

CLAS Faculty Council DRAFT Statement on Furloughs and Spring Teaching - Oct 1 2020

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Faculty Council has met and distributed a survey to all faculty to gain insight on faculty views and suggestions regarding 1) the Furlough Draft Policy proposed by UF Administration and 2) in-person teaching in the Spring. The CLAS Survey was sent Tuesday, September 29th and we collected data over the course of two days. Over 40% of the CLAS faculty participated in the survey (344 responses). We will make available the results of this survey to the Senate Steering Committee if requested. Based on the survey and meetings, CLAS faculty respectfully request full transparency on any negotiations between the UF and the BOG which imply trade offs between health and safety of students and their families, faculty and staff. The following is a statement based on this survey and meetings of faculty governance bodies within the college.

Draft Furlough Policy

The CLAS faculty joins its administrators in our desire to achieve the status of a top 5 public university. As such we outline the following that will help the University remain a top tier school in the nation.

A furlough policy is more desirable than layoffs. While the faculty at large recognize this, we stress the furlough draft policy must continue to be updated based on feedback from the faculty governance groups and appropriately bargained for those within the bargaining unit. A careful analysis of UF's fiscal health and its research and teaching excellence is in order. We ask the administration to seek and seriously consider input from the faculty in these matters.

We would like to propose the following be considered in any furlough policy to ensure that the UF community can continue to excel in teaching and research in spite of budgetary challenges. The vibrancy of our community is both important to its members and vital to UF's aim of achieving a top 5 ranking. Faculty have also expressed their overwhelming preference to protect the most vulnerable lowest-paying employees, such as staff, graduate assistants, and post-doctorates. This would ensure the University's stance to advocate for equity, diversity, and protection of the educational system and its most vulnerable employees. Therefore, a furlough policy should include:

- Pay-cuts or furloughs on the highest earning employees, such as administration. The salaries of administration may easily salvage any further action.
- A graduated/progressive furlough in top-down increments, with higher earning employees having higher percentages than those making less.
- A salary cutoff that states those making below a specific amount will be exempt from furlough pay cuts. This should be reflective of the cost of living in Alachua county.
- Exemption of Non-US citizen employees to maintain visa status
- Employee contribution to health benefits during furlough should be covered by the university for any furlough longer than 1 pay period. UF contributions to health-

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insurance, retirement benefits and social security should be maintained during the furlough time.

- Consideration of the context of reduced working hrs/day rather than reduced days (weeks, months).
- Maintaining access to offices, clinics, and labs, as well as to the other physical resources and electronic resources (including email, virtual libraries and UF databases, and computer networks for examples) of the University, in the same way that 9-month faculty retain access to those resources during the summer. This should include access to UF administrative resources (submission of proposals, administration of grants, etc).
- An extension to promotion and tenure clock or allowance in P&T packets for no negative consequences should be available to faculty who are furloughed. This follows similar paths made by any other interruption during the pre-tenure/promotion years, such as the pandemic caused this past year.
- Exemption from approval for any outside activities regulations during the time of their furlough. This will ensure employees can seek to ensure they can meet their cost of living. If possible this could be a stipulation just on the lower-earning employees under furlough.
- A minimum 30 day notice must be required before any furlough implementation and whether these will affect employee assignments, such as teaching, research, and service.
- Finally, we urge the University to consider all available resources that may be in reserve to reduce the impact of furloughs on teaching and research, as well as salaries.

Spring 2021 Instruction

It is well known that most faculty prefer teaching students in-person and we miss our interactions with the students in this type of modality. Faculty are committed to weathering the storm of this pandemic to ensure the safety of all students, their families/coworkers/partners/etc., and employees of UF. We are also eager to become a top 5 nationally ranked University. That being said the directive to return to teaching in-person sections that match those from spring 2020 presents a troubling timeline. CLAS Faculty are extremely concerned about the charge to return to in-person instruction in spring 2021, when very little information is available on how to do this safely. Any rush to resume in-person instruction should be predicated on 1) the ability to ensure the safety of the UF community, and 2) a significant foreseeable payoff in the quality of instruction. The former should go without saying, and the latter is fundamental to the university's mission and prestige. Furthermore, UF students and families were not consulted on this matter and they are considerably affected by the directive. In order for the University to move forward on the directive to teach in-person this spring we highlight the need for the following:

- Extensive testing measures, monitoring, and contact tracing.
- In-person instruction in socially distanced and masked classrooms poses important challenges to effective learning in classes where group work and communicative teaching would become impossible. Thus, information on different teaching modalities is needed.

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- For example, the hy-flex model of instruction might negatively impact pedagogy and student learning, splitting faculty attention between in-person and remote students. We are also concerned about the costs of equipping classrooms for such instruction.
- Information on how students will be split, such as in-person and online sections provided to the students and faculty.

Conclusion

It is disconcerting to have so many mixed messages from administration running the gambit of making fiscal cuts and talk of furlough, teaching in-person this spring, having Hy-flex classes, promoting AI initiatives and hires, all while maintaining a stance that we will stand up for diversity and equity and protect the well-being of employees and students. Most of these contradict each other and will not help UF stand as a nationally ranked school in the top 5. The university's reputation was gravely affected by the cuts in the Great Recession; the current contradictory messaging - including to students and their parents who might expect return to in-person teaching in the spring - could have the same consequence, no matter how they are spinned by PR. To us as the CLAS Faculty, the quality of education and safety of our students, families, and employees is paramount.