frustration regarding a lack of communication from the university on whether classes would be in-person or remote.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategies

- Transparency in decision making and communications, including clear and robust messaging, is a fundamental aspect of the themes, recommendations, and strategies regarding community, flexibility, technology, accessibility, quality and DEI.
- In the transition period of the next two years, GW should clearly explain its timeline for decision making, the restraints it faces, and the work it is doing to ensure a successful reopening.

Themes and Recommendations from the
WORKING GROUP FOR STAFF AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT PERSONNEL

Academic support staff include those whose administrative responsibilities support the broad academic enterprise at GW, including administration, finance, instruction, technology and safety. This group includes career professionals and librarians who support faculty and students throughout the academic enterprise. Their work plays a critical role in identifying innovations and bringing them to fruition.

Theme 1: Telework

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

Telework and flexible work schedules have been a hallmark of the shifting work culture as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. GW, like most universities and corporate organizations, needs to carefully consider the impact of this shift on the operational, financial, and performance goals of the university. Academic support staff have been clear both through the online survey and town hall that telework during the pandemic has allowed for high performance and achievement of academic goals, and they strongly desire to see flexible telework arrangements continue. Implementation of this vision would require changes in GW's formal approach to telework, which in the past has looked at this as something that allowed only under unusual circumstances:

"[Telework] is an arrangement that *may* be appropriate for *some* employees in *some* positions when job, employee, and manager characteristics *are best suited* to such an arrangement.*"*[Italics added.] (Source: GWHR). Based on staff responses, GW might consider a much more open attitude toward telework.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Academic support staff are strongly interested in continuing to work from home on a more frequent basis, and they point to their strong performance this past year as evidence of its effectiveness. Some respondents believed that their work could be done completely at home. Others longed for the professional and social interaction of a traditional work setting. Others simply expressed the desire for more openness to teleworking from GW, with the particular breakdown between telework and on-campus based on the specific work situation.

One breakout room discussion at the town hall, for example, showed sensitivity to constituent/consumer needs when considering more telework. For example, public-facing staff noted that increased teleworking must not reduce the quality of personal interactions with students and faculty. Many point to the need for increased support, such as upgraded equipment and training to be effective in their roles while maximizing job performance. Expanded telework also requires increased training in handling sensitive personnel, financial and research data that presents additional challenges.

Evidence:

Among **206 responses** to the survey's question about "Ideas for the Future," **131 respondents requested continuing telework arrangements** (though some used different phrases to refer to the concept). This is by far the most mentioned idea for the future: **a full 60% of respondents independently suggested it.** They also suggested many ways to make it work well for all types of staff university wide.

LITERATURE

- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics the demand for information security analysts will grow by 31% from 2019 to 2029 in order to ensure adequate and increased security for expansion in teleworking workforce. (2021 Educause Horizon Report: Information Security, Information Security Workforce Shortage)

- Digital privacy and security concerns will grow as more and more devices are connected to institutional and personal data. New laws such as GDPR, CCPA are reviewed and updated to ensure careful consideration of data sharing. (2021 Educause Horizon Report: Information Security, Greater Focus on Data Privacy)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide **mandatory training and guidance** for supervisors and managers to set up temporary and long-term work arrangements and up-skill in remote management. Include supervisory, guiding and mentoring checklists; tips for staff on how to work efficiently from home; and the incorporation of sound evidence-based practices from management and leadership studies and to secure employee well-being while working remotely.

- 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.

- Ensure telework when appropriate **serves other constituents** (e.g., students, instructors and administrators).

- Recognize employees and roles that cannot be performed from home. They should also be provided with **opportunities to enhance job skills, further education, and execute their responsibilities** responsibly and with accountability.

Theme 2: Hybrid campus

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

A hybrid campus refers to in-person and virtual, or some of each, as a normative business model. Some use this term for a campus where activities take place simultaneously online and in-person. Others use it to refer to distinct activities that are online even as others take place in traditional ways. For example, campus life, advising, hybrid learning, meetings and study abroad can each have a hybrid approach. Moving toward a fuller use of either of these models has implications for both the short term as GW reopens and longer term as more fundamental changes are contemplated.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS.

Academic support staff are concerned that we maintain flexibility around requirements to come to campus as GW reopens. There are health concerns in the near term, but even beyond the pandemic itself, staff noted that many students and other campus stakeholders have strongly valued the flexibility to work or study from home or from other locations. Hybrid options would enable broader access for more and perhaps stronger students and staff.

Evidence:

Survey respondents mentioned that continuing hybrid events, meetings and student advising would allow more flexibility for students and staff and enable broader attendance. Some respondents thought certain types of meetings might even work better in a virtual format, such as student advising or faculty office hours or events that incorporate participants from other countries without the need for international travel. There were even suggestions for virtual study abroad or other types of events that are typically thought to depend strongly on in-person attendance. More fundamentally, many meetings could be held in a hybrid format to continue supporting telework, especially if some basic equipment were installed in on-campus meeting rooms.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

- Educause [(Educause, Top IT Issues, 2021)](#) provides a broad overview of recommendations required to incorporate virtual activities into the "DNA" of institutions. This includes efforts to reduce costs, manage data, and provide adequate training and skill-building to operations for staff as well as students and faculty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage a **culture of hybridization** that requires equal access and inclusion no matter if one works face to face or remotely. Develop hybrid campus systems for all aspects of campus life: events, advising, meetings, study abroad, etc.

- **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.

- 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 classes.

- **Crosstrain IT and academic support staff** to provide a higher level of support to environments with flexible learning spaces and active learning.

Theme 3: Teaching and Learning

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

Academic support staff are critical to the academic enterprise that includes teaching, learning, research, technological support and enhancement, pedagogy, design, and all functions that relate to the teaching and learning enterprise that include instructors, students and university partners. Some aspect of staff activities could be more online even without a movement toward hybrid and virtual classes; the likely reorganization of the classroom experience requires involvement of the staff and further coordination of resources and training.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Academic support staff, especially those who are materially involved in the design, maintenance, and development of course offerings, curricula, learning technologies, and instructor training need to have strong partnerships and input into the teaching and learning mission that will lead to more competitive and state-of-the-art learning delivery. A major issue for the staff and academic support constituency is that teaching and learning will continue to offer hybrid options where appropriate. They noted that students strongly valued recorded lectures, and also appreciated other innovations including flipped classrooms, exams outside class time, and flexibility to attend from home or elsewhere, etc.

Evidence:

Survey respondents specifically mentioned several successful innovations in teaching and learning that they wanted to see continue, including those mentioned above: recorded lectures, flipped classrooms, exams outside class time, and flexibility to attend from home or elsewhere. In some instances, these changes may require staff involvement and increased staff flexibility and organization complexities.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

- Recommendations from key literature (Educause, Top IT Issues, 2021)
- Strengthen the collaboration between academic departments, schools, instructional designers, multimedia developers, instructional technologists.
- Strengthen online and hybrid education by providing on-demand support for course development and delivery; advocate for processes, policies, and support structures to increase student and institutional readiness.

- Ensure adequate staffing and support services in areas where the digital divide is most evident.
- Improve understanding of diverse challenges students face by hiring staff and staff leaders that reflect the diversity of the student population.
- Incorporate educational equity awareness and initiatives into student success initiatives. Equitable Access to Education: Providing technologies, support, and policies for diverse users and equitable access to bridge the digital divide and reduce equity gaps
- Invest in instructional and multimedia staff to support faculty in transitioning course content to on-demand, hybrid experience.
- Investigate Next Generation Digital Learning Environment (NGDLE) to support exploration, innovation and extensive communication and collaboration in a way that moves across individual courses, and beyond to integrate extracurricular collaboration.
- Foster new and deeper collaborations among instructional technologists, digital pedagogy experts, librarians, faculty, and others. These mutually supportive communities will help institutions evolve and adapt to the new normal.
- Invest in a digital confederation of tools, content, and applications, dynamically connected by means of open standards.
- Online Learning: Progressing from emergency remote teaching and learning to online learning by advancing best practices in technology-enabled teaching and learning

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify a **chief online learning officer (COO)** from within the existing administration responsible for aligning schools and academic support units to develop strategy, policies and best practices for the future of online and hybrid learning at GW.
- **Further develop GW Online Learning Standards** that are common to all schools to ensure the quality and rigor of online learning. Take better advantage and benefits of existing GW partnerships with Quality Matters and Online Learning Consortium to develop succinct training programs across all schools for faculty and staff. Strengthen the collaboration between academic departments, schools, instructional designers, multimedia developers and instructional technologists.
- 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.

- Facilitate greater understanding of the increasingly diverse student body, especially with respect to online learning. Increase awareness of educational equity and diversity issues.

- **Ensure adequate staffing and support services** in areas where the digital divide is most evident. (Educause, Top IT Issues, 2021)

Theme 4: Culture and relationships

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

Maintaining a highly functioning and effective university community is highly dependent on the encouragement, development and maintenance of an organizational culture that values strong relationships. For academic support staff this is an important part of their work-life arrangement with the university.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Recent challenges have exacerbated what was already seen as a challenging work culture for staff. On the other hand, the pandemic also instigated a greater emphasis on empathy and kindness, which was welcomed by staff and frequently noted in online responses and the town hall. Staff seek concrete actions to maintain the good aspects of this "pandemic" culture and challenge the problematic aspects, but they also emphasize the difficulty of real culture change in an institution deeply resistant to change. Staff frequently mentioned the need for continued focus on empathy, relationships and respect.

Evidence:

Culture and relationships was a major focus of the town hall, with a large number of attendees emphasizing the need for a culture change that recognizes centrality and value of staff along with other constituents (see Theme 6 below). **Survey respondents also mentioned the benefits**

of the pandemic-induced emphasis on empathy and kindness in relating to others at GW and suggested that this continue. Other respondents found it harder to maintain relationships in a virtual setting, and suggested strategies such as a coffee hour with managers and co-workers. Some reported better empathy and respect, others found relationships more challenging to maintain.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

Recommendations from key literature (Educause, Top IT Issues, 2021)

- Embrace a culture of transformation, change, future thinking and agility.

- Recognize and work on overcoming challenges such as COVID fatigue, mental health, income disparities, distrust in institutions, student debt crisis, Back Lives Matter, climate change.

- Understand that change and accelerated transformation may continue as economic pressures are more intense.

- Consider restructuring credential offerings, in collaboration with accreditation organizations, to provide more flexible, lower-cost credential opportunities.

- Institutional Culture: Contributing to a culture of transformation by modeling agility and forward thinking when designing IT programs and services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work to establish and support a culture of inclusion, innovation, empowerment, openness, creativity that embraces the special contributions of the career professionals amongst our staff and academic support personnel.

- Establish best practices for employees to engage both face-to-face and online with the goal of maintaining relationships focused on trust, accountability, support and community building.

- Practice and train all university constituencies to be empathetic, cognizant of the importance of strong relationship building, a culture of respect in line with principles of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI).

Theme 5: Communication

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

Communication is the means by which all university stakeholders ensure that information is shared equitably and uniformly. It is a cornerstone of and effective business model that values stakeholder engagement throughout the organization.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Ensure all constituents are included in relevant communications, be respectful of when and who needs to know. Enable clear and formal avenues for communication from bottom to top as well as top to bottom. A number of respondents noted that staff received belated information from the central administration about important changes in administrative procedures. Some of these changes were developed with little or no staff participation. While this has been an ongoing issue at GW, staff believed it worsened during the pandemic.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

- Sources (SMARP, *The Importance of Communication in the Workplace (& How to Do It Right)*
- Centralize important communication in the same space by reducing communication silos.
- Recognize and mediate the communication overload by investigating more efficient means of messaging information (Slack, telephony, etc.).
- Provide the ability for staff to chat quickly with each other, knowledge sharing, tag stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Revisit the possibility of a Staff Council to enable staff to continually communicate with each other as well as provide feedback on needs and concerns for the administration's consideration.
- Ensure all stakeholders are included in relevant communications, be respectful of when and who needs to know.
- Enable clear and formal avenues for feedback and recommendations from bottom to top as well as top to bottom.
- Reduce "information silos" where information does not flow efficiently across schools and administrative units.
- Recognize "email overload" and investigate more efficient means of informing staff about important changes. This may become even more important with increased teleworking.

Theme 6: Valuing and acknowledging staff contributions

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

As part of the academic enterprise, academic support staff need to be valued by the university at large and other constituent stakeholders for the work they contribute. This includes both outward recognition and a culture of inclusion that views their work as a partnership with instructors and students.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Understand staff needs, address burnout, acknowledge major contributions, endorse career ladders, establish greater trust and accountability for staff in light of a new era of changing workflows and modern work environments.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

- "Consistently encourage employee well-being, identify stress-reducing activities, allow for an intermittent mental health break" (Source: Binghamton University, Supervisory Best Practices)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a formal system for staff to provide input and receive recognition with similar opportunities that other constituencies (faculty and students) for example, committee work, ideation and contribution to university decision-making.
- Maintain a culture of shared responsibility and accountability across faculty, staff and students in administrative matters.
- Encourage and devise reward and recognition strategies at all levels of the organization beyond performance review to serve as a means to maintain trust and a culture of recognition.
- Invest efforts that strive to understand and recognize staff needs, address burnout, and acknowledge major contributions.
- Elevate the role of academic support staff to help lead transformation and strategy as well as provide service.

Theme 7: Technology, Processes and Tools

SUMMARY/DEFINITION

Technology, business processes and tools that will allow for a continued state-of-the-art evolution will be critical to the success of GW in the post-COVID era. Academic support staff possess skills and knowledge that affect the direction of the university in these areas and can be valuable assets to the decision-making, outlook and recommendations necessary to ensure GW is prepared for the post-pandemic higher education climate.

CONSTITUENCY CONCERNS AND IDEAS

Clear processes must be developed so that turnover is easier on everyone—staff and clients, universal university tools that don't differ across schools, scalable infrastructure, technical support, greater digital security and privacy.

LITERATURE/TRENDS

- (2021 Educause Horizon Report: Information Security, Borderless Networks, Security Incidents Becoming Routine)

- IT security intrusions will continue to grow and become more routine. Personal and mobile device use will grow. Institutions that move IT services to cloud-based solutions from being housed on-premise will provide greater security and flexibility in incident response control, prevention and decrease in incident response time.

- Leaders at institutions that have heavily leveraged technology to adjust to the pandemic will continue to strengthen the role of technology and its alignment with institutional strategy.

- IT Governance Model (Based on IT Governance standards from the Educause Toolkit models)

- IT governance includes the people, processes and structures necessary to guide decision making around technology issues (make it clear who makes IT decisions, who provides input into IT decisions, who is accountable for them).

- If IT governance is not actively managed, its effectiveness and credibility will suffer.

- Embrace Next Generation Digital Learning Environments (beyond higher education coursework) to support exploration, innovation and extensive communication and collaboration in a way that moves across individual courses and includes resources that exist outside of the classroom environments. (Educause, Top IT Issues, 2021)

- Invest in a digital network of tools, content, and applications, dynamically connected by means of open standards. (Educause, Top IT Issues, 2021)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop redundant processes and clear documentation methods so that institutional memory and operations can be maintained and improved.

- Invest in customer-friendly communication frameworks for IT professionals.

- Recognize needs that suggest universal university tools as well as unique needs of individual schools.

- Invest in digital security and privacy, risk management and liability prevention standards.

- Invest in learning analytics infrastructure and staff to review, analyze and provide recommendations about optimizing teaching and learning.

- Standardize a baseline of digital fluency through training and staff development so that 21st-century tools can assist in successfully completing day-to-day projects and long-term goals.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

IMPORTANCE OF THE IN-PERSON EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS

Students—whether undergraduate, graduate or professional—place a high value on the in-person, Washington, D.C. experience. Living and taking classes on campus is essential to creating a sense of community for undergraduate students. Likewise, for the majority of graduate and professional students being in Washington with their classmates is key. The desire to be on a college campus is not unique to GW, but it is particularly important given how much students value our location in the heart of Washington, D.C.

DESIRE FOR FLEXIBILITY

Learning, teaching and working remotely has provided students, faculty and staff a new degree of flexibility. The task force recommends the university work to offer students, faculty and staff additional flexibility by allowing for more telework and relaxing restrictive policies, such as for grade submissions and dropping, adding or withdrawing from classes. It also recommends that the university look at retaining some elements of virtual teaching, for example, having class discussions online or using a virtual classroom for a guest speaker who isn't on campus. Finally, undergraduate, graduate and professional students all said that they appreciated having recorded lectures. The task force recommends that faculty explore the feasibility of continuing to record lectures.

ONLINE STUDENT SERVICES CAN WORK

Virtual office hours and academic support meetings, such as with advisers and financial aid, received positive reviews from students this year. The task force recommends that faculty members be strongly encouraged to continue them. The university should also consider continuing virtual appointments for academic support meetings and telehealth appointments.

CULTURE OF EMPATHY SHOULD BE EXTENDED

Students appreciated faculty members' empathy and concerns for their well-being this academic year. Likewise, the university culture was cited by faculty and students. The task force recommends a new "culture initiative" that includes input from students, emphasizes empathy and respect, and recognizes the contributions of faculty and staff.

NEED FOR BETTER TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Teaching, learning and working remotely highlighted the need for GW to invest more in information technology. Students, faculty and staff need more IT support and training, and the university needs to ensure that GW community members' needs for software and hardware are met. This recommendation was made across the four working groups.

NEED FOR BETTER COMMUNICATIONS

GW community members felt like the university was not always up front with them when it came to issues like staff layoffs. Community members also have email/infomail fatigue, and the university should look at other means of communication.

RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF STAFF AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT PERSONNEL

Staff and academic support personnel advocated for a cultural change that recognizes their value and voice. The task force recommends the university examine the feasibility of establishing a Staff Council that would enable staff to communicate with each other and with the administration. The university should also consider a formal system to recognize staff accomplishments and permit staff the ability to continue some aspects of remote work and flexible schedules.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Through the course of information gathering, GW community members raised concerns that may merit attention but were seen as outside the scope of this task force's charge. These include:

- Faculty need a more balanced schedule. The norm for research universities is 2-2 but that is not the base teaching load throughout the university.

- GW Libraries budget is well below its peers during a time when the costs of journals and database subscriptions have increased.

- The proliferation of administration-created committees adds to concerns about the role of the Faculty Senate in shared governance. The Faculty Senate has standing committees that can/should be more involved in the planning, forming and implementing of important academic committees like this task force.

- Supporting graduate students for 12 months should be a priority with a view to the high cost of GRAs to the grants, needs for a competitive stipend and additional medical support (pregnancy, mental health care, etc.). There should be thoughts to allocate revenue with appropriate central support.

- Research further suffered during the pandemic due to a lack of a vice provost for research.

- There should be a variety of support tools that can be put in place (such as tenure review delays, an additional teaching release, additional external coaching/mentoring, startup deadline extension, etc.) and the managers should work with the faculty member concerned to determine what the most appropriate supportive measures would be in each case. Most importantly, it needs to be communicated to junior faculty that these measures are available and will be employed without prejudice.

- If staff are permitted telework, it should be ensured that there are enough support staff on campus to help faculty members with needed on site tasks.

- We should reconsider students course loads; reducing it from five to four per semester as is the case in several of our market basket schools. The teaching load of TT is higher than in top research universities.

APPENDIX A: *Working Group Members*

Faculty

Billy Mullins, Clinical Assistant Professor, SON (chair)

Cynthia Dowd, Professor of Chemistry, CCAS

Russell Korte, Associate Professor of Human and Organizational Learning, GSEHD

Liesl Riddle, Associate Dean for Graduate Programs and Associate Professor of International Business and International Affairs, GWSB

Victoria Shanmugam, Director of Division of Rheumatology and Professor of Medicine, SMHS

Graduate and Professional Students

John Warren, Director and Associate Professor, MPS in Publishing, CPS (chair)

Donald Braman, Associate Professor of Law, GW Law

Miriam Grinburg, Manager, Research Programs, Sigur Center for Asian Studies, Institute for Korean Studies & East Asia National Resource Center, Elliott School of International Affairs

Eric Grynaviski, Associate Professor Political Science and International Affairs

Mike Guy, Graduate Student, Corcoran School, and Studio Technician, The Textile Museum

Lionel C. Howard, Associate Professor of Educational Research, GSEHD

Ryan McDevitt, MBA Student, School of Business; Director of Federal Government Relations, GW Office of the President

Undergraduate Students

Gayle Wald, Professor of American Studies, CCAS (chair)

Tamara Henry, Teaching Associate Professor and Practicum Director of Prevention and Community Health, GWSPH

Srinikhila Karri, Undergraduate Student, Seven-Year B.A./M.D. Program

Sarah Wagner, Associate Professor of Anthropology, CCAS

Staff and Academic Support Personnel

Guy Lotrecchiano, Associate Professor of Clinical Research and Leadership and of Pediatrics, SMHS and Associate Dean, Innovative and Collaborative Pedagogy, LAI (chair)

Erica Gralla, Associate Professor of Engineering Management and Systems Engineering, SEAS

Miro Liwosz, Assistant Dean, Online Learning and Instructional Technology, SON

Michael Moore, Director of International Economic Policy Program and Professor of Economics, ESIA

APPENDIX B: *Response from the Faculty Senate Fiscal Planning and Budgeting Committee to Working Group Reports*

May 20, 2021

To: Jason Zara
      Chair, Post Covid Task Force

Fr: Jose Cordes
      Chair, Fiscal Planning and Budgeting Committee

Re: Feedback on Draft Post-Covid Reports

The draft reports of the sub-groups of the Post Covid Task Force were circulated for comment to faculty members on the Senate Fiscal Planning Committee. The following points were raised. These are comments from individual committee members, rather than a comment from the committee as a whole.

Recommendations Specific to Post-Covid vs. "General" Comments

There is much useful material in the subcommittee reports. Many of the suggestions attempt to distill what the University has learned from its experience of operating during the Pandemic. But, these recommendations are interspersed with other suggestions that may have merit, but have nothing to do with COVID or Post-COVID. In the final version, these different types of recommendations should be clearly separated from each other.

Specific Comments About the Draft

Academic Support Staff Draft

"The task force engaged academic support staff through an online survey, which resulted in 212 responses as of April 9th.":

What percent of the GW academic support staff participated?

"GW might consider a much more open attitude towards telework."

This is a great recommendation for almost all SEAS staff. For those rare few who need to step-up and be *more* responsive, how do we all move forward so you are incentivized to contribute more, in whatever mode?

"Further develop GW Online Learning Standards that are common to all schools to ensure the quality and rigor of online learning."

Where are current standards available? A search on https://my.gwu.edu/ for "Online Learning Standards" returns "No Results Found".

Graduate Professional Working Group

"GW reduced student services, advising staff, IT support staff, and other technology services precisely when these services were needed most."

This points directly to the elephant in the room. Why would GW Admin listen to and implement the recommendations from the Post-Covid Taskforce when they insist still they took the correct actions with the staff reductions around Sept 2020? Also, some of the worst changes they made (shared services for research administration and computer services) were being planned well before the pandemic.

Faculty Subgroup

"The amount of emails from students was overwhelming":

There needs to be training and tools tailored to the GW environment readily available to faculty for dealing with emails in general and emails from students specifically. I googled "dealing with volume of email from students" and got a top hit of http://rtalbert.org/dealing-with-email/   This gives a good non-tailored start, but GW should provide a tailored tutorial with advice specialized to GW selected tools (Blackboard for courseware).

"The number of meetings (virtually) has increased significantly during COVID"

The "friction cost" of calling a meeting has decreased for those calling meetings. GW needs to set best practices for meetings to respect the time of all (faculty, staff, students).

"Having meetings online made them more efficient"

Not if the person calling the meeting does not follow basic rules for effective meetings, such as pre-providing an agenda and post-providing decisions-made/action-items-to-be-taken lists.

Additional Comments

My one suggestion has to do with remote work policy for staff. Our assistants (formerly known as "secretaries) often do a lot of menial in-person work to save us time: photocopying; printing out multiple documents/stapling so we don't have to take time to do it; bringing things from one part of the building to another to save us time; producing formal (letterhead) letters from our drafts; packaging things; etc.

I have no idea how much of an ordinary day requires any one assistant to be in the office, but their presence saves me (and, I assume, others) a fair amount of time.

If we move to remote provision of staff positions like these, I propose that for every five assistants at least one has to be in the office on each day to do these chores for faculty--not only their "own "faculty (since no one can predict which days she will be sending out fedex packages, etc) but also for other faculty. Maybe this could be a secretarial pod that ensures the presence of at least one staff member will be in the office to perform such functions. The staff themselves will probably have ideas about the best way to make sure there is always someone present to perform necessary in-person tasks. Maybe in the case of special projects (e.g., f a faculty member is hosting a conference in the building), special arrangements outside the ongoing "pod-pool" could be made.

The idea is to avoid forcing all of our assistants to be at school in person 5 days a week "just in case."

APPENDIX C: *Response from the Faculty Senate Committee on Appointments, Salary, and Promotion Policies to the Working Group Reports*

The reports are quite detailed and painstakingly done so we have no specific edits or corrections to offer. As "post-covid" reports from four different communities, it is no surprise that there is a fair amount of emphasis on "**on-line**"/virtual aspects of campus functioning. However, besides the fact that both the graduate and undergraduate subcommittee reports clearly mention a **preference for in person and other community aspects of campus life**, issues relating to space/real estate utilization, campus (Foggy Bottom) caps etc. will need to be elaborated on in any analysis of longer term (post Covid) implications. Further, there is a common thread of faculty needing to be able to participate in **shared governance** and to **feel like they were being heard**.

We suggest a couple of issues dealing with **problematic processes** and **inconsistent outcomes** of this important work.

The process is another example of problematic shared governance: During an early faculty meeting this semester, a concern was raised by senior-level Faculty Senators about how new administration-created committees (including the Post-covid (Futures) Task Force) would/should relate to the existing committees of the Faculty Senate. The main takeaway was: **the proliferation of administration-created committees was adding to the generalized concern about the role of the Faculty Senate in shared governance. The Faculty Senate has standing committees that can/should be more involved in the planning, forming, and implementing of important academic committees like this Task Force.**

Example of flawed process: Faculty Subgroup. One of the first things the task force committees did was to collect data. Some members of our committee specifically watched for the news from the Provost's office about the Faculty Subgroup, and when the subgroup asked for volunteers to be interviewed, they completed the online form and volunteered. They were never contacted and were told that faculty would be allowed to contribute their voice to the work of the subcommittee through Town Hall type forums. A personal communication (email) from a subgroup member indicated that the invitations to faculty to join the Town Hall forums were held up for some reason, and that the subgroup intended to provide faculty with enough advance notice to be able to attend. What ultimately happened is that on April 20, the announcement was made for faculty to contribute their ideas to the Subgroup's work--with only 48 hours advance notice of the forum....at the end of the semester, with grading and related busyness. **This lack of advance notice, and limited options to have meaningful faculty input continue to be denied by the practices and processes of this administration.**

Inconsistent outcomes: Each subgroup seems to have created their own format for reporting. Various levels of transparency are offered in the reports in terms of evidence collected, analysis processes followed, and key decision points regarding prioritizing and writing up the recommendations. **Some reports are detailed and transparent in terms of their outreach efforts, and include the numbers of people contacted/interviewed--this transparency improves the trustworthiness of the recommendations. Other reports significantly lack transparency, and do not offer evidence backing up their analysis and recommendations.**

This inconsistency might be a product of the need for speed in completing the task. We believe that the timeline for the whole process of the task force has been rushed—much faster than anyone would have wanted.

Our overall comments:

We very much appreciate the efforts of the members of the four sub-groups, and **believe they did the best they could do with the instructions provided and on the timeline dictated by the administration.** This highlights the situation as **another example of the lack of shared governance in key decision making regarding the core mission of GW: academics.** Overall, the post-Covid task force and the four subcommittees have done an admirable job of studying post Covid campus functioning.

Murli Gupta

Chair, Faculty Senate ASPP Committee

May 19, 2021

APPENDIX D: *Response from the Faculty Senate Committee on Educational Policies and Technology*

The George Washington University

Faculty Senate Committee on Educational Policies and Technology

EPT committee response to Post-Covid Task Force Subgroup Reports

The committee would first like to acknowledge the impressive amount of work and outreach that has gone into these subgroup reports. The EPT committee has some comments on aspects of the reports that are general across all four of the subgroup reports;

1)   There has been widespread appreciation of the flexibility of teleworking across campus and it is hoped that as the university moves forward post-COVID that policies and attitudes towards appropriate amounts of telework will be more relaxed compared to pre-COVID.

2)   There is also widespread concern regarding the availability of appropriate technology and training for students, faculty, staff, and academic support. GW must ensure that there is equitable access to necessary technology, resources, and technology training.

3)   There was also concern on the committee that some aspects of these reports include items that are not clearly "post-COVID" in nature. Examples of this include calls for more doctoral funding, a graduate program provost, and more BA/MA programs. While these goals may be laudable, they are not clearly in the stated mission of the PCAITF.

4)   There was also some opposition on the committee to the idea of creating a Chief Online Learning Officer. It seems that proposing a new administrative structure must be carefully considered and should be discussed in a timeline that is longer than the course of the PCAITF.

5)   EPT also supports the idea of thinking carefully about tenure and promotion reviews for faculty affected by the pandemic, but it is a topic that might again need a longer timeline and feedback to decide how best to evaluate and potentially adapt the promotion and tenure process.

6)   While many faculty members have expressed concern and difficulty in the transition to online learning over the past year, there are areas, such as School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Clinical Research and Leadership Department, where the online transition has been very successful. GW would be well served to identify areas of excellence and leverage successes as resources for others.

7)   There was also feedback that Post-COVID academic innovation might also include new initiatives regarding psychological wellness of community members and how GW can improve support in these areas.

8)   Finally, it is important to note that in these times of uncertainty, that communication of options, decisions and support resources is essential to ensure that the entire GW community is supported in our joint academic mission.

Prepared by Jason Zara on May 20, 2021

APPENDIX E: *Response of Faculty Senate Research Committee to Working Group Reports*

Faculty Senate Research Committee

Response to Post-Covid Innovation Task Force Report

FSRC appreciates the efforts of the Innovation Task Force Committee in creating the four subgroup reports in an unusually short time. It also appreciates sharing of the drafts with the senate committees.

FSRC solicited comments from the members over emails, which have been forwarded to the Post-Covid Innovation Taskforce Committee. They are also included as an Appendix to this report.

The members of the FSRC want to emphasize that research is a critical component of GW's mission It suffered significant losses due to COVID including the disruption caused by the recent restructuring of the research support infrastructure. It was further exacerbated by not having a VP of Research since July 2020 causing a leadership vacuum during the crisis, which has seen several changes primarily motivated by financial considerations. The additional burden on the faculty having to adopt a virtual mode of instruction without proper infrastructural (e.g. IT) support has also affected their research productivity. There is an immediate need for steps to be taken with appropriate resources for restoration of the research infrastructure, ensuring its proper functioning.

Regarding the Innovation Taskforce, members felt that to make decisions wisely, the university should not be continually trying to complete serious academic planning exercises on shortened timelines which do not allow us to fully utilize the available resources. They should incorporate real "stakeholder" consultation and investigation of the relevant scholarly resources.

Staff

1. We need to rebuild the IT and Research support infrastructure, which are critical not only for effective research but also for effective research administration. We are unable to adapt the IT tools used in research administration to the new POD system due to the issues with IT staffing levels and having lost highly qualified individuals e.g. the university's only Service Now administrator.

2. About teleworking, one should use evidence-based analysis for the appropriateness of different modes for different types of work.

Undergraduate

1. Suggestions for online classes during regular semesters or mandatory summer courses need careful thinking and caution against a one-size-fits-all solution. On one hand, it offers flexibility and potentials for increasing enrollment bringing in additional resources for all activities including research. On the other, online or hi-flex teaching poses an additional burden on faculty time affecting their research productivities.

Graduate

1. Supporting graduate students for 12 months should be a priority with a view to the high cost of GRAs to the grants, needs for a competitive stipend, and additional medical support (pregnancy, mental health care, etc.). There should be thoughts to allocate revenue with appropriate central support.

Faculty

1. Regarding the comment about non-tenured faculty not having sabbatical and their need for time-off, sabbaticals are not to be misunderstood as time-offs. They are time for developing research and scholarly enterprise and increasing their impact.

1. While services and teaching ought to be valued, as they are important components in one's academic career, the university should make research a top goal and be specific about the other responsibilities.

2. GW should always place a clear premium on research productivity throughout a faculty member's career and incentivize it in every way possible, perhaps linking it with reduced teaching loads.

3. There should be a variety of support tools that can be put in place (such as tenure review delays, an additional teaching release, additional external coaching / mentoring, startup deadline extension, etc) and the managers should work with the faculty member concerned to determine what the most appropriate supportive measures would be in each case. Most importantly, it needs to be communicated to junior faculty that these measures are available, and will be employed without prejudice.

Comments from members

I don't have too much more to add—it's been a good "learning experience" though a bit overwhelming with all of our other responsibilities. The short time frame was both a blessing and a constraint, as we were tackling some big issues. More time and more research is always needed, but the short time frame means we can begin to work on next steps.

Of particular concern, I'm sure all on the faculty senate research committee will find, is the the Faculty Subgroup's finding of the negative impact of the pandemic on research, as well as the risk of faculty attrition "Based on national surveys, 35% of faculty are considering change of career, 31% considering change in role and 38% considering retiring."

As GW reopens, and with a seemingly robust economy (at least for now) we can probably expect the research enterprise at GW to rebound and expand. Regarding faculty attrition, a fair amount of retirement is probably a good thing, but not if driven by dissatisfaction. I think that faculty will also realize that they are not alone in terms of the workforce being stressed by the pandemic, and many will probably come to realize that things are not as dire as they think at the moment.

Since other parts of the post-covid taskforce (e.g. those on students and staff) are making positive recommendations, I suggest that the Faculty part of the post-covid taskforce could make further recommendations and specifically those to do with either improving or protecting research

One thing that the ecosystem report in both phases indicated was that faculty time is the most important resource. The second phase of the ecosystem report on resource allocation noted how too much time / events taking faculty attention is a drain on research.

Slide 5 of the post covid taskforce subgroup on faculty notes the damage that Covid has done to research (again due to time).

I'll observe here that some universities have responded to grievous harm that converting classes to online have done to their research enterprise. In other universities one such response has been to either give a course release or to accelerate eligibility for sabbaticals by one year for each class that was converted.

So what might the Faculty Senate Research Committee look for from the post-covid taskforce in terms of protecting or at least not damaging research?

1. Would we recommend acceleration of sabbatical eligibility?

2. Would we recommend that there be course releases offered?

3. Would we recommend that, because it to too damaging to faculty research, and because most undergrads apparently don't like them, that there be no hyflex courses because these are the most drain on faculty time (requiring both online and in person). To this end, our research committee might also suggest striking or eliminating the part Post covid report on graduate education, section on "hybrid campus"(p.6) which asserts that the hybrid model "is manageable".

I agree that the switch to online has negatively affected the research enterprise. It seems like the drain on faculty time could certainly be offset by course release -- something I could support. Wondering others' reactions to your proposed recommendations....

I noted in Slide 12 in the Power Point that one of the recommendations for research involves further supporting

mentoring for early career faculty. This is an excellent initiative, but should be paired with structural support for those involved. The concern is that it's easy for such excellent ideas to become more superficial proposals that ultimately won't yield the critical results needed both for early career faculty research, and won't necessarily address the time that more mid-career or senior faculty need to continue to support/elevate their research agendas. One recommendation might be for any senior or mid-career faculty that gets involved in supporting mentoring initiatives be provided a course release or adjusted timeline for sabbatical.

I would also add that in addition to moving courses online or teaching concurrently, many faculty have played more critical roles supporting students in advising, the "community building" that the graduate student task force report discusses, and in marketing/recruitment efforts of the university. All of these efforts have also been drains on precious faculty time for research, again pointing to the need to support faculty in other structural ways, such as a course release.

Faculty

4. *On committee and meetings: "Evaluate existing committees to determine current relevance and disband committees as appropriate":* This has to be controlled and streamlined. There were too many meetings; all the time. And meetings tended to go on and be disorganized/unfocused.

5. *On Shared Governance:* This has to do with lack of transparency and knowledge about how information flows through GW. Regular faculty have no idea who their senate representatives are; senate representatives don't regularly meet with constituents; There is little familiarity (perhaps, some apathy) with what's going on outside departments.

6. *Themes that derived from the data: Career Development: "To remain nimble and responsive in the pandemic and post-pandemic era GW needs to consider a number of issues focused on faculty development and retention, and also address concerns related to tenure time clocks which even despite an institutional pause could result in unconscious penalization of women and faculty of Black, Asian and Hispanic descent.":* This might sound heartless, but this might be a great opportunity to re-structure programs and departments, hire new promising and highly productive faculty members. It's also an opportunity to diversify the faculty.

7. *Themes that derived from the data: "Our most valuable and precious asset is our people – we need to nurture them back to health":* But this should be with an eye toward productivity and the future of GW's reputation and research success.

8. *Recommendations: Research: "Administration: re-examine tenure timelines; remove/extend expiration of start-up funds; increase flexibility in service expectations, course loads and scheduling; strengthen supporting infrastructure for research (OVPR, IRB, etc.)" :* We should re-consider students course loads; reducing it from 5 to 4 per semester as is the case in several of our market basket schools. The teaching load of TT is higher than in our top research universities.

9. *Recommendations: Career Development: "Assess quality and impact of published research alongside service commitments and teaching":* In my opinion while I recognize the importance of service, it shouldn't be equated with research. The university should make research a top goal and be specific about the service responsibilities. The university should always place a clear premium on research productivity throughout a faculty member's career and incentivize it in every way possible. Likewise for service obligations. Perhaps linking them to research incentives (e.g., reduced teaching loads).

10. *Recommendations: Work-Life Balance: "Faculty need time off. Non-tenured faculty do not have sabbaticals. The norm for research universities is 2-2 but that is not the base teaching load all throughout the university." :* Are sabbaticals time off?! This seems to be a misunderstanding of what these time is supposed to be about...developing your research infrastructure and impact.

Academic Support staff

1. *"[Telework] is an arrangement that may be appropriate for some employees in some positions when job, employee, and manager characteristics are best suited to such an arrangement."[Italics added.] (Source: GWHR). Based on staff responses, GW might consider a much more open attitude towards telework":* I understand this is meant to be vague and flexible but some definitions and parameters would benefit everyone.

2. It would be good to know whether some jobs are more amenable to telework than others. Having some evidence-based analysis on the types of jobs that are suited for this type of work would be helpful.

3. *"Reduce "information silos" where information does not flow efficiently across schools and administrative units." :* Some clarity or centralization/transparency in terms of who is the administration talk to, what are they saying and how is that information getting to the rest of the faculty and staff is key.

Undergraduate Students

1. *"Many student services can be effectively delivered via online platforms" :* There were rumors (unsure if true) that GW cut mental health services during the pandemic. If this is true, that should be changed.

The first point is that I fully agree with the assessment that online and even more hybrid modes have negative impacts on research. I am not sure that compensating the adverse impact on research has a one-size fits all solution. Depending on the area and the specific faculty, the needed remedy can be different. Beyond course releases and sabbatical there are many other things such as GRA support even just in the form of tuition credits and much more … So having a flexible vehicle to adapt to the needs of the researchers would be of great value. Furthermore, the online model can potentially increase our enrollments as it is inherently scalable and that may even have higher impacts on research in the future. So flexibility and scalability of the solutions are important.

We need to communicate back and early on how research is very core to how we will be defining ourselves as a university in the years to come and therefore any new leadership search needs to highlight and underscore it. Research in my opinion should be visibly stated, not just implied.

It may, however, be helpful to point out that to make decisions wisely, we should not be continually trying to complete serious academic planning exercises which should incorporate real "stakeholder" consultation, and investigation of the relevant scholarly resources, on shortened corporate timelines which do not allow us to fully utilize the available resources. I know this was a great frustration of many of my colleagues in the strategic planning phase, that, for example, town halls were announced with very short timelines, limiting the ability of faculty to shift office hours etc. to enable participation.

In terms of content, I thought it was very poignant and important to note the strength of focus on communication, community building, and empathy in all the reports.

Undergraduate Report

The suggestion of allowing online classes in the regular semester could afford increased flexibility for faculty whose research necessarily takes place abroad, allowing them the flexibility to be present at archives or labs between classes. However to take advantage of that potential, GW will need to have a more coherent plan for dealing with foreign presence of teaching faculty. COVID has really intensified scrutiny of foreign working and the university's communications and attitudes on this are very inconsistent, with faculty teaching classes being treated as a completely different situation to those on full salary while on sabbatical. The legal costs of engaging foreign counsel to address tax / employment law implications are being passed on to the colleges, increasing their need (in these highly constrained budget times) to be very restrictive. If we want to have a serious global presence, we need to have a more consistent approach and an easier mechanism to evaluate and approve such arrangements.

The suggestion of a mandatory summer semester could be very detrimental to research if this would be in addition to Fall and Spring teaching loads. If it could be engaged selectively to e.g. allow people to have their "summer research time" in Fall or Spring, that may actually help. For example, the accelerator at which I mainly work is only turned on for experiments from July to December, by shifting teaching from Fall to summer I could enable more east participation in experiments.

Graduate Report

The current budget model ensures that the cost of students is high, restricting their numbers, which in itself has an impact on program quality (smaller cohort sizes can result in little community, and a reduction in variety in course options). This also makes the cost of putting graduate students on grants high, reducing the number of GRA positions for students, and forcing students to continue teaching instead of focusing on research post-quals. We need to find a better model of supporting graduate education and facilitate graduate student support on research grants.

Not mentioned by the report, is the issue of the coverage of graduate health insurance, which only e.g. covers pregnancy care at 80%. I spoke with a pregnant graduate student who was terrified to need an epidural during delivery as it would cost $800 for the 20% liability... We need to provide not only competitive stipends (for which there should be university set minimums which are reasonable, and clear guidance for PIs, and which we have set within CCAS - requiring that faculty pay their students at the prevailing total TA package level in order to be eligible for 2/3 tuition match), but also healthcare benefits and access to mental healthcare that are supportive of the whole student.

The idea of ensuring twelve-month support of grad students is great in principle, but it really would be an unfunded mandate in the current fiscal model and very constrained budgetary system without a clearer argument that not only should this be allowed / encouraged, but that revenue should be redirected from appropriate central sources to support it.

Staff and Academic Support

I thoroughly agree that the FWI program needs a cash injection and that the missed FWI year should be made up post-haste. We are wasting valuable staff time supporting computers that are failing, instead of on strategic activities. Skimping on adequate IT resources is penny wise and pound foolish in the extreme, adversely impacts all aspects of academic and research life, and has a real negative impact on morale.

We need to rebuild the IT support staff, their current levels are inadequate to the task, despite heroic efforts for those left behind, and, if we do not act soon, we will see attrition of the remaining staff due to extreme burnout. This is a severe impediment not only to effective research, but also to effective research administration. We are unable to adapt the IT tools used in research administration to the new POD system due to the issues with IT staffing levels and having lost highly qualified individuals e.g. the university's only Service Now administrator.

Faculty

I support the earlier comments on teaching release, and thoroughly endorse the need to provide supporting structures for junior folks concerned about progression etc.

There should be a variety of support tools which can be put in place (such as tenure review delays, an additional teaching release, additional external coaching / mentoring, startup deadline extension etc) and the managers should would work with the faculty member concerned to determine what the most appropriate supportive measures would be in each case. Most importantly, it needs to be clearly communicated to junior faculty that these measures are available, and will be employed without prejudice. The uncertainty of how they will be supported to recover from the COVID-years can do almost as much damage to their research and morale as the COVID-years did. We need to provide real reassurance and support swiftly.

APPENDIX F: *Response from Faculty Senate Libraries Committee to Working Group Reports*

Our committee notes that GW libraries are central to many of the main themes detailed in the reports but are not mentioned specifically. We wish to emphasize that the broader funding issues that have impacted the library since the previous budget crisis at GWU (2015-2018) continues to impact the LAI and has compounded in the current crisis. We note, specifically, our report from 2020: "Our library budgets are—and have been--well below those of our peer institutions; at the same time, the costs of journal and database subscriptions have increased. . . . our committee advocates for a fully-funded budget and fully-staffed library system in order to ensure that we maintain a research university-level library system."

1. Staff:

    a. Timeline to reopen: Clear signaling is needed and soon. Given the centrality of the library to the teaching and research mission of the university, it will likely be one of the first areas of the university to transition fully to a "post-Covid" campus.

    b. Regarding telework: LAI staff and librarians have excelled at supporting teaching and research during this year of virtual learning; they ask that this performance be taken into account in decisions regarding telework.

    c. Safety Protocols: Our libraries are among the most populated buildings on campus; they are also (in the past) open to the general public. Ensuring the safety of staff and librarians will be key and this information should be communicated very soon (esp given the HVAC issues at Gelman Library).

2. Faculty: The faculty subgroup's finding of the negative impact of the pandemic on research will likely intensify some of the issues stated above (including increased in-person use of the libraries during the summer months).

    a. Gains from 2020-2021: LAI-organized training around online pedagogy was essential to navigating this past year and should be recognized.

    b. Reopening and the Impact of budget cuts: The 2020-2021 budget cuts resulted in loss of staffing at Burns law library and cuts to the collection (specialized research journals) at Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library. As the report notes, the impact of Covid on faculty (and librarian) research was profound; the university should invest in its research infrastructure (including reinstituting sabbaticals for librarians) to enable faculty and librarians to continue their research.

3. Graduate Education: the pandemic made it clear that accessibility to online research resources is key to graduate education and we emphasize that this question of access will continue post-Covid (esp in terms of the high cost of research databases).

4. Undergraduate Education:

    a. Excellence in training: LAI has excelled in training faculty to meet the demands of online education; we hope that this training can continue (with adequate staffing and funding to make this possible even as with the campus plans to reopen).

    b. Online Education: GWU should consult its successful and long-established online programs (including many in Health Science) as it plans to meet student demand for expanded hybrid pedagogy;

    c. Research Infrastructure: student demand for recorded lectures will require that the university explores and develops cost-effective storage strategies other than in Blackboard (including training faculty in work arounds).