

I. Introduction

On April 16, 2020, Provost Cangelaris charged this Task Force to investigate and consider contingency strategies for Fall 2020 instruction in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Appendix A* includes the full charge and committee membership. With the establishment of the University Steering Committeeⁱ and its related task forces, this Task Force was renamed to “Academic Affairs.” The committee met at least weekly since mid-April.

The goal of this effort is to identify options and catalog the benefits and weaknesses of each option. Throughout the effort, the Task Force received input from a number of sources, including student surveys, feedback from faculty and consultation with colleagues across campus and at other institutions.

II. Overview

The Task Force is charged with identifying and considering instructional options consistent with health and safety conditions that may be present in the fall.

The Task Force’s deliberations were informed by the Spring 2020 experience of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sudden move to remote learning underscored the immense value of a residential experience for the growth and development of undergraduate students, the training and maturation of graduate students, and the production of new knowledge and research. Face-to-face instruction creates more opportunity for the personal interactions that are so vital to the learning process. In-person discussions and activities allow students to engage fully with the instructor, their peers, and the material. There is no more powerful learning experience than instructors and students exploring a topic together and pushing each other to deeper understanding. Our students also grow and mature through interactions with peers of different backgrounds and viewpoints in a variety of settings. The co-curricular aspects of the residential experience provide crucial and irreplaceable opportunities for students to learn leadership and interpersonal skills, develop into well-rounded individuals, and make a difference in their communities. Without COVID-19, our business-as-usual model is based on a strong residential experience for our students. With COVID-19, we must look at ways to deliver as much of the experience – curricular and co-curricular – as possible within the constraints placed upon us by the pandemic.

The remote learning experience in spring 2020 also underscores the importance of access and equity issues. The COVID-19 pandemic brought into sharp focus deep historical disparities across different communities, leaving the most vulnerable members of our society particularly exposed to the deadly consequences of the virus. For the University, the rapid change to remote instruction in the Spring 2020 semester put students with limited access to technology at a disadvantage. But those disadvantages extended beyond technology: students suffered from lack of access to support networks, quiet spaces for study and reflection, academic and advising support, and many other resources which are available on our campus. The Task Force also recognized the disparate impact of the crisis for members of staff and faculty who faced different sets of personal, professional, and economic challenges in managing the switch to remote learning. The Task Force was mindful throughout its deliberations of these issues and sought solutions that would benefit our entire community of students, staff, and faculty.

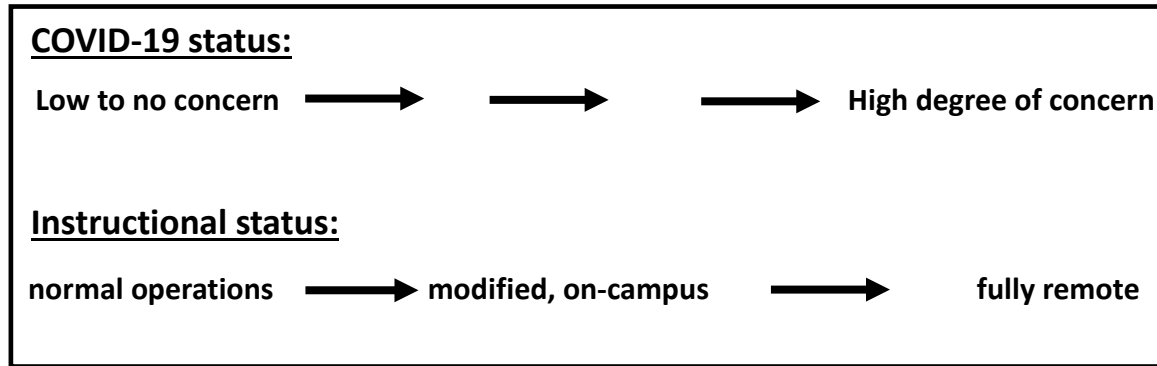


Figure 1 Campus Instructional scenarios.

The range of options considered by the Task Force is shown in *Figure 1*. On one extreme is “normal operations” (*i.e.*, full face-to-face instruction as in any other semester) while the other extreme is a semester that is fully remote with no face-to-face instruction (remote instruction is sometimes referred to as “online” although other modalities are potentially available.) Given the state of the pandemic, we recognize and acknowledge that normal operations are unlikely. Fully remote operations remain a possibility that will be determined by the course of the virus, whether the campus can operate safely, and guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health.ⁱⁱ

The extreme cases, normal operations and fully remote, are considerations that would be driven exclusively by the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff. Put another way: normal operation will not resume in the Fall 2020 semester, and fully online will happen only if conditions force us into that eventuality. Therefore, the Task Force spent the majority of its time considering a number of scenarios related to “modified on-campus” instruction. In this instance, the “modification” acknowledges that conditions might evolve throughout the semester and that special considerations and adjustments (*e.g.*, social distancing) are going to be relevant throughout the term.

In evaluating the possibility of “modified on-campus instruction,” the Task Force made several assumptions associated with campus activities. In particular, we assume if any form of face-to-face instruction occurs:

1. The University will have met all of the requirements necessary to proceed to Phase IV of Governor Pritzker’s Restore Illinois Plan.ⁱⁱⁱ
2. The campus and community will have in place adequate testing/tracing/quarantine procedures, cleaning protocols and enforceable guidelines and procedures for safe campus operations. This includes testing campus community members as they return to campus in August, along with a robust, continuous testing strategy.
3. Students, faculty and staff will be required – and will agree to – behave in a manner that maximizes the safety of the entire university community. This includes social distancing, mask wearing and other safe public health practices carried out on-campus and off.
4. For a number of reasons related to COVID-19, some faculty, students and staff will be unable return to campus.
5. Physical space and time necessary to carry out academic instruction have priority over non-academic or co-curricular activities.

If the community or University are unable to meet all these conditions, or if health conditions lead to a retreat from Phase IV, we will be forced to continue with remote-only instruction, which will be

described in Section IV. We also note that changing circumstances could lead to a transition to fully remote instruction at a later point of the semester as occurred in the Spring 2020 term.

The Task Force also identified several objectives for any on-campus instructional activities:

1. New and continuing students who do not return to campus for any reason must have access to courses and opportunity to make progress toward their degree.
2. Instructional faculty who are unable to return to campus for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic should still have opportunities to teach and engage students remotely.
3. Even as the University must rely on remote course delivery for modified instruction, we should strive to maximize face-to-face instruction to the degree that safety allows.
4. To the extent feasible, units should have the ability to determine the appropriate delivery modality for their own courses.
5. The University should utilize face-to-face instruction where it can have the most impact on the student experience. Examples include performance courses, studio experiences, laboratories and peer-interaction/peer-learning situations.

In order to think about the issues associated with modified on-campus scenarios, we break the problem into three components:

- **Logistical.** How does the University implement an instructional plan which protects student/faculty/staff safety and reflects the need for social distancing and other safety measures? This acknowledges, for example, that classroom capacity will be greatly reduced compared to normal operations.
- **Calendar.** Are there semester scheduling modifications which can/should be made to be responsive to safety, logistical and instructional issues?
- **Instruction.** What actions do we need to take to ensure a strong educational experience for our students? This could include topics such as blended learning, assessment, and modified delivery in response to calendar and logistical issues.

In any modified on-campus instruction scenario, our effort will assuredly include a sizeable component of remote course delivery. During a normal semester, classroom utilization is above 80% for much of the week, and above 90% during preferred hours of instruction. Social distancing in the coming academic year will limit classroom occupancy considerably, meaning that we will simply not have the space to carry out in-person instruction at the level to which we are accustomed. Furthermore, Phase IV of Restore Illinois limits gatherings to 50 individuals or less. Even classes with smaller enrollments will require much larger rooms to ensure safe social distancing.

Any calendaring and logistical options which require a significant modification to the Fall 2020 Class Schedule ([link](#)) pose additional challenges. As of late-May, more than 25,000 continuing and transfer students have completed early registration for Fall 2020 based upon the “standard” Class Schedule. New, first-time freshmen begin registering in early June. Options that require a total revamp of the timetable will likely require all students to re-register.

We place Class Schedule modifications into three categories:

- **Minor** – minimal impact on Class Schedule. An example is a face-to-face section which is moved online while maintaining the same meeting time.
- **Modest** – more significant changes which do not require a full Class Schedule reset. An example would be additional discussion sections added to an existing course or turning a scheduled Tu/Th course into a Tu face-to-face and Th remote course.

- **Major** – changes which require the timetable to be “rebuilt” and many students must re-register for Fall 2020. An example of a major modification would be shifting one-half of all courses meeting between 9 am – 12 pm to the 5 pm – 8 pm time window.

While perhaps possible to achieve, major modifications to the Class Schedule, and the corresponding need for a number of students to re-register, would be extremely challenging given the short time between now and the start of the fall semester.

Since the majority of students (other than new freshmen, who start registration on June 1) have registered for Fall 2020, even minor and modest modifications to the Class Schedule can give rise to the need for student schedule changes. This will put additional stress on students and academic advisors in the summer and fall. For the Spring 2021 semester, scheduling modifications are easier to implement if they can be carried out prior to early student registration.

In the following sections, we present three broad scenarios for Fall 2020 instruction: modified on-campus delivery, fully remote instruction, and a transition between the two. Within these scenarios – particularly for modified on-campus delivery, we consider a number of options and outline the benefits and challenges associated with each option.

III. Scenario A: Modified on-campus delivery

This section outlines potential actions to achieve an on-campus semester that is both safe and also prioritizes face-to-face learning opportunities. To be clear, this section outlines a number of ideas that were considered by the Task Force. *We do not endorse all of these ideas*, nor does this section attempt to exhaustively describe every contingency considered. In a later section, we will provide concrete recommendations for Fall 2020 instruction.

In any scenario where students are on-campus for the Fall 2020 semester, we must recognize the truly unique circumstances under which we will be operating. While it is understandable that faculty, students, and staff long for “business as usual,” we must be willing and able to take the necessary steps to enable on-campus operation. Ensuring the health and safety of our community remains the top priority at all times. A safe environment, an aggressive COVID-19 testing/tracing/quarantine system, and personal protective equipment are all prerequisites for an on-campus fall semester of any form. In addition, as integral members of the campus community, it is important that students engage in safe behavior at all times. Without this commitment to safe behavior from our student body, actions taken in regard to on-campus instruction will be quickly overwhelmed by behavior undertaken after-hours or off-campus.

In the following, we outline a set of options along with benefits and challenges. These options are considered in the context of maintaining safety while producing an excellent educational experience and recognizing that all campus resources – from faculty instructional time to financial resources – are finite. Along with the options is an attempt to describe the “pros and cons” for each action. While many of these choices could be considered “à la carte,” others should be taken together for maximum effectiveness. We describe these alternatives when needed.

A. Logistical Issues

This section outlines some of the logistical issues associated with a fall semester that includes an on-campus component. The University must follow safe practices at all times, including CDC, IDPH, CUPHD and campus guidelines related to social distancing and gathering sizes.

Classroom Capacity. In Phase IV of Governor Pritzker's "Restore Illinois" plan, gatherings are limited to 50 people. This limit is only lifted in Phase V. The Urbana-Champaign region is unlikely to reach Phase V by the beginning of the fall semester.

Our normal instructional spaces must be utilized at considerably reduced capacity in order to follow social distancing guidelines. To ensure that individuals remain 6 feet apart in the classroom, we must allocate approximately 40 ft² per person. Seat arrangement (fixed versus moveable) and other considerations such as airflow may further reduce capacity. Based upon assessments at other institutions, we assume that rooms with fixed seating (*e.g.*, auditoriums) will be at 15-20% capacity, while rooms with moveable tables/chairs will be at 25-30% capacity.

By itself, the social distancing requirements on classroom space place tremendous limitations on our face-to-face instruction. A room that normally seats 100 individuals will now have to be used for a smaller section of 15-25 students. Peer-to-peer interaction in a large room will require loud speaking, an action which is known to further propel droplets and spread COVID-19.

Online sections. Modifications to classroom capacity directly affect larger sections, which will be unable to meet face-to-face simultaneously with all students. While it might be possible to spread students out over several sections, we believe this to be impractical for our larger courses. As a result, course sections with 50 or more students will be forced to deliver content online. Recorded content could be performed remotely, in a studio, or generated before small groups of students (live audience) which would add the benefit of real-time questions and answers.

To clarify terminology, requirement for remote delivery based upon enrollment would be implemented at the "section" level. For example, a single course (class) might normally be scheduled for a lecture section of 160 students, along with 8 discussion sections of 20 students each. The limitation on gatherings would force the lecture section to be delivered remotely (online) while the discussion sections could conceivably continue to meet face-to-face. In this example, the **class** is not fully online, only the lecture section. A class is only fully online if all aspects of the course are performed remotely. For this example, one model of instruction would be to have an online lecture section together with six face-to-face discussion sections and two online discussion sections. The online discussion sections would accommodate students not on campus, while the face-to-face sections would be available for on-campus students.

Given the space limitations due to social distancing, it will be important for departments and programs to judiciously choose and schedule sections that should continue face-to-face. The Task Force recognizes that it is preferable to carry out the majority of our instruction in-person, but in this situation, we must identify the highest priority aspects of our academic programs for face-to-face instruction.

Better utilization of irregular times. Peak instructional times tend to be late morning and early afternoon. As we work to utilize fully available space, it is important to consider spaces throughout the *entire* day. In particular, early morning, late afternoon and evening meeting times tend to be underutilized. Taking advantage of classroom spaces during these times can increase the opportunities for face-to-face instruction.

Table I. Proposed modified daily schedule to allow for condensed instruction and social distancing.

"normal"					"modified"	
M/W/F	T/Th		slots		M/W/F	T/Th
8:00	8:00		1		8:00	8:00
9:00	9:30		2		9:10	9:35
10:00	11:00		3		10:20	11:10
11:00	12:30		4		11:30	12:45
12:00	14:00		5		12:40	14:20
13:00	15:30		6		13:50	15:55
14:00	17:00		7		15:00	17:30
15:00	18:30		8		16:10	18:55
16:00	20:00		9		17:20	20:30
17:00			10		18:30	
18:00			11		19:40	
19:00			12		20:50	
20:00			13			
13 slots	9 slots				12 slots	9 slots

Stop/start classes (passing periods). In addition to reduced classroom density in observance of social distancing, we must also produce a safe environment outside the classroom. One area of concern is groups of students entering and exiting classrooms. With only 10 minutes between classes on M/W/F, even a low-density classroom might have a “traffic jam” of students attempting to exit and enter at the same time.

Facilities & Services will be actively working throughout the summer to help improve safety: for example, for larger rooms, some doors will be for entrance only, others for exit only. Even so, 10 minutes between classes on M/W/F, and 15 minutes between classes on Tu/Th, creates a surge in traffic flow. We recommend extending the passing time between classes to 20 minutes. *Table I* shows that the effect of this is minimal on the number of instruction times (one time slot is lost on M/W/F.) Given that the entire daily schedule would shift, the impact on students’ class schedules would be minimal. Undoubtedly, conflicts with courses meeting at non-standard times would result in some cases.

An alternative approach to longer passing periods would be to maintain standard course starting times, shorten sessions correspondingly (40 minute sessions M/W/F, 60 minute sessions Tu/Th) and compensate instructional time through remote instruction. In this scheme, the schedule is preserved along with longer passing periods at the trade-off of 20% of the instructional period moved to remote instruction, causing disruption to existing teaching modules and lesson plans.

Saturdays. One of our biggest problems meeting the demand for more classroom space to adhere to social distancing guidelines is the limited number of available classrooms during weekdays. As stated above, the number of students who can be served in any given classroom will be considerably reduced from a normal semester. Hence, we are looking at additional meeting times in order to maintain social distancing. The idea to expand course offerings to Saturday is viewed in two different ways, both of which are intended to be of minor or modest modifications to the Class Schedule. In one scheme,

courses which need additional sections (e.g., additional lab sections to accommodate social distancing) could add those sections on Saturdays. Another scheme would “aggregate” face-to-face instruction time for a course into a single, longer Saturday section (e.g., in-person sessions once per month on a Saturday for 2 ½ hours) similar to a format currently utilized by the School of Social Work.

Modifying our Class Schedule to include Saturday instruction would be beneficial in terms of space usage, but would also pose challenges in other dimensions, such as religious practices, child care on weekends, and work-life boundaries.

Extra spaces. Another way to provide additional instructional space is to pursue the option to convert non-traditional and non-academic spaces for instruction, including the Illini Union, Campus Recreation, Housing (Ikenberry Commons), and Alice Campbell Alumni Center. Other available spaces might include departmental or research unit rooms on campus that are traditionally reserved for seminar speakers and special meetings. Every square foot of potential instructional space, even if less than ideal, should be evaluated for the Fall 2020 semester. Supplemental space must be accessible, possess a layout suitable for instruction, and include the level of classroom technology standard to regular classrooms.

Space sharing. To maximize space utilization and ensure that as many courses as possible can have a face-to-face component, we must also consider ways to “share” or “split” classroom space. No, we are not proposing to simultaneously put two classes meetings in the same room. But it is possible to share meeting times and alternate room usage. For example, two courses which meet from 9:30 am - 10:45 am Tu/Th might be booked in the same room, with one course meeting in-person on Tuesday, and the other course meeting in-person on Thursday. Instruction on the off days would be delivered remotely. This option provides the benefit of ensuring that more classes have at least one time per week for face-to-face instruction while fully utilizing classroom space. This approach also has the benefit of maintaining “regularly scheduled” course meeting times, which is of benefit to our students. In Spring 2020 student feedback, one common complaint with remote instruction was the loss of a regular schedule that helps to pace student work.

Campus Capacity and Occupancy. As we assess campus capacity for students, understanding that instructional space will be severely limited by social distancing, one possibility is to reduce the total number of students on campus by inviting only a portion of the student body to campus for fall instruction. Many different models exist, including prioritizing students with financial and technology needs, students who have a higher need of face-to-face instruction, freshmen students to help them transition to college, or upper class students since they often need more specialized instruction. There is also a question about how graduate students (many of whom are both students and instructors) would factor into this model.

Limiting campus to select subsets of students would increase the number of courses offered face-to-face (or hybrid) for those students. At the same time, it would move other students into a fully remote semester. Selective limiting on-campus participation necessarily increases the number of students participating in a fully remote semester.

Even if we limited the number of students invited to return in the fall, actual campus occupancy would be much greater than the number of students invited to return. Many returning students have signed leases in local apartments and are likely to come to the community even if not formally invited to return to campus. In the Spring 2020, even after campus was closed, many students remained in the community and were seen out-and-about on campus. The University must also consider whether

students who are not part of the “invited group” might choose to enroll elsewhere during or after the Fall 2020 semester.

B. Calendar Issues

As mentioned above, semester scheduling challenges also arise as we deal with COVID-19. In this section, we outline issues associated with the fall calendar, while continuing to consider modified, on-campus instruction. Concerns from experts include a resurgence of the virus later in the fall, perhaps coinciding with flu season.

Phase-in of students. A recurring theme in discussions was the need to avoid situations where the density of people is high. This will be challenging at the beginning of the term as students become accustomed to classroom locations, timing, entrance and exit, and ways to maintain social distancing. One possible solution is to stagger the introduction of students to classes. For example, freshmen only attend class on the first two days of the semester, sophomores begin on day 3, juniors begin on day 5, seniors on day 6. For students who begin on-campus after day one, their initial course material could be delivered online. A scheme like this can be executed over a matter of days (within one week, if preferred) while having the benefit of “easing” students into a routine with lower initial student density.

A variation on this theme would be to have classes on the first floor of a building start five minutes early the first week, courses on the second floor to start on time, and courses on the third floor to start five minutes late the first week (with each floor also being released in staggered fashion). A similar plan could be implemented for courses in rooms that are odd or evenly numbered to start before or after the bell the first week.

Breaks. COVID-19 modeling experts as part of the SHIELD team point out that we should minimize the number of times the students return to campus. Every time students leave for a break (e.g., Fall Break, Semester Break, Spring Break) they travel to many different locations, exposing themselves to communities far beyond campus. Every return to campus will involve a period of testing and potential quarantine, so minimizing these “return to campus” events is important.^{iv} *Table II* lists the primary dates associated with the Fall 2020 semester.

In a normal academic year, all students return to campus from breaks on 4 occasions: beginning of fall semester, after Fall Break, beginning of spring semester, after Spring Break. It is possible to reduce the number of times students return from break with modifications to the academic calendar.

Table II. Fall 2020 academic calendar. After Fall Break, there are 8 days of instruction, Reading Day and 6 days of final exams.

What	Date(s)
First day of Fall 2020 instruction	August 24
Labor Day	September 7
End of POT A (1 st 8-week)	October 16
Start of POT B (2 nd 8-week)	October 19
Fall Break	November 21-29
Last Day of Instruction	December 9
Reading Day	December 10
Final exams	December 11-18

Fall semester. Return to campus at the beginning of fall semester is an unavoidable transition for on-campus instruction. However, it is conceivable to eliminate the return-to-campus from Fall Break. This could be achieved in several ways:

- Early start. If we begin the semester two weeks early, August 10, it is possible to complete the semester at Fall Break with modest modifications to the instructional timeline. This option is challenging for a number of reasons. Summer session ends on August 8, leaving only one day between Summer and Fall sessions. In addition, students, faculty, and staff have already made plans (internships, vacation, research) based upon an August 24 start date. An early start would also require modification to faculty and staff contracts.
- Longer class sessions. Our nominal class meeting times are 50 minutes for M/W/F classes and 75 minutes for Tu/Th classes. If we increased meeting times by 20% (increase of 10 minutes M/W/F, 15 minutes Tu/Th) we could make up for instruction time lost after Fall Break and conclude the semester by November 20. This scheme works against our need for additional classroom space and meeting times. It would also require faculty to map their class sessions onto a different footprint. An instructor who has developed curriculum for 50-minute sessions would be required to modify lesson plans to accommodate the longer sessions.
- Remote end. A third option is to keep our existing academic calendar and simply have the final three weeks (8 days of instruction, Reading Day, 6 days of finals) conducted remotely. Given our experience with the Spring 2020 semester, we know that this option is achievable, particularly if faculty and students are made aware of it at the beginning of the Fall semester and can plan for a remote ending to the term. Remote final exams present additional assessment challenges that can be addressed with planning.
- Short semester. In this option, we start the fall term on time and modify the semester so that final exams end at Fall Break. This approach shortens instruction by three full weeks (at least 14 days) and is therefore disfavored.

Spring semester. Following the logic outlined above, the University should consider limiting return-to-campus events in the Spring 2021 semester as well. One way to do this is to eliminate Spring Break. The nominal start date for Spring 2021 is January 19. If, for example, the University delays the beginning of Spring semester by one week (start on January 25) we can complete the full semester on the normal schedule by eliminating Spring Break. This must be weighed against the fact that eliminating Spring Break is problematic from the standpoint of stress and mental health. One way to partially compensate would be to have additional reading days prior to final exams.

Alternative Semester Format. Another option considered to provide more flexibility was to break the 16-week semester into two 8-week terms (modules). This idea has two specific benefits:

- It would lend itself more naturally to changing conditions. If we were forced to terminate face-to-face instruction at mid-semester, students would have more choices and flexibility for the 2nd half-semester.
- If one or both halves of the semester are online, a typical student would take two or three courses at once. We know from the Spring 2020 experience that students enrolled in 4-6 courses had a very hard time keeping up with all courses via remote instruction. A modified 2x8-week term would reduce the number of courses in which student is enrolled at any given time.

Although there are benefits, there are also significant shortcomings with this approach. First, most faculty are not used to teaching an 8-week course and would have to modify their content substantially.

Secondly, courses would proceed at double the normal pace, which might be challenging for some disciplines. Third, this approach would involve significant logistical challenges in rebuilding the Fall 2020 Class Schedule.

C. Instructional Issues

A modified instructional format involving both face-to face and online learning would also involve challenges for instruction.

Course Development. Course instructors will have to engage new modalities and approaches to ensure that courses achieve learning objectives and are consistent with the standards of excellence that students expect. Although all instructors pivoted quickly this spring to a remote format, many faculty did not have the time, expertise, and opportunity to develop sophisticated-and-complete online courses. In surveys regarding spring instruction, faculty have pointed out a difference between the simple remote delivery of classes and an integrated online education which takes full advantage of the technology to engage students in new and thought-provoking ways. Even with blended courses which have both online and face-to-face components, faculty and instructors will need support to develop novel approaches to mixing modalities in an effective and manner.

To uphold high quality instruction, the University will need to offer educational opportunities over the summer that support the development of new course modalities to help instructors learn about different techniques and approaches to online education.

The University may also consider other incentives for instructors to invest in new course development, including providing financial support for educational innovation and ensuring that junior and mid-career faculty who rise to the challenge are rewarded for their efforts at promotion and tenure time.

Online assessment. With a modified face-to-face semester, many of the aspects of a “normal” semester will be unavailable. For example, the ability for large courses to run combined, evening exams in classrooms across the campus will not be feasible. Therefore, it will be necessary for the campus to rely more heavily upon online assessment tools. We have a campus-wide license for unlimited use of Proctorio™, an online exam proctoring tool which allows fully proctored exam to be taken by students. A number of sessions to demonstrate how Proctorio™ works will be available to faculty over the summer.

Placement and proficiency. All students, whether at Illinois or another institution, experienced a very unusual Spring 2020 semester. For continuing students, we are keenly aware of the circumstances and challenges students faced during the remote instruction portion of the semester. New students in the Fall 2020 semester will be coming from many different high schools and had a wide range of experiences in their final high school semester. As a consequence, we will be facing a wider range of student preparation than usual. Campus efforts to provide incoming students with precollege preparatory material have been limited, so it is important that instructors prepare first year courses with additional transition material where appropriate.

Classroom set-up and technology. Classroom technology will also need to be reviewed for remote delivery and upgraded if needed. Safety requirements, such as personal protective equipment, may make it difficult for instructors to deliver course content. For instance, faculty and students will be wearing masks in the classroom, potentially making it difficult to be heard or to read lips. Although general assignment classrooms are already well-equipped with technology, temporary spaces will need

to be evaluated to ensure that all students, even those who sit in the back can see materials, hear discussion, and participate in conversation. Other safety features (e.g., Plexiglass or different seating arrangements) may also inhibit the delivery of course content and require that the classroom be equipped with technologies to offset those measures.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities. Regardless of the modality, instructors need to be particularly cognizant of the needs of students with disabilities. Accommodations, which are necessary for face-to-face instruction, remain necessary in courses with online content. In some cases, additional accommodations are necessary for online learning. For courses with on-line content, appropriate captioning of videos, live interpreters during Zoom meetings, and access to electronic content and learning management platforms for text-to-speech readers must be provided to allow all students to have access to the materials.

The campus must also be aware of how modifications to the physical space of the classroom might affect students with limited mobility or students who use wheelchairs. For instance, if a large lecture hall requires that a specific door be used for entrance and another door for exit, it may interfere with the ability of disabled students to move in and out of the classroom. Distancing protocols must take into account the possibility of students with a variety of disabilities in the classroom.

Given the human, psychological, and economic costs of the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education must anticipate an increase in the numbers of students experiencing mental distress, anxiety, and acute stress. Instructors need to be trained in how to recognize behavioral indicators that might suggest a student is in distress. Instructors also need to know the what resources are available to help students in need and how to connect students with those resources.

It is also important that we accommodate and consider instructors with disabilities. This is relevant with respect to non-standard instructional spaces, online instruction and personal protective equipment.

Health and Safety. The University needs to develop and publicize its expectations and policies around health and safety in the classroom. Instructors must clearly understand their rights and responsibilities in this area. For instance, what actions may an instructor take if a student refuses to wear a mask in class? Or shows up to class while COVID-symptomatic? How should a faculty member respond to a student who complains about a classmate who s/he suspects is ill? Can a faculty member require students to take additional safety actions (e.g., wear disposable gloves) beyond the University-established policies?

The University needs to review its policies and guidelines around student absences and accommodations and make sure that instructors understand those policies and guidelines. For instance, will students testing positive or under quarantine due to exposure be excused from class? Will students feeling ill automatically be excused or will they need verification from McKinley? Instructors need to be aware of the protocols in the case they or one of their students becomes ill. Common language in the form of a syllabus template will help instructors convey expectations and policies to students.

The coming academic year will also provide unique challenges for students who must carry out student teaching, clinical work, or other required internships. Decisions regarding these experiences must be undertaken with safety as the top priority. For activities occurring off-campus, conditions and public health guidance at the remote site are an important consideration.

Intellectual Property, Harassment, and Content Sharing. As faculty and graduate instructors develop and deliver their courses in new modalities, it raises issues around intellectual property and academic freedom. The University has existing policies addressing these concerns. But as more courses are put online, particularly in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, these issues become even more pressing. Online course delivery creates more possibility for recording and misappropriating course materials. It is not just a matter of copyright violation – using course materials which technically belong to the instructor or the University. This becomes especially problematic when course materials by their very nature deal with controversial and difficult topics. In this situation, those course materials may be used to harass, intimidate, and silence instructors because of their views, in clear violation of their academic freedom. Faculty need to be aware of the University’s policies and recommendations on this issue^v as well as the protocols if instructors become targets of online trolls ([link](#)). The best approach to these challenges involves the utilization of technology (e.g., password-protected Zoom sessions) along with course and campus policies.

The University needs to ensure that its security protocols and technology guidelines for online class meetings and matters such as office hours and internships are updated regularly and disseminated widely.^{vi}

Administrators, faculty, staff and graduate instructors should be reminded of the intellectual property rules around course development ([link](#)).

IV. Scenario B: Fully remote instruction

If the status of COVID-19 drives us into a position where our semester is fully remote, a number of issues must be considered. An entire remote semester is different than Spring 2020, during which we had 8 weeks of face-to-face instruction before moving to remote instruction. In this Scenario, it will be necessary to cancel courses which cannot be delivered in a fully online format for an entire semester. Even if our campus is face-to-face for the Fall 2020 semester, some students will be unable to come to campus. No matter what, we will have a number of students, undergraduate and graduate, who will experience their first Illinois semester from a remote location.^{vii}

Based upon student surveys and other feedback, we know that managing a full course load (approximately 16 credit hours) of fully remote material is extremely challenging for some students. It is important that students have an option to register for part-time instruction, as some academic progress is better than none. For students who opt for part-time enrollment, the University should consider increased course offerings in the Summer 2021 term to help maintain academic progress.

There will invariably also be questions related to the appropriate cost of attendance for a fully remote semester. We note that student fees are considerably reduced for online students, as was done for the online-only Summer 2020 term.

It will be important to build community and engage students beyond asynchronous delivery of course material. If we are fully online in the Fall 2020, this will be the first time ever our institution experienced such a radical change to instruction. New students would have no reference for an “Illinois experience” and returning students would continue to struggle with isolation and challenges in maintaining pace with multiple online courses. All campus units will need to consider innovative ways to build community and engage in co-curricular experiences which are crucial to student growth and development.

As outlined previously, a fully online semester would still result in students living in the Urbana-Champaign area. Even in that scenario, COVID-19 testing and tracing would be of benefit to the community.

V. Transitions between scenarios

Circumstances and progression of COVID-19 may force the University to change instructional delivery during the semester. For example, if we begin the Fall 2020 semester in Scenario A (face-to-face with social distancing) and changes in the COVID-19 conditions in our community make it necessary for the University to move quickly to Scenario B. Over the past few months, as our understanding of the novel coronavirus and its impact has been progressing, reliable, science and health based metrics from CDC, IDPH and CUPHD are available, and must be used to inform such decisions. Everyone gained considerable experience with a rapid transition in the Spring 2020 semester, so the campus community should be better prepared to transition. Even if the decision is made to bring students back to campus in the fall, faculty and staff should be aware of the possibility of a potential need to transition and prepare accordingly. Instructors might contemplate sequencing material to maximize face-to-face opportunities early in the semester.

VI. Observations and Recommendations

This committee was charged with identifying options for fall instruction and evaluating the benefits and challenges associated with these options. Here, the Task Force provides recommendations and observations that are relevant for the upcoming academic year. This list of recommendations does not represent an exhaustive list of all choices or actions that must be undertaken prior to the Fall 2020 semester.

General observations and recommendations:

1. We reaffirm that decisions about Fall 2020 instruction should be driven by health and safety considerations. Educationally, we would prefer on-campus instruction, but only if community health and safety can be assured. This includes meeting defined benchmarks for COVID-19 testing and tracing, influenza immunization as well as effective implementation of social distancing, personal protective equipment, additional safety infrastructure and other guidance regarding public health.
2. In every viable model for Fall 2020 instruction, we must deliver a significant amount of material remotely. As a consequence, the University should undertake an effort to aid faculty, graduate instructors and staff in developing online instructional material. Fast and easy access to instructional and educational technology support must be maintained throughout the semester.
3. Just as online and hybrid instruction are new and challenging to many faculty, staff and graduate instructors, those instructional modes are also new and challenging to many students. Just as the Campus should support the development of online instructional material, it should also provide support and resources for student online learning. This could include a pre-semester orientation or set of seminars to help students navigate online learning, peer-to-peer interaction and academic support.
4. Due to the unique nature of the Fall 2020 semester, some students may prefer to take a “gap year” or enroll part-time. The campus should accommodate these choices and enable students to proceed toward their degree as much as possible, including via additional summer 2021 course offerings.
5. We should acknowledge that a fully “business as usual” Fall 2020 semester will not happen. The University community must appreciate that life in the coming academic year is going to be very far

from normal in any scenario. If health and safety guidelines are not followed and the contagion spreads, face-to-face instruction will again be at risk.

6. Tenure-track faculty, specialized faculty, and graduate instructors may be affected differently by a transition to new instruction modes. It is important that the burden of this transition not fall disproportionately on any single group. The University must work with all instructors and unit Executive Officers to be aware of issues and proactively address them.
7. The University should yield intellectual property rights to online content generated exclusively in response to the COVID-19 pandemic during the Spring, Summer and Fall 2020 semesters to the faculty, graduate instructors and staff who produced the content unless otherwise contracted.

For students who are enrolled from off-campus (regardless of face-to-face instruction)

8. The University should continue to provide access to technology (laptops, Wi-Fi hotspots) as was done in the Spring 2020 semester. A robust communication plan working with campus colleges and programs (OMSA, I-Promise) is necessary to ensure that students are aware that help is available.
9. Administrators, instructors, and staff must recognize that students often have limited access to technology. For example, asynchronous lectures available for streaming require significantly less bandwidth, and are more forgiving of slow connection, than live, synchronous sessions. Many students do not have immediate access to a scanner. Educational technology and information technology experts from across campus can help with these issues. The University should continue to disseminate guidelines on maximizing accessibility through the choice and use of technology and we urge instructors to consult with experts on alternatives rather than disadvantage some students.

For an on-campus Fall 2020 semester:

10. Students, faculty and staff must all contribute and commit to the health, safety and wellbeing of our campus community. It is not sufficient to undertake special protective steps on-campus if individuals are going to engage in unsafe behavior on or off-campus.
11. Due to limitations from social distancing and classroom space, the University must prioritize for face-to-face instruction the components of the curriculum which cannot be delivered remotely.
12. The University should work to provide face-to-face classroom experiences for every on-campus student.
13. The campus community must acknowledge that modifications to class scheduling and space utilization take precedence and will affect other on-campus activities.
14. The University must take steps to accommodate students who are not participating in on-campus instructional activities.
15. Accommodations must be made for faculty, graduate instructors and staff who are not conducting face-to-face instruction.
16. All course sections with enrollment of 50 students or greater must be modified. While we expect that most high-enrollment sections will move to online delivery, it is also possible for some courses to take advantage of other techniques, such as multiple meeting times. Social distancing will also limit the number of smaller sections that can be delivered face-to-face. Prioritization of which courses have a face-to-face component should, when possible, be primarily driven at the departmental level.
17. Acknowledging the testing group recommendation to minimize the number of times students return to campus, the Task Force recommends that the semester start as scheduled, and face-to-face instruction terminate on November 20, the beginning of Fall Break. The final 8 days of instruction along with 6 days of final exams should be conducted remotely. Decisions regarding professional programs, some of which operate on different schedules, should be made separately.

18. The University should utilize instructional space available to its fullest. This includes judicious sharing of space and utilization of the entire day and evening times available for instruction. It also includes utilization of other campus spaces that can be converted for instruction.
19. The Task Force recommends that modifications to the fall Class Schedule be restricted to the “minimal” and “modest” categories, only allowing for “major” modifications if absolutely necessary.

VII. Summary

Regardless of scenario, the Fall 2020 semester, and quite likely the Spring 2021 semester, will be very different than what our faculty, staff, and students are used to. All members of the campus community must share the burden and challenges associated with COVID-19.

Members of this Task Force remain convinced that we can continue to deliver upon our education mission through this challenging time, and that, as we were in spring 2020, our University can again be an exemplar in managing a challenging set of circumstances. If our students, faculty and staff come together, support one another and adhere to health and safety guidelines, the University can emerge from this challenging time stronger than ever. Our students will be the better for it.

Appendix A. Task Force Charge



OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS & PROVOST

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April 16, 2020

Sent Via Email

Contingency Planning Task Force

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Sarita Adve, Grainger College of Engineering
Ellen Althaus, Graduate College
Arnoldo Ayala, Illinois Student Government
Dominic Cobb, Office of Minority Student Affairs
Kim Collins, Disability Resources & Educational Services
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Christopher Span, College of Education
Karen Tabb, School of Social Work
Anastasia Tzirides, Graduate Student
Wendy Yang, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Allison Vance, Public Affairs

Dear Colleagues,

To protect the safety of students and the community during COVID-19 pandemic, the University quickly and decisively moved all Spring 2020 instruction to a remote delivery model. The University has also limited its Summer 2020 course offerings to an on-line format. While it is too early to know the pandemic's course, the full human costs, and the economic implications of the virus, the University must begin to plan how it will handle instruction in Fall 2020.

To inform the decision about Fall 2020 instruction, I am asking this task force to identify the benefits, drawbacks, and notable consequences of different instructional models. The University

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must understand the implications of each model to determine the option that is most appropriate to achieving our goal of protecting the safety of our students and our community while maintaining the educational mission of the University, given what we will know about the pandemic and its consequences in the next few weeks.

I ask you to identify different models for instructional delivery in Fall 2020. One of these options would be a return to a "normal" residential-centric form of education with students living in the community and taking courses on campus. At the other end of the spectrum, the University could continue remote instruction for the entire Fall 2020 semester. I am asking you to identify additional possibilities, which may include partially re-opening residential instruction, sequencing students on campus, opening the campus to only certain types of students, limiting class sizes, and so on. You should identify the benefits, drawbacks, and consequences of each of them.

As you do so, please take into consideration the following questions:

- a. How do we ensure that all our students are able to access our educational offerings, paying particular attention to the needs of underrepresented and disadvantaged students?
- b. We have an incoming freshman class who have never been on campus. If we do not have normal in-residence instruction, how do we build a sense of connection and community with these students?
- c. It is possible that some students who have chosen to attend the Illinois will have to defer enrollment, either due to immigration restrictions or economic hardship. What activities can we provide to these students that will allow them to engage with the University during this time?
- d. Different cohorts of students may have different needs. How can we engage our different instructional modalities to meet their concerns and needs?
- e. What are the implications of these models for graduate and professional students?
- f. Are there particular longer-term consequences of a model that would make it more or less attractive?

Let me underscore that I am not asking you to rank the models or choose among them. Instead, your report will inform the decision that will be made, given the information that we will have in the future.

As you might imagine, we want to make a decision about Fall 2020 as soon as is prudent. Therefore, I request your report by Monday, May 11.

Thank you for your commitment to the University of Illinois, especially at this uncertain period of our University's history.

Sincerely,

Andreas C. Cangellaris
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost
M.E. Van Valkenburg Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering



Appendix B. Cross-cutting questions

Several campus task forces have been established in order to plan and prepare for the 2020-21 academic year. While the Academic Affairs Task Force focused on academic and instructional issues, our group raised a number of questions which are relevant, and in some cases central, to the work of other task forces. We refer to these questions as “cross-cutting” since they involve multiple task forces. We enumerate some of those questions here.

- 1) Physical classroom spaces
 - a. How will classroom capacities be determined?
 - b. How will classrooms be configured to improve social distancing?
 - c. How will classrooms be modified with safety features for instructors and for students?
 - i. How will these modifications affect instructors and students with disabilities?
 - d. Will classrooms have appropriate technology to facilitate in-person instruction—e.g., microphones and sound systems?
 - e. Will classrooms have appropriate technology to allow “hybrid” approaches—e.g., in-person lecture/discussion can be recorded or live-streamed?
 - f. What will be the protocols for the cleaning of classroom space?
 - g. What PPE and cleaning equipment will be provided and available for classroom spaces?
 - h. Teaching labs and performance spaces (e.g., practice rooms) will require particular attention for safety. Who will analyze and guide those spaces to comply with the appropriate guidelines?
 - i. What role will campus-level leaders play in the assignment, safety analysis, and configuration of instructional spaces controlled by the units?
- 2) Passing time between classes and fire safety practices and tornado alerts
 - a. How will protocols and guidelines be established to facilitate movement in and out of classes?
 - b. How will classrooms be reconfigured and outfitted to facilitate movement?
 - c. Students with disabilities will require additional accommodations for moving in and out of classes. How will this be handled?
 - d. What about buildings with narrow corridors and stairwells? How can social distancing be maintained at all?
 - e. What is happening with campus busses? How will they be made safe?
- 3) Using non-academic spaces for classroom spaces
 - a. Who will coordinate the process of reassigning space to classroom usage, including discussing compensation to the units controlling the space?
 - b. How will these spaces be configured?
 - c. Will extra technology be required?
- 4) Modifying the calendar
 - a. If the academic calendar is modified, what are the implications for student life: housing, dining, etc?
 - b. If the academic calendar is modified, what are the implications for employees, including those belonging to a union?
- 5) Expanding the course day to include classes at irregular times (e.g., evening, morning, weekend)
 - a. Will there be safety issues with more students on central campus at night or in the early morning?

- b. Will this affect bus schedules?
 - c. How will this affect cleaning protocols for the classrooms and public spaces?
- 6) Faculty and Instructor Safety
 - a. What are the expectations for PPE in the classroom? Will PPE be provided? Will faculty need to wear a mask during a face-to-face lecture/discussion?
 - b. How can we train instructors to communicate about safety in the classroom?
 - c. What, if any, responsibilities do instructors have for maintaining the safety of the classroom? For instance, do they need to wipe down equipment?
 - d. What if faculty wish to opt out of these expectations? What if a faculty member is unable to use the PPE equipment (e.g., allergic to latex gloves)?
- 7) Academic freedom and technology
 - a. On-line course delivery creates more possibility for the misappropriation of course materials. How will the University update and modify its safety protocols and guidelines for on-line class meetings? Will the University provide additional technology safeguards to protect course content?
 - b. The University needs to review its policies on intellectual property and course development to address issues raised in the current situation.
- 8) Experiential learning, clinical training, internships, and other educational activities that require students to be in the community
 - a. How will the safety standards for these activities be determined? Who will enforce those standards? How can we keep students safe?
- 9) Access and Equity for Students
 - a. Much instruction will be online. How can we provide students with appropriate equipment?
 - b. This will be a challenging semester for learning. How do we prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of a “hybrid” or fully on-line approach?
 - c. How do we create a sense of community among our students, faculty, and staff? What can be done at the unit level? What should be done at the University level?
 - d. Students with disabilities require close consideration both inside and outside the classroom. For instance, how do we ensure on-line course are appropriately captioned?
- 10) Student Mental Health
 - a. How can we prepare faculty, advisors, and instructors to recognize mental health issues, approach students about those issues, and connect students to the appropriate resources?
- 11) Equity concerns for graduate students and post-docs.
 - a. How do we ensure that the interests and needs of these groups are protected? How do we make sure they have access to appropriate resources for health and safety?
 - b. How do we make sure they have access to the appropriate technology and training to use that technology to fulfill their responsibilities?
 - c. How do we ensure that members of these vulnerable groups are able to remain off-campus if they do not feel safe and yet continue to fulfill their duties and make progress toward the degree?
 - d. How can units build a sense of community and support for these groups?
- 12) Expectations for student safety behavior

- a. How do faculty handle students who don't comply with safety guidelines? Can faculty exclude a student from the classroom who, for instance, chooses not to wear a mask?
 - b. Can instructors insist on higher standards of safety for students in their classes? How will they communicate those standards?
 - c. Will university policies around student absences and accommodations be modified? For instance, will students testing positive be excused from class? Will students feeling ill automatically be excused or will they need verification from McKinley? How do instructors handle students who feel sick?
 - d. How should a faculty member respond to a student who complains about a classmate who s/he suspects is ill?
 - e. The Student Code has an existing section (§2-104) which is, "Policy for Individuals with Contagious Diseases." Does this section of the Code need to be updated for COVID-19?
- 13) Protocols for when someone tests positive
- a. If a student or instructor tests positive, will the entire class need to be quarantined?

Appendix C. Concerns

Through the work of the Task Force, as well as through surveys and consultation with members of the university community, we received considerable input on the concerns and issues about the 2020-21 academic year. In this appendix, we attempt to catalog a number of these concerns. This is, by necessity, an incomplete list. Many of these issues are actively being pursued by the different campus COVID-19 task forces. While many bear directly on the deliberations associated with instructional models, others reach far beyond the classroom.

Health and Safety

1. Feelings of uncertainty remain among students and faculty about returning to campus as our campus and community can become a hotspot with the possibility of an outbreak with the return of students.
2. Questions remain how as a community we can ensure that we are able to maintain social distance. We can only restrict the safety limits to our immediate campus (classroom, housing, dining).
 - a. What do we do if our physical environment does not allow for social distancing?
 - b. Will we have a mask policy?
 - c. How much confidence do we have in students' agency to maintain social distance? Utilizing parents as part of the messaging that their children need to take responsibility for all their actions.
 - d. Can we realistically follow-through, monitor, and implement social distancing policies? If a student or colleague does not follow these policies, what are the consequences? Who enforces it? Is there support for faculty enforcing these policies in the classroom setting?
3. Why pursue normalcy in the middle of a global emergency? Does talk of normalcy send unhelpful signals? Normalcy may not be the right goal; creative adaption to a public health crisis might work better.
4. Support and care for vulnerable members of our campus (faculty, students, and staff) is an issue.
5. Will there be enough available PPEs? What are plans to provide adequate testing and conduct contact tracing?
6. The need to have ongoing coordination with local public health, transportation, housing and commerce officials. Unless we have a coordinated social distancing campaign with the city, landlords, public health and local business; adequate testing for symptomatic and asymptomatic students; contact tracing, increased hand sanitation stations; and expanded cleaning then we should not attempt to reassure parents and student that the campus is safe. We should tell them to come at their own risk.
7. During the "move in" period prior to the start of the semester, students are returning to campus from many locations, they are also bringing parents, family members and friends with them. How can we ensure campus safety as more than just our students converge upon the community?
8. Can we allow students from hot spot areas return to campus earlier than other students so as to quarantine before the semester starts?

Instruction

9. The consequent negative impact of a "hybrid" semester/school year on campus life, particularly on the student experience. Students need to come back not just for education but also for social benefits – keep both in mind.

10. Feasibility of faculty and instructors to develop and deliver quality face-to-face and online instruction. Assistance to enhance faculty and grad students' capacity to teach online.
11. The financial health of units and campus, overall. The inevitable loss of revenue could lead to the deterioration of quality of instruction and access to campus services.
12. Proctoring exams will never be 100% effective at stopping cheating/providing a fair comparison *between* students. Need to rethink if, how, and when we offer exams.
13. Access to technology support for students and instructors: availability of computers, software, WIFI connection, and expert consultants.
14. Access to library, labs, student services and other facilities

Others

15. Negative impact on our community. Local businesses that rely on students and university activities for support may close and could reduce the long-term vibrancy of our community if students do not return in the fall.
16. Need for new (or adapted) policies on:
 - a. How to mitigate effects of COVID-19 on students' progress, faculty and staff career trajectory.
 - b. When students and faculty decide against physically returning to campus.
 - c. What policies are decided at the campus level and what are unit-level decisions.
17. Lack of communication to inform and reassure faculty, staff, parents, and students. If massmail is used, the messages need to get to the point sooner and be short. Students, in general, are not as responsive to email.

Appendix D. Task Force Timeline

This appendix documents the timeline for the Academic Affairs Task Force:

- Committee formed, April 16, 2020.
- Meeting dates:
 - April 17, 21, 24
 - May 1, 8, 12, 15, 20, 27
 - June 3, 11, 25
- Draft report shared with campus, June 3, 2020.
- Briefing on report presented to SEC, June 3, 2020.
- Feedback from campus community received; June 3-10, 2020.
- Briefing on report presented to campus community, June 9, 2020.
- Final report submitted to Provost, June 22, 2020.

ⁱ <https://massmail.illinois.edu/massmail/8171661.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://dph.illinois.gov/covid19>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/restore-illinois-introduction>

^{iv} Although this section deals with formal return to campus events, we note that informal departure/return, such as students going home for the weekend, also pose additional community concerns associated with broader potential exposure to COVID-19. This issue will be considered by the Student Life Committee.

^v <https://uofi.box.com/s/6du41q7b1063bgay2310q2epneimvvyv>

^{vi} Zoom, for example: <https://answers.uillinois.edu/illinois/page.php?id=99469>

^{vii} While this is expected of students that enroll in our existing online programs, it is a very different scenario for those who were planning for an on-campus experience.