REFLECTIONS ON 2020

1 - COVIDEMICS

1. Should UCC keep the currrent 20-day format?

52.4% No | Yes **47.6%**

2. Should UCC continue to record classes even after COVID?

27.5% No | Yes **72.5%**

2 - YEAR IN REVIEW

%very satisfied|%somewhat satisfied|%unsatisfied|score

$$\text{score} = \frac{100 \cdot \text{\# of very satisfied votes} + 50 \cdot \text{\# of somewhat satisfied votes}}{\text{number of total votes}}$$
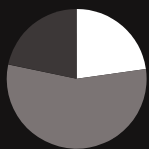
Self-satisfaction
33.3% | 52.9% | 13.8% | **59.79**

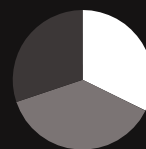Satisfaction w/ UCC
37.6% | 53.4% | 9.0% | **64.29**

Satisfaction w/ Canada
22.7% | 55.6% | 21.7% | **50.53**

Satisfaction w/ Humanity
11.1% | 47.1% | 41.8% | **34.66**

Academic self-satisfaction
33.3% | 49.8% | 16.9% | **58.20**

Social self-satisfaction
32.3% | 37.6% | 30.1% | **51.06**

Co-curricular satisfaction
27.0% | 47.6% | 25.4% | **50.79**

Sleep quality satisfaction
32.8% | 36.5% | 30.7% | **51.06**

FAREWELL 2020 - CONVERGENCE SURVEY RESULTS

KEVIN LIU
CO-EDITOR IN CHIEF

On December 3, 2020, *Convergence* sent out our "2020 In Review" survey, which had received a resounding response from the student body. In merely a couple of days, almost 200 students participated in the survey and left over 100 comments. These comments cover many aspects of student life at UCC. When I read these comments, I could tell how thoughtfully they were written and how these comments truly represent our passions, our anxieties, and our deep care for our UCC experience.

As such, a few joke comments aside, I have included everyone's comments after this editorial. On behalf of *Convergence*, I sincerely thank everyone who took part in the survey and wrote these comments, and I am sure that the school and our teachers will take time to review these comments, as they represent unfiltered thoughts and authentic feelings from the student body.

2020 In Review - A New Annual Tradition

As we advertised, the eight questions in the second part of the survey will start a new school tradition. They are designed to gauge how UCC students as a whole feel about important aspects of their life - academics, social interaction, co-curriculars, and wellbeing - and how we view the performance of ourselves, our school, our country, and the human race over the past calendar year. These same questions will be asked every year from now on so we can see how students' perspectives evolve over time.

Based on the responses from the survey, we construct a "satisfaction score" that reflects how satisfied students are with the subject of each question.

To calculate this score, we use this formula: (100 x number of very satisfied votes + 50 x number of somewhat satisfied votes + 0 x number of unsatisfied votes) / number of total votes. This means that to achieve a perfect score of 100, all students have to vote "very satisfied".

I am very grateful that the school allowed Convergence to send out a survey that would gauge the students' satisfaction level with the school itself. This demonstrates our school's transparency and self-confidence, and this confidence is proved very well founded. Among the four areas where students were asked to rate their satisfaction (themselves, our school as a whole, our country, and humanity in general), students rated our school's performance the highest, with a score of 64.3. In fact, over 91% of students said they were either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with UCC.

UCC students, or to be precise, 86.2% of UCC students, also seem to be generally happy with themselves. This gives a satisfaction score of 59.8, the second highest among the four areas. Students are lukewarm with how Canada has performed though, with a score of 50.5; but compared with the miserable score of 34.7 for humanity as a whole, Canada is in fact not that bad.

Obviously, 2020 has been a very eventful year, and unprecedented in certain ways. Throughout the pandemic, UCC as a school has been very considerate and remarkably resilient, always trying to make the best out of the constantly-evolving situation. Strong student satisfaction for the school's performance over the past year therefore comes as no surprise. On the other hand, students obviously believe that the performance of humanity as a whole has much more room for improvement.

Students' Self Assessments

Students' ratings of their own performances in different aspects of their lives likely reflect many of the unique circumstances we've faced over 2020. Overall, students are most dissatisfied with their co-curricular performance over the past year, which received a score of 50.8. Social life and sleep were not rated much better, tying with a score of 51.1. In contrast, academic performance actually generated the highest score of 58.2.

Regarding social life, one student simply wrote that "the problem isn't a lack of friends – it is a lack of ability to do things such as play sports and go out and meet new people." I think many students would echo this feeling. Similarly, it has also been harder to get involved with co-curricular opportunities, which were described as "shot in the foot" by one student.

On academics, the majority of student comments expressed increased stress due to the abnormal learning environment, but the relatively higher score could be attributable to the reduction in commute times and other extracurricular commitments that usually took time away from academics. Students pointed out that less commute time al-

lowed more potential time to sleep, but more time was also spent dealing with the large amount of homework and summative assignments that kept some students "up all night".

Overwhelming Support for Recording/Streaming

As the development of COVID-19 vaccines continues to progress, every industry is reviewing whether some of the changes they've introduced during the pandemic will stay in a post-pandemic world (for example: working from home, remote learning, and zoom meetings), and I think that our school might be no exception. This is why in the survey, we also included two questions to gauge students' adoption on the two biggest changes that UCC has introduced over the past months - the 20-day cycle and the class recording practice.

The support for continuing to record/stream classes after the pandemic is overwhelming. 72.5% of students believe this practice should be maintained in a post-pandemic world. Many students have pointed out the benefits: it is a tremendous tool for rewatching lessons they miss or have trouble understanding, and it would allow students "to still get the education they need when at home instead of falling behind" when facing unforeseen circumstances. And apparently, it allows students who have just "a runny nose or a sore throat" to stay at home, rather than come to school to spread the germs.

However, there are also some concerns to be addressed. One student pointed out that "recording classes might be a bit of privacy issue. As well, in university most courses won't get recorded, so it might not be a good habit to just rely on recordings". Another concern is that having classes available for streaming might overly pressure sick students into joining classes instead of resting. Recording and streaming classes might also cause "delays in getting classes started", increase the workload of teachers, and also prove imprac-

tical due to the potential high cost of the platform used to stream and store classes.

A Divided View on the 20-day Cycle

According to the survey, the student body is almost equally divided as to whether the 20-day term structure should stay, with a slight majority of 52.4% against and 47.6% in support. Although the voting results are fairly evenly distributed, many students left strong, compelling arguments as to why the 20-day term structure should be removed as soon as possible, while there were much fewer comments supporting the continuation of the structure.

The primary concern with the 20-day term structure is, as one student wrote, "you can start to forget stuff pretty quickly" when you spend a month without touching 3-4 courses. The transition into a new term can be "very difficult", especially for subjects like math and second-languages. A Year 12 student wrote that "we're being tested on course content that we have not even considered about for the past month" during their exams. This can be exacerbated if a student's courseload between the two terms is unbalanced - one student said "one term I'm getting no sleep with hours of homework. My next term I'll be at home doing absolutely nothing".

The quick pace of instruction during each term has also been stressful for many students. As classes take place every day during the term, a student points out that "you must do the homework the night it is assigned because it is due the next day", leaving little flexibility for a student who might have

large commitments on a given day. And last but not least, the large number of assessments, and the "not as sufficient" time given to complete them, make the final week of each term "very stressful" for some students.

On the contrary, there are also some students who find that focusing on 3-4 subjects has actually "lightened the load". In some conversations, I've heard students who point out that having a lot of assessments together can't be prevented that easily anyways - even with the assessment calendar in previous years, there would still be "hell weeks" with assessments from five or six different subjects, so having four assessments at the end of the term isn't that bad.

Farewell, 2020

I know that COVID-19 has made many of us willing to bid farewell to 2020. However, judging from the result of our survey, it is apparent that UCC students are largely satisfied with the school and happy with ourselves. Given how difficult this year has been, this itself is something to celebrate. And even if some of us are not entirely satisfied with some aspects of life in 2020, such as social life or the performance of humanity in general, the new year is just around the corner - and this is certainly something to celebrate! In December 2021, when everyone fills this survey again, I hope we will all have more to be satisfied with.

Convergence therefore wishes everyone a great celebration for the holiday season and the New Year of 2021!

I would like to thank **Jason Gao** for his wonderful design of the infographic cover, as well as many other creative cover designs he has made over the past couple of years.

Student Comments (Somewhat) Supporting the 20-Day Cycle

1. Should UCC keep the currrent 20-day format?	
52.4% No	Yes **47.6%**

"The rotating terms are a must in my eyes. As an IB1 student I cannot imagine having seven courses at one time, along with CAS and EE right now. Even though our assessments would be spaced out, I believe the 20-day blocks are more beneficial to solidifying our learning and focus."

"It's a lot easier to manage the summative assessments now that we don't need to do eight at once."

"The 20-day format we are using right now allows for more time to focus on each class. Since there are only four classes, you are able to spend ample time at home studying and reviewing lessons, whereas either the format before it felt more rushed."

"I think that it relieves a bit of stress and is a little bit easier on us."

"I like only having to worry about 3-4 courses at a time, but the last week of the term has way too much work - it needs to be more balanced in the future."

"Doing 20-day terms with 3-4 courses lightens the load a little."

"Sometimes the new format is beneficial with classes that just take time. However, other times, when you are not doing French or math for an entire term, you can start to forget stuff pretty quickly."

"I like the 20-day cycles but I would wish for them to be more even with synchronous and asynchronous classes. But I am not sure about what it is normally like though because it is my first year in the Upper School, it is very different than the Prep so far."

Student Comments Against the 20-Day Cycle

"The format of 3-4 courses at a time has got to be the worst idea I've seen from the school. Language courses are useless. I'll learn some concept and forget it by the next term. My courses are completely unbalanced. I have math, language, science, and design in one term. Really it's so unfair. One term I'm getting no sleep with hours of homework. The next term I'll be at home doing absolutely nothing. I would say get rid of the 3-4 courses per term. I think the school wanted to try it out to give students less workload but it has been very poorly done."

"Practicing music in between terms doesn't work."

"20-day terms end in heavily concentrated summative assessments in the last three days of the term. Courses such as math can not be taught and learned with 20-day breaks."

"The way we have it right now means you must do the homework the night it is assigned because it is due the next day. While this is generally fine right now because there are so few extra-curriculars, this is not going to work when people have school practice until 6:00pm then having to rush home to eat dinner before going to a practice or game with an outside team, and finally getting home at 11:00pm and having to do two hours of work."

"The current schedule creates weeks at end of cycle that are very stressful. I do not recommend continuation of this schedule."

"Please never use the 20-day schedule."

"I believe that we should not continue the 20-day terms because they make it much harder to connect with your teachers. For me this is a large problem that the format of eight-courses-all-year solved. I believe that the school should not combine in-class and online after the pandemic. There could be an alternate online school for UCC and if you were sick you could join that school. However, I believe that the combination of the two is not effective."

"For me, I find it's really difficult to have teachers start teaching something in the last few days of one term, and after the next term, expect us to come back a month later and remember everything."

"There are many pros and cons for the alternating 20-day terms, but I think the main concern is that you get the same amount of work you would be getting due over a longer span of time in one day, or three-four days for assignments. It also depends on how the classes are broken up. One of my terms this year had three synchronous classes, while the other term only had one, causing the shift of terms to be very unexpected and hard to get used to."

"The 20-day term thing has its benefits but I think overall it's best to go back to the eight-day schedule."

"I find that the 20-day system doesn't allow much time for homework. Homework is always due the next day. The previous system gives much more time for homework completion."

"If UCC implements a 3-4 subject-per-term schedule I'd seriously consider moving to another school."

"Having 20-day terms with four subjects causes you to forget the material learned in the previous term. There is in fact an increased workload as you have to keep up with the daily homework from each four subjects, while also having to review the material for the other four subjects in order to not forget the content learned. As well, since the terms are shorter, the time period for summative projects and tests is not sufficient, as everything has to be finished within the 20 days. The previous eight-course system was more efficient as you could focus on all subjects throughout the year, and the time span between summative projects could be more well managed."

"The downside to the 20-day class period is that assessments are given out from all four classes towards the end of the 20-day period, which leaves students with a lot of summative work that has to be completed at the same time."

"I think that the four-class terms are not a great solution, because the terms can't be perfectly balanced (in terms of workload). For me I have one term with all of my hardest classes, and another term where I have no work."

"School is still school. And this pandemic does not, and cannot, change that. This pandemic is not an excuse for students in the future to study at home, as it is simply ineffective compared to the on-campus learning experience. Also, I do not think that not touching half our courses for almost a month at a time is good for us. This is also an excuse for those who cover units later to seek help from those who have already learned those units. This is simply an alternative form of studying and must not be perpetuated in the future."

"I believe that the 20-day schedule can make the courses feel rushed, especially when the art courses are being mixed so you only have nine days of music/art out of 40 days."

"The 20-day cycle is draining for both students and teachers and should not be continued if possible."

"The format with only four classes is extremely stressful because homework is due the next day, which means there is no time to get extra help or have questions answered."

"The alternating 20-day term format leads to disjointed progress within subjects where the first few days back in a term are spent trying to remember what was done last term."

"I feel like the same four courses for 20 days is too much of four subjects, and the alternating schedule would be best for full time school."

"I think the 20-day schedule should be continued for the remainder of the school year for continuity reasons but should be changed back to normal for the next academic year."

"It is very difficult to be away from a course for twenty days and then try to pick up where you left off."

"I hate the alternating 20-days term. It is way too condensed. The regular timetable is better."

"The 20-day terms make it difficult to maintain information and keep track of ongoing assignments, especially for Language B subjects such as French. Assessments pile up towards the end of the cycle as well."

"20-day system is a total failure in my opinion. The only reason why it is semi-working right now is because of the fact that the exams are (potentially) formative. I spent all of my time working on my current subjects for the projects/tests and the exams I just took, as well as the university applications, and next week I will have another set of exams for which I have only a week to study for. This system under no circumstance should be considered ever again."

"The transition to the next unit of a subject after neglecting it for nearly a month always feels weird (for example, getting back into math is extremely awkward because it takes a few days of adjustment)."

"I don't like the term system because teachers drop all the work on us at the same time. They introduce the assignments rather late so we can't work on it earlier and then all of a sudden, we have several tests or assignments to do/submit in two days. I think this always creates a sleep deficit and stress at the end of the month."

"The 20-day schedule with two days for assessments is horrible."

"UCC tried to make this year as 'stress free' as possible with the 20-day cycle. But now my every other week is a hell week with more than three tests and projects plus some TOK work. In contrast, last year I had only one hell week per month. Now somehow all of my project/tests are due in the same two days. It is like this because we cover the content with the two times speed, therefore the time required for an assessment is two times shorter. The system should be reviewed to make it truly as 'stress free' as possible."

"These 20-day cycles don't make sense especially with our grade 12 exams next week. We're being tested on course content that we have not even considered about for the past month."

Student Comments on Streaming/Recording Classes

2. Should UCC continue to record classes even after COVID?
27.5% No — Yes 72.5%

"Recording lessons is the greatest thing UCC has ever introduced, and for 100% recording should be kept for the future years. It is just one simple click for the teacher but a huge favor for the students. I can't stress enough how good this change is and how I wish it will stay in the future!"

"I think the recording option is really important. Students should always have the ability to participate in class whether in person or at home. I also think having recorded lessons is beneficial to our learning since students can watch the lessons over after leaving class."

"Doubtless the recording/streaming of all classes will make the choice between staying home and attending class in-person a much simpler one, but the question of whether this development will benefit the student body as a whole is admittedly a difficult one. In previous years, students who were ill (especially those in YII and YI2) would have to weigh the consequences of missing a lesson, assignment, lab, test, or other activity against a runny nose or a sore throat - and from personal experience I can attest to the fact that virtually no one cared if they had a runny nose or sore throat. With recorded/streamed classes, a student's dilemma all but vanishes. Stay home, get a blanket and a hot drink, kick your feet back, stay caught up, and your friends don't get sick. Perfect, right? Not quite, as with a laptop as well as the comfort, tranquility, and relative solitude of your own home comes the propensity to take your mind off whatever's happening in class - you can look down to answer texts and look through social media and when you look up the class is over. Indeed, many studies have shown that, barring a few highly motivated students, academic performance suffers as a result of learning virtually versus learning in-person. Overall it's a definite improvement - but how will it impact the discipline with which students attend class, particularly in the younger grades? Will we redefine 'tired' as 'sick'? Should the school choose to make these stream recordings available to everyone? Such choices should not be made without careful and deliberate consideration."

"I think it would be great if the lessons are recorded even if all students are present, as I think it is a very valuable learning resource to be able to review a lesson again."

"Recording/streaming would be nice, but it might be a chore."

"I just think it might be handy to have a way of joining class when you can't go due to unforeseen circumstances."

"I wouldn't want to stream each class, but recording it is a good idea."

"I personally feel that recording classes might be a bit of privacy issue. As well, in university most courses won't get recorded, so it might not be a good habit to just rely on recordings."

"I think we all need to enjoy those sick days, no?"

"Streaming and recording cause (sometimes significant) delays in getting class started, which are acceptable given the current circumstance, but would likely hinder learning in a normal school year."

"I think that the school should continue to record classes, but only stream them if a student has requested it in advance due to sickness or an appointment."

"If the classes do continue to be streamed, I don't know whether synchronous attendance should be mandatory - if a student has an appointment or feels very sick it is fair to catch up on the work later that night, or on the weekend."

"Class recordings are helpful for review, or for paying attention in class and taking notes later."

"I think that an audio recording without video is not worthwhile, and a full video recording may be excessive."

"I think recording classes after the pandemic is a good idea, but I believe that pushing students to be socially and physically active is better than pushing for a less interactive virtual world."

"For the recording of classes, I think it is necessary since some people may miss class for sport events."

"Streaming classes lacks engagement even now, so it would be worse with only one or two students staying home due to sickness. Personally and from what I've heard, recordings have not been very useful other than for exam preparation. However, if it means the technology we have implemented, such as the cameras in each class, would go to waste, it might be better to make use of them anyway."

"I like the fact that there is recoding of the classes so if I miss something I can go back and re-watch it, I find that quite helpful, especially for classes like math. But some teachers do not record their classes - I have wanted to check back on some of those lessons but I can't see them."

"I think that recordings of the classes and streaming them is a great thing because it really helps you - when you don't understand something in class, you can then watch that part of the class again."

"Streaming would allow for kids to still get the education they need when at home instead of falling behind."

"I think we should continue to record classes so kids can watch them back."

Student Comments on Social Life and Co-Curricular Activities

Social self-satisfaction
32.3% | 37.6% | 30.1% | **51.06**

Co-curricular satisfaction
27.0% | 47.6% | 25.4% | **50.79**

"In terms of social life, the problem isn't a lack of friends – it is a lack of ability to do things such as play sports and go out and meet new people."

"Acknowledging stress has to become more important. Stress is at an all time high for high schoolers, especially in the DP, and we are expected to be at the same capacity of work like last year, while not being able to engage in social activities or sports. Social interaction is low, in-person time at school is low, and workloads are too great given the circumstances of the worldwide pandemic, which adds more stress to everything."

"I enjoy being on campus and miss all the team sports."

"Put squat racks in the bubble."

"It's really hard to have a proper social life during the pandemic."

"Co-curriculars were shot in the foot."

"During these times, it is harder to get involved with co-curricular opportunities. I hope when the pandemic cools down I will have an opportunity to join more co-curriculars for things that I am passionate about."

"These people sitting in class without masks on, coughing - it just doesn't feel right. I wouldn't like it even if there wasn't a pandemic."

"I started a couple of businesses, and grades are going up (for now) this year, pretty good overall. I think UCC has done the best they could to protect everybody even with the COVID cases. However, some protocols are obviously for PR purpose – for example, the paper mask thing which doesn't make a difference from a cloth mask. Also the mask during gym outside wasn't helpful at all; everybody including myself ended up touching the mask significantly more, defeating the its own purpose."

"All students should return. Look at similar models such as Havergal."

"We need to be in school at all times back in uniform like our sister school BSS."

Student Comments on Academics

Academic self-satisfaction
33.3% | 49.8% | 16.9% | **58.20**
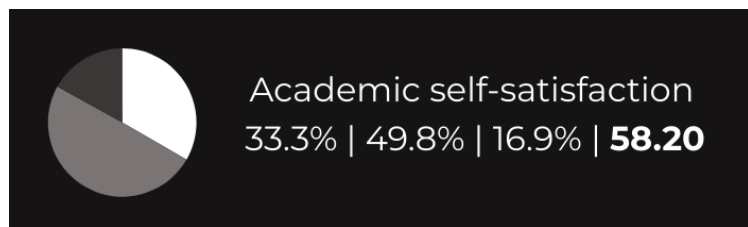
"Y12 assessments, EE and university applications are unbearable due to Covid."

"I have tried to get 6+ grades but I have been struggling with the switch from Prep to Upper and with Covid and online classes it makes it a lot harder. I am only getting 5/6's. I also have got a few marks that are lower than that which I have been disappointed with. Overall I think the school has a good plan for this year but I have been disappointed by my grades this year. The school also needs to keep the Covid cases down."

"I do like our current school structure in the sense that we have a one day in one day off for in-person and online. However, learning through a computer screen has many cons. It is easy to become less engaged and more tired, and it takes a strain on your eyes and brain."

"If we continue the 20-days rotation, could we get rid of assessment days?"

"Why do we blast all the sums in the last week? It is very stressful."

"I have very bad habits I don't really know how to fix."

"In my opinion, it is just so much harder to get the teacher's attention when you are at home than when you are in class directly in front of the teacher."

"The 20-day terms should be longer so the teachers don't need to rush as much."

"The every-other day of school is very inefficient."

"Allow the school experience to remain organic and remove the strain off teachers to operate two fields of learning, especially because the online aspect often hurts the engagement in class."

"I am uncomfortable attending school in person. I prefer to be a remote learner even though I do not like it but it is the right choice for now."

Student Comments on Sleep

Sleep quality satisfaction
32.8% | 36.5% | 30.7% | **51.06**
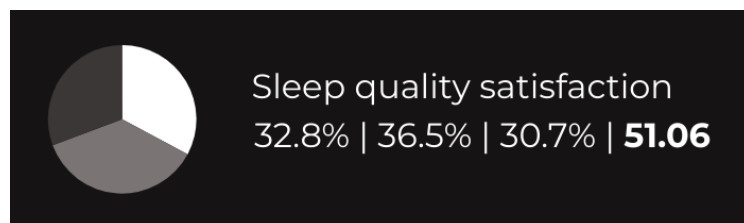
"I have been getting more sleep due to online classes which I don't need to travel for. I still don't get a lot of sleep though."

"The amount of homework and summative projects from each subject reduces the amount of sleep one should get, and the deprivation of sleep causes reduced overall performance."

"The reason for my lack of sleep is due to the fact that teachers are giving so much homework that I am up all night completing it."

EDITOR'S NOTE - JOINING CONVERGENCE

Interested in joining or contributing to *Convergence*?

It is easy to become a **Staff Reporter** - all you need to do is to join the Convergence and Blazer club, show up to club meetings, present your ideas, and write articles (reports of an event, interviews, opinions, etc.).

Also, anyone in the Upper School can be a **Contributor** to *Convergence* without full-time commitment. Your articles can either be related to UCC or cover social/political events of general interest. Please just send them to us at *kevin.liu@ucc.on.ca* and *princeton.zhou@ucc.on.ca*.

Your potential contribution to *Convergence* will be greatly appreciated, and will be a strong factor in determining executive roles such as **Manager** and **Editor** for future years.

Princeton and Kevin