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We normally avoid any campus-wide communications during breaks, as we want to respect the time away for our faculty and staff. That said, had there been any fundamental shift in instructional modality/campus operations being planned, additional communication would have been forthcoming. With the high number of Omicron cases, we have tried to make clear in numerous communications that instructors and staff had additional flexibility to teach and work remotely to manage personal disruptions from COVID as needed. Department Heads and Deans were monitoring staffing levels, and the University was prepared to support units who had service challenges as a result of high numbers of positive cases. Teaching and Learning has been communicating weekly with suggestions and tips for instructional delivery.

A number of steps were taken to manage/mitigate the Omicron variant, including expanding the physical size of the testing center, adding 10 technicians, opening a drive-thru testing clinic for families, engaging the COVID-19 student ambassadors, adding more academic case managers, and enhancing messaging, among others.

We appreciate the question and will continue to refine our communications approaches to keep the campus informed of new developments as we navigate the pandemic. Fortunately, to date, we have been able to deliver our residential learning experience effectively, despite the impacts of Omicron. The efforts and resilience of our faculty and staff during this time have been much appreciated.

President Daniels has argued repeatedly that case count is not what we should be paying attention to, given the vast majority of the cases are mild. However, when employees need to stay home because they are ill, case numbers do matter, particularly combined with a flu surge and a shortage of testing. How is the administration looking differently case count amongst employees given these different circumstances generated by Omicron?

We noted in our campus-wide communication prior to the start of the semester, “As the pandemic becomes endemic, the number of positive cases by itself becomes a less informative indicator of the health of our campus and our ability to protect Purdue...we will continue to consider, evaluate and modify our approach based on many factors including positive cases, case severity, availability of and our ability to deliver campus resources, and community trends.”

We monitor daily employee absence reports across the university and have not seen widespread absences (for any reason) that could create staffing shortages or even remotely threaten the normal operations of the university.

As anticipated, on campus, the number of new COVID cases resulting from Omicron are decreasing, as are total active cases and the positivity rate.

As of the week ending January 29, the Indiana Department of Health classified the statewide flu impact as “Minimal.”

How are promotion and tenure guidance, tenure clocks, and course evaluation processing going to be changed to acknowledge faculty members’ lack of reliable childcare and continued heightened expectations in teaching and service due to the pandemic? What other policy changes will you make to acknowledge that many staff and faculty are

both working their jobs and providing additional childcare at home on an ad hoc basis? (Especially now that PCR tests are restricted from dependents, which limits kids' abilities to get back to school in 1-2 days with a rapid test rather than 5 days?)

A number of steps have been taken in support of faculty as they navigate the challenges created by COVID-19. We offered automatic tenure clock extensions to faculty (which were taken by more than 2/3 of those eligible), along with consideration going forward of normal tenure clock extension requests that are related to COVID-19. The option of adding a professional impact statement in the promotion package to document the effects of COVID-19 on a faculty member's productivity was added. We suspended normal teaching evaluations for Spring 2020. In addition, we launched a COVID-19 Research Interruption Fund that provided bridge funding for nearly 100 faculty with research programs impacted by the pandemic. This spring, we gave maximum flexibility for faculty and instructors to adjust course modality to address short-term challenges such as childcare disruptions created by COVID-19.

For both faculty and staff, departments have and are facilitating hybrid and remote work arrangements when possible. Many meetings (department, committee, and professional) have been modified to hybrid or fully remote formats, when possible, to facilitate participation from those out of the office. We have counseled Department Heads and others involved in the annual review process (some use committees) to take individual circumstances created by COVID-19 into consideration in the evaluation and feedback process. We will continue to look for appropriate ways to support faculty and staff given whatever challenges COVID-19 brings us.

While we are already in the middle of Omicron, we also need to look to the next variant. What triggers are in place to change our approach to "business as usual"? For example, a) what happens when the campus positivity rate hits 25%, or 30% and so on, or b) what happens when we reach quarantine capacity on campus, or c) how many instructors and graduate teaching assistants have to be sick for us to take action or move online?

Since the start of the pandemic, we have never bound ourselves to inflexible triggers. Our COVID-related decisions have been based on the best medical and scientific guidance available, including that of our own team of leaders and experts, our external Medical Advisory Team and our partners at the Tippecanoe County Health Department and the Indiana Department of Health. We will continue to monitor public health circumstances closely, to work with our expert partners, and to respond accordingly.

It appears that PRF has different vaccination and testing requirements from the West Lafayette campus. Some PRF job postings list a requirement to be vaccinated. PRF employees also seem to have separate requirements for drug testing. Why are these requirements different for PRF employees versus Purdue-WL employees?

This question was helpful in drawing attention to inconsistencies between the PRF and West Lafayette campus practices. After reconsideration, PRF's policies for COVID vaccination and testing will align with those at the West Lafayette campus. Employees will be encouraged to be vaccinated, but those who choose not to be vaccinated will help keep PRF safe by participating in a COVID testing program.

At the start of the pandemic, you provided little kits of cloth masks, hand sanitizer, wipes, and so on to all students and employees. Given that the CDC has recommended the use of N-95s and similar respirators now, will you provide N-95s or equivalents to students and employees?

Information on how to obtain a free N-95 mask has been disseminated frequently via Purdue Today and special COVID-related messages; it also appears on the [Protect Purdue website](#).

Masks are readily available at our physical Fisher Scientific stores in Lilly and Wetherill and can also be ordered online via Ariba for departmental needs. To date we've distributed 22,000 masks and still have 8,000 on hand.

If we are expected to teach in classrooms that are full capacity, why is public access still restricted to Hovde? Why is access limited to one entrance, and you must have an acceptable reason to enter? The rest of campus is open. Are you applying a different standard of safety to administration staff compared to the rest of us?

All individuals seeking to conduct university business have and have always had access to Hovde. Visitors are asked to check in for informational, safety, and security considerations. With three of our largest student-facing support areas on the main floor of Hovde (Bursar, Registrar, and ID Office), check-in allows staff to direct students effectively to the appropriate office. The upper levels of the building house much of the university's secure data, and prudence suggests that visitors check in for their appointments. To maintain an efficient use of human resources, one check-in counter exists in the building—on the lower level—and is accessed through the handicap-enabled entry.

Climate Change

Preparing Purdue students to both work in and produce a world making fewer carbon emissions will take large-scale curricular change that should have already begun. How is the administration preparing to support curricular development around the realities of climate change not just in majors that already focus on it, but for all Purdue students?

The question present an important example and opportunity for the type of [Meaningful, Flexible, and Cross-Disciplinary Curricula](#) that campus called for during the listening sessions that lead to the [Roadmap for Transformative Education](#). With funds from the [Lilly Endowment Charting the Future](#) grant, the [Innovation College at Purdue](#) was recently launched to support this type of curricular development. Faculty who have project ideas for large-scale curricular development and transformation related to climate change or other cross-disciplinary topics should contact the [Innovation Hub](#) to explore support possibilities.

Creative Writing Program

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The University has continued to increase our investment in the College of Liberal Arts in support of writing and communications, and general support of growth in programmatic needs as campus enrollment has increased.

A full review of the Creative Writing program's fiscal situation and the facts behind it has been completed. Dean Reingold's decision to hold the program and the English Department accountable for meeting their budgets was fully appropriate.

One of the most important duties made by academic administrators—from provosts, to deans, to department heads—is the allocation of resources based on enrollment trends, programmatic priorities, and other considerations, and the discipline to maintain expenditures within agreed limits. Overspending by any college or department must necessarily be remedied by the rest. Fairness suggests that each is accountable to the others and to the university.

IT Infrastructure

What will Purdue do to provide a better and more stable IT environment? Instructors continue to face network and system outages. This makes a modern IT-supported classroom very, very difficult.

The IT organization began a full review of operating systems and environments late in 2021 to develop a roadmap for retiring the more dated platforms and replace them with more robust options. In addition, the team is enhancing training, staffing and support so that we can operate with the same reliability and resilience that our end users (students, faculty and staff) expect. We have already seen improvements in system availability and performance and this trend will continue forward.