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Health Related Questions

How will the university address return to campus testing in January for the start of the spring semester?

From Eric Barker, Dean, College of Pharmacy:
We are making plans for return-to-campus COVID-19 testing for Spring 2021, in a manner similar to the pre-arrival residential student testing conducted before the start of the Fall 2020 semester. Specific details about available testing options, a timeline for testing, and how students can be cleared for campus by the Protect Purdue Health Center will be shared by 15 November 2020. Only those students in the fully online cohort for Spring 2021 semester will be exempted.

What is the university doing to provide better contact tracing? Instructors seem to not to be notified when students test positive.

From Eric Barker, Dean, College of Pharmacy:
Data from this semester continues to confirm that classrooms are low-risk environments for the spread of COVID-19 due to de-densification and face masks. Our contact tracing data, as well as the Protect Purdue Proximity Systems, confirm that we have no evidence of spread in our classrooms. We will continue to prioritize the privacy associated with an individual’s health information and only notify instructors if there is evidence of classroom-related spread. We continue to make enhancements to the reporting from the Protect Purdue Proximity System that enable better and more efficient contact tracing. One example is improved reports on University Residences and Congregate Housing units that enable contact tracers to identify potential outbreaks and allow us to do targeted surveillance, if needed.

As it relates to absence notifications, a new system for sending letters was launched during the week of 5 October 2020. We anticipate that this will improve communication among PPHC, ODOS, and faculty.

What are the plans for funding substitute instructors who need to cover lead instructors or graduate teaching assistants who are ill due to COVID?

From Provost Jay Akridge/Jenna Rickus, Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning
We have communicated guidance on the question to Deans and Department Heads. In short, units are expected to fill any short-term teaching needs (e.g., a quarantine situation) as they would with any illness. In many cases, the instructor may just move from face-to-face to online teaching for the quarantine period. If the teaching void turns out to be longer term, then the Dean can request funding from the Provost’s Office as needed.
Personnel-Related Questions

What are Purdue’s plans to support parents (graduate students, staff, and faculty) working from home with children at home if the local public schools should shut down again (whether wholesale or piecemeal)?

From Bill Bell, Vice President of Human Resources:
- We are being flexible around alternative scheduling/work hours and work locations, allowing remote working on a FT or hybrid basis – or as-needed due to childcare issues.
- We are being flexible around the use of paid time off due to childcare issues.
  - Additionally, there is emergency FMLA available through the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act.
- There are resources available via our Benefits / Family Friendly website to aid parents with finding childcare arrangements and referrals: https://www.purdue.edu/hr/familyfriendly/off_Campus/Index.html
- We are investigating other options through Employee Assistance Plan providers and Care.com to see if there is a potential benefit for our faculty/staff.
  - We are in the process of finalizing an RFP for an Employee Assistance Plan provider and expect to release it within the next few weeks.

What is the status of merit pay increases? Enrollment has increased and in some units research funding is steady or increasing.

From Chris Ruhl, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer:
Pausing merit was one of the many measures we proactively implemented to enable Purdue to navigate highly uncertain times and prioritize resources to safely reopening campus and protecting Purdue. The FY21 budget allocates tens of millions in new Protect Purdue investments – dollars we didn’t anticipate spending 9 months ago.
While enrollment did exceed expectations, other revenue streams have been adversely impacted – notably cuts to state appropriations, paused research activity over the summer, reduction in events, etc.
With respect to enrollment we are actively monitoring student engagement and whether students persist at historical levels. Spring data will be key.
In short, we are stable financially, but nowhere near out of the woods, so caution remains.

Are there any updates on the issue of parking restrictions at IND Airport?

From Chris Ruhl, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer:
- There are no restrictions on parking at the Indianapolis Airport.
- The change in policy implemented a per diem cap on reimbursement for the parking garage.
- Travelers retain the choice of numerous parking options at the Indy Airport, including a new partnership Purdue entered into with Fast Park that provides a convenient, safe, inexpensive option.
- There are no current plans to change the policy.

How many employees have been terminated, RIFd (Reduction-in-Force), or furloughed so far as a result of budget cutbacks due to COVID? Why have some employees been terminated rather than furloughed?

From Bill Bell, Vice President of Human Resources and Chris Ruhl, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer:
- There have been 35 RIFs due to budget/COVID-19 reasons:
- 10 = Project Managers in Capital Projects due to COVID-related reduced workload.
- 10 = Marketing & Media due to budget reduction coupled with a strategic shift to digital vs. print or long-form communication pieces.
- 8 = Office of Engagement in the Conferences area due to lack of work caused by COVID-related cancellation of conferences on campus.
- 7 = Student Life in the Hall of Music and Convocations areas due to lack of work caused by COVID-related cancellation of events on campus.

- Other than in Athletics, no furloughs or salary reductions have occurred.
- A furlough is really meant to be used as a short-term, temporary, unpaid leave of absence.
  - In cases where we do not believe the staffing/budget impacts are temporary in nature we have chosen to initiate reductions in force.
  - RIF’d employees are eligible for unemployment benefits immediately upon separation, but furloughs aren’t nearly as clear-cut and depend on the duration and overall annual salary impact.
  - Typically, Purdue has 40-50 RIFs during a “non-COVID year”.
- Due to the pandemic we enhanced our benefits for RIF’d employees to include:
  - Extended healthcare benefits for a period of 180 days.
  - Continued tuition remission at the university and Purdue Global for a full year.
  - Extended priority consideration for a period of one year for open positions if and when new employment opportunities within the university arise.

## Research-Related Questions

Does the hiring freeze necessitate that all hires are approved through HR in new ways, and ultimately must be approved by VP Bell? Why is hiring on external grants covered by the hiring freeze at all?

**From Bill Bell, Vice President of Human Resources:**
- Faculty hiring is reviewed/approved by the Provost.
- Deans have been delegated the authority to make hiring decisions for post-docs, graduate students, undergraduate students, and lecturers.
- Staff hiring is reviewed/approved by Bill Bell:
  - To hire students and staff for externally funded projects.
  - Deans forward their requests to HR, and all are responded to within a few days.
  - To date, 131 grant-funded positions have been approved for hire this year.
- External grants are covered by the hiring freeze to scrutinize and review the stability/confidence and duration of the funding source before moving forward with any hiring commitments.

## Teaching-Related Questions

Has the Senate or a Senate Standing Committee recently considered a music program at Purdue? The Director of the School of Music and the Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts at Purdue Fort Wayne would like to be able to provide their opinion.

The question pertains to the Senate and should be addressed to the Steering Committee and/or the Intercampus Faculty Council.
Faculty report continued problems with BrightSpace and lag times with TLT, as well as frailties in the WebEx system. Zoom is not an official tool and requests for Zoom help are sent to Purdue Northwest. TLT help is limited to office hours, and then seems to be struggling with the backlog that appears overnight; ITaP has dropped customer service requests; but instructors must often work on their classwork outside of office hours. As we look towards another semester of heavy IT use for instruction in the spring, what sort of active assessment will ITaP etc. be doing? Are there discussions underway or anticipated for the spring term, regarding new or existing platform performance in support of distance learning classrooms?

From Karl Browning, Chief Information Officer:
Nearly every primary computer system that supports student life, student on-boarding, class scheduling, and dozens of others critical functions were updated and tested throughout the summer. The new BrightSpace system required herculean efforts of faculty and staff and achieved incredible success. Late in the summer we increased the use of Zoom as a conferencing and teaching tool. With all of that effort and change, some loose ends relating to the handling of questions and problems remain. The Provost's Office, Teaching and Learning Technologies (TLT), and ITaP will collaborate to smooth out the problem-solving process to make the moving parts more seamless to faculty.

The ITAP/TLT ticket system can be very slow to respond. What plans are there to have a streamlined response? It's not always possible to make the office hours. Given the extraordinary challenges that we are facing with software outages, dealing with new software, etc., are there plans to hire more support staff? If not, what plans are there to more efficiently reply to inquiries for help, especially for questions/issues that are urgent?

From Karl Browning, Chief Information Officer:
As you know the new Brightspace Learning Management System became a crucial component of delivering learning in the "year of the pandemic." In our collective zeal to help faculty use the new tools, we didn't create a "one-stop" call center to provide management of the variety of questions and problems that arose. Thus, delays were experienced. Innovative Learning, TLT, and ITaP each have a role in delivering service. As we move into the spring semester the three organizations will develop a more coordinated approach to provide better service.

All of us, faculty and staff, experienced a tidal wave of work, which in my view was a colossal success. A lot of that work is related to the newness of the LMS as well as the lift from the old system to the new system. Hopefully, we have crossed the start-up hurdle and will move into more normal workloads going forward. Certainly we will have a better view of what staffing requirements need to be on an ongoing basis.

Will we be able schedule synchronous online classes for the online-only students this spring (a population including international students who are unable to come to campus), and if not, why not?

From Jenna Rickus, Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning:
We appreciate all of the incredible work being done to accommodate our international students who cannot yet be with us on campus and until then are in the Fully Online Option. These learners can be anywhere in the world and represent all time zones. The PSG survey tells us that 40% of Fully Online Students report that their time zone and access to reliable internet has created a challenge for them in regards to their online learning. These students have asked for asynchronous access to their courses. We all prefer being together in person, or if not in person then synchronously online, but requiring these
students to meet for official class times with a West Lafayette instructor creates problems for many of them. In addition, as a residential campus, our systems are not inherently set up to support a complete undergraduate online experience at scale. Our student scheduling systems, for example, do not know or account for student time zones when producing student schedules.

Will you affirm that faculty will have the “full right” (c.f. MSNBC on Aug 4) to determine their mode of instruction for their teaching in spring 2021, based on their assessment of their students’ pedagogical interests, without pressure from their department heads?

From Provost Jay Akridge/Jenna Rickus, Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning:
Our Spring 2021 guidance remains consistent with our Fall 2020 guidance: we are a residential university and that is the educational experience are students are here for; we are putting the best public health science/CDC guidance to work in creating safe teaching environments; we are working to ensure that anyone in a health-compromised situation is protected and teaching on-line; we are giving all others the broadest possible latitude with respect to how their course is delivered with face-to-face/hybrid/hy-flex strongly preferred. We are strongly discouraging asynchronous on-line teaching, as to this point in general, it has not worked well with residential students. Again, detailed guidance was sent by the Provost's Office on Thursday 16 October 2020.