Faculty Feedback Survey
October 2020

The October Faculty Feedback Survey was administered in the window from October 8th-12th. A total of 553 faculty participated in the survey (vs. 472 for the September survey). This represents 44.7% of full-time faculty. Of these 553, 84.4% of faculty (467) who started the survey completed it.

Summary of Key Takeaways from the Faculty Survey

Pledge to Protect & Operational Supports

- A substantially higher proportion of faculty were satisfied in October than in September (58.9% vs. 41.3%), with fewer faculty having "many concerns" (5.6% vs. 11.8%) on the Pledge to Protect.
- Just over 6 in 10 faculty reported being generally satisfied with operational supports (61.0%). This constitutes a slight increase over September, where 54.7% reported being generally satisfied. Only 4.7% of faculty indicated they have many concerns that still need to be addressed.

Teaching Experiences

- Overall, nearly 6 in 10 faculty reported being generally satisfied with their teaching experiences (57.6%). This represents an increase over the September survey, when 43.9% of faculty reported being generally satisfied. Faculty teaching virtually were more likely to be satisfied than faculty teaching in other modalities (72.4% for virtual vs. 45.4% for SMUFlex and 43.5% for faculty teaching both modalities). As in September, faculty teaching virtually were most satisfied.
- Overall, there was a bimodal distribution in terms of faculty reports of student in-person attendance in SMUFlex classes. The plurality of respondents indicated either that fewer than 40% of their students attended in person on their assigned day, or on the other end, that over 80% of their students attended in person on their assigned days. Fewer faculty reported numbers somewhere in between these two. The most frequent reasons faculty indicated that their students cited included a) concerns about COVID-19 exposure and b) convenience.

Communications

- Overall, over 6 in 10 faculty reported being generally satisfied with university communications (61.1%), which constitutes a small increase over September (51.2% generally satisfied).
- 7.4% of faculty overall indicated they still have many concerns about this area that need to be addressed, with substantial variety in responses: some faculty were "impressed with the commitment to communication" and others cited it as "not useful. Some faculty indicated there was "not a lot of communication" and others indicated it was "overwhelming."

Key Takeaways on Spring Course Format

- Faculty substantially preferred the option of having classes all virtual for the Spring semester. For smaller classes, virtual was preferred over the next most popular option, all in-person, by a margin of more than 2:1 (45.7% vs. 20.2). For large classes, the margin was even larger, with 50% of faculty preferring all virtual and 19.3% preferring the next most popular option, SMUFlex.
- For performance and applied classes, the plurality of respondents preferred all in-person, with all virtual as the second most popular option.

The survey was conducted to ensure anonymity, with all responses reported only at the aggregate level. Overall characteristics of the respondents can be found in the charts below.
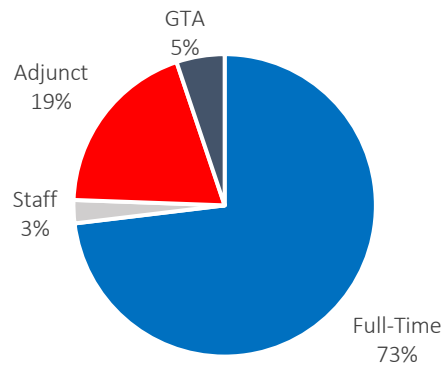
Faculty Survey Respondents by Teaching Modality
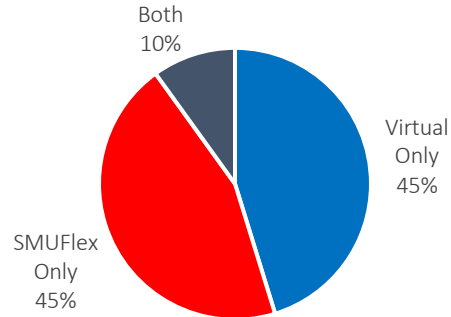
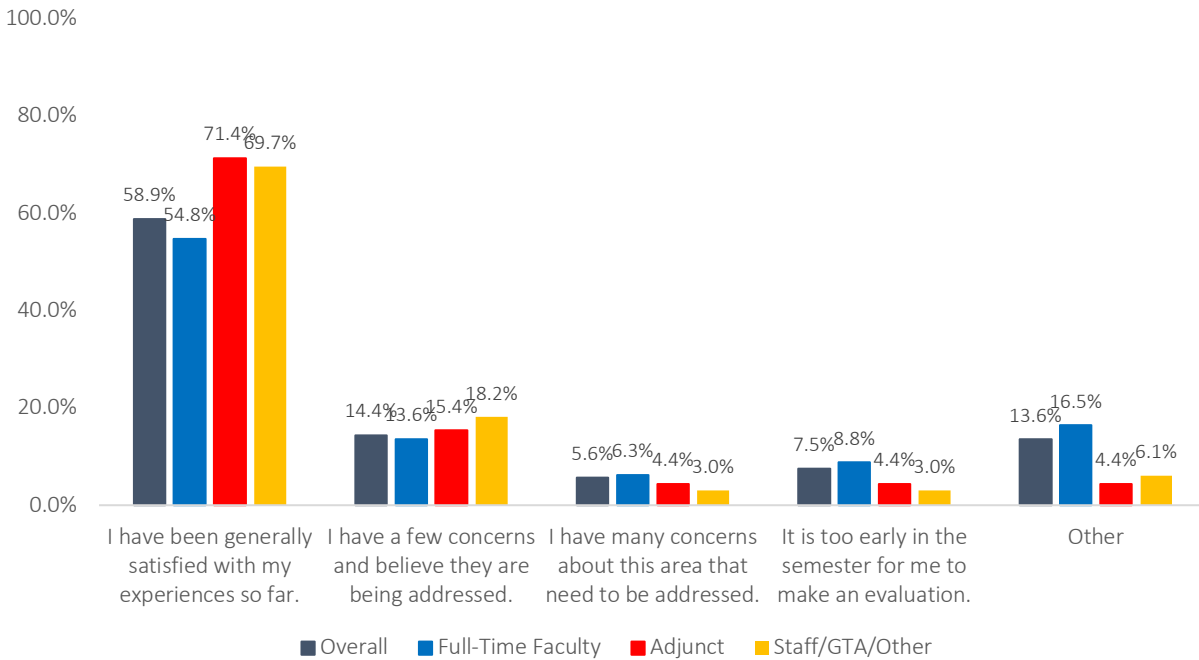### Faculty Survey Respondents by School
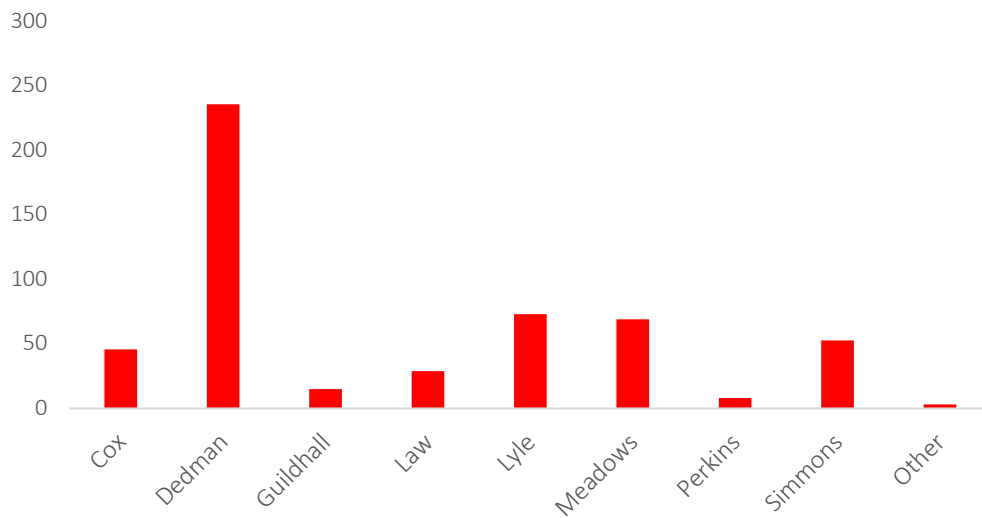
Faculty Survey Respondents by Role

Pledge to Protect

How have members of the SMU community (students, faculty, and staff) upheld the values of the SMU CAN Pledge to Protect (commitment to social distancing, wearing masks, and maintaining a safe campus)?
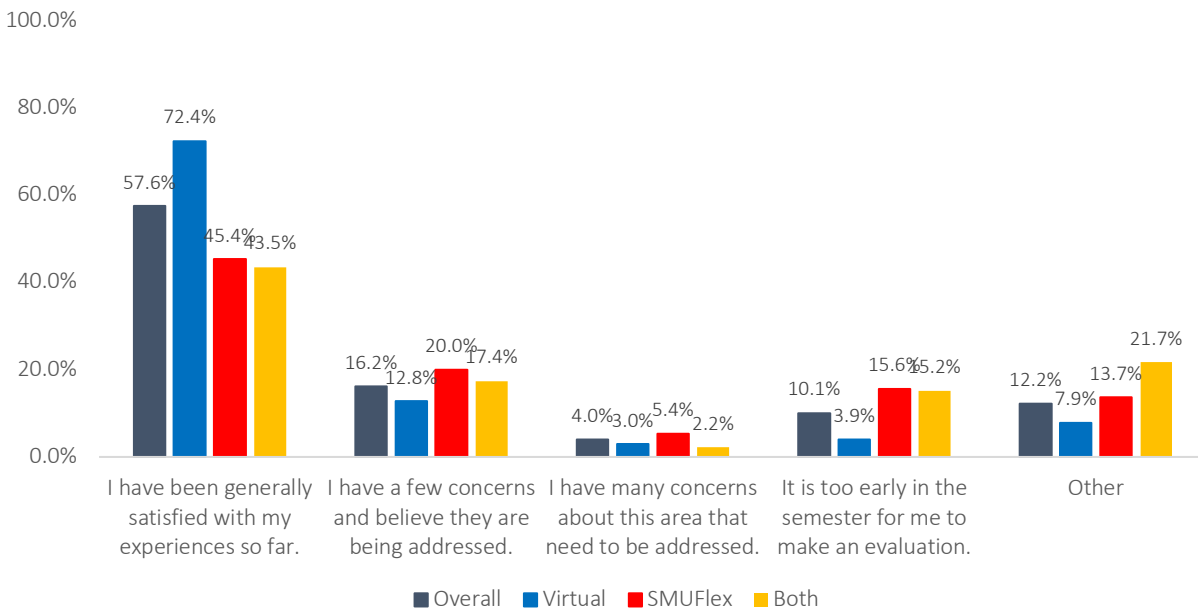

Key Takeaways on Pledge to Protect

- Overall, roughly 6 in 10 faculty respondents reported being generally satisfied with the university community upholding the pledge to protect.
    - This constitutes an increase in overall satisfaction since September – a substantially higher proportion of faculty were satisfied in October than September (58.9% vs. 41.3%), with fewer faculty having "many concerns" (5.6% vs. 11.8%).
- Full time faculty reported being somewhat less satisfied than adjunct faculty and staff/GTAs.
- Of the 65 write-in comments of "Other," the following themes emerged:
    - The vast majority (50) indicated that this item was not applicable to them, since they had not been on campus because they are working remotely.
    - The remaining 15 concerns focused on students not wearing masks and social distancing when outside of class. There a few mixed comments about numbers of Covid-19 cases and a note of concern about whether students are reporting all cases

Overall Classroom Experience

How has the overall experience been of teaching in the first two weeks?

Chart data:

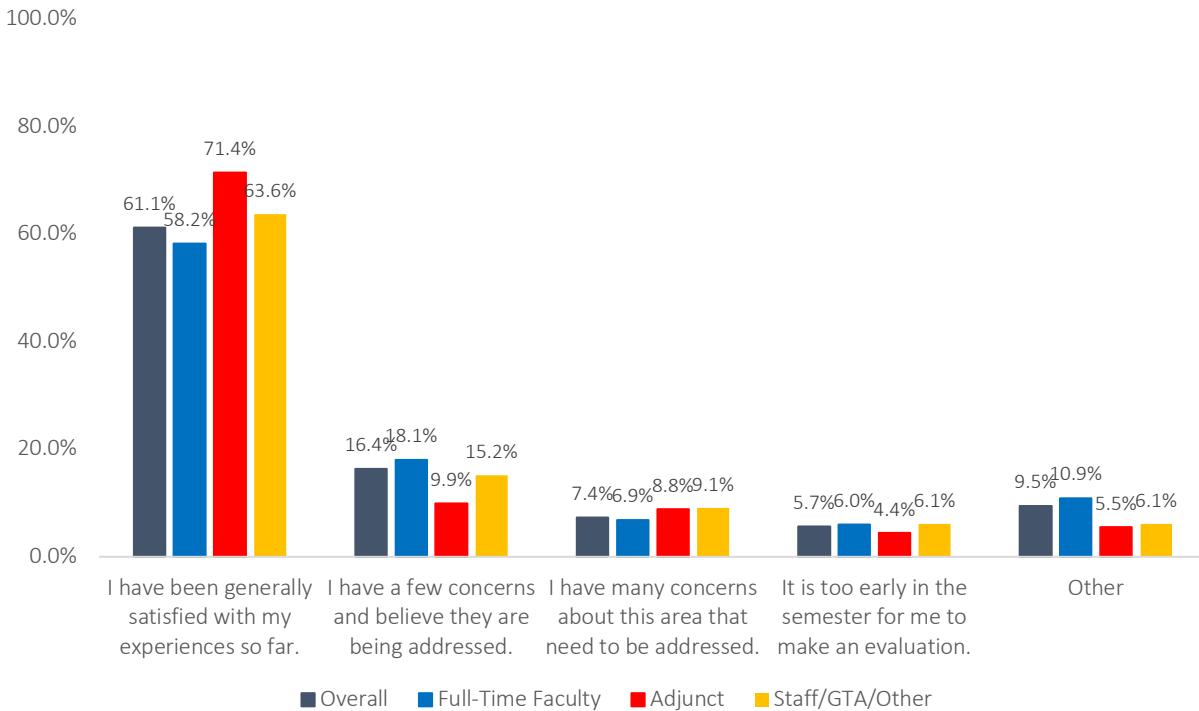| Response	Overall	Virtual	SMUFlex	Both
I have been generally satisfied with my experiences so far.	57.6%	72.4%	45.4%	43.5%
I have a few concerns and believe they are being addressed.	16.2%	12.8%	20.0%	17.4%
I have many concerns about this area that need to be addressed.	4.0%	3.0%	5.4%	2.2%
It is too early in the semester for me to make an evaluation.	10.1%	3.9%	15.6%	15.2%
Other	12.2%	7.9%	13.7%	21.7%

Key Takeaways on Overall Teaching Experience

- Overall, nearly 6 in 10 faculty reported being generally satisfied with their teaching experiences (57.6%).
    - This represents an increase over the September survey, where 43.9% of faculty were generally satisfied.
- Faculty teaching virtually were more likely to be satisfied than faculty teaching in other modalities (72.4% for virtual vs. 45.4% for SMUFlex and 43.5% for both).
    - Likewise, in September, faculty teaching virtually were most satisfied.
- 58 faculty used the "other" write-in option to lay out the following concerns:
    - Positive examples of supports received from OIT and leadership
    - Experiences about the difficulty of the fall semester reported in this write-in option were very mixed; some faculty indicated that the beginning of the semester adjustment was more difficult than mid-semester, while for other faculty, the semester has become more exhausting across the semester
    - Exhaustion and time investment required to teach in the new modalities (SMUFlex and Virtual) were top themes
    - Consistent difficulties with the SMUFlex mode were consistently brought up (pedagogical constraints and attendance concerns)

University Communication

How useful have the newsletters, town halls, and department-level communications been?

|	I have been generally satisfied with my experiences so far.	I have a few concerns and believe they are being addressed.	I have many concerns about this area that need to be addressed.	It is too early in the semester for me to make an evaluation.	Other
Overall	61.1%	16.4%	7.4%	5.7%	9.5%
Full-Time Faculty	58.2%	18.1%	6.9%	6.0%	10.9%
Adjunct	71.4%	9.9%	8.8%	4.4%	5.5%
Staff/GTA/Other	63.6%	15.2%	9.1%	6.1%	6.1%

Key Takeaways on Communication

- Overall, over 6 in 10 faculty reported being generally satisfied with university communications (61.1%).
    - This constitutes a small increase over September, where 51.2% were generally satisfied.
    - 7.4% of faculty overall indicated they still have many concerns about this area that need to be addressed.
- Adjunct faculty were particularly likely to report being satisfied with university communication (71.4%), while a smaller share of full-time faculty reported being satisfied (58.2%).
- 45 faculty chose the "Other" write-in option, with the following emerging themes:
    - There is variety in satisfaction with the communications, with some faculty "impressed with the commitment to communication" and others citing too high a volume and "too frequent"; others cite experiencing that it is "not a lot of communication" or that it is "useless" and "overwhelming."
    - Variety also characterizes faculty responses about the COVID dashboard communications, with some indicating their concerns were addressed with the new rollout and others appreciating the new format and level of detail.

Operational Supports

How have the operational supports been handled in the first two weeks (masks and cleaning supplies provided, timeliness of requests for support)?
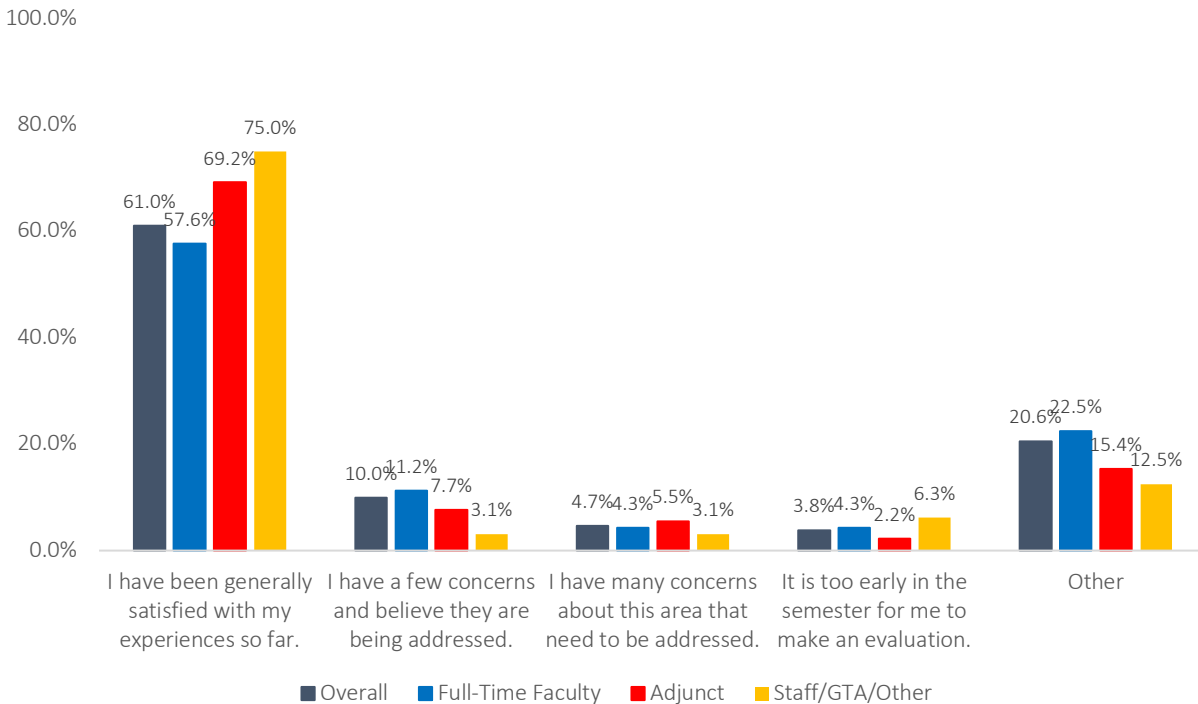

Key Takeaways on Operational Supports

- Just over 6 in 10 faculty reported being generally satisfied with operational supports (61.0%).
  - This constitutes a slight increase over September, where 54.7% reported being generally satisfied.
  - 4.7% of faculty indicated they have many concerns that sill need to be addressed.
- 54.7% of all faculty reported being generally satisfied with operational supports.
- Adjunct faculty and staff/GTAs were significantly more likely to report being satisfied with operational supports than full-time faculty.
- 97 faculty used the "Other" option to write in their comments:
  - 75 faculty commented that this question does not apply to them since they are not coming to campus
  - Of the remaining 22 comments, 6 focused on positive comments about OIT support; 3 have focused on masks; 13 focused on various aspects of cleaning, ranging from inconsistent stocking of supplies and specific buildings that might not be cleaned to questions about whether faculty and students are using the supplies between classes.

Attendance

In your SMUFlex classes this semester, how would you describe your students' attendance patterns for the in-person rotation days (i.e. Red/Blue Days)?
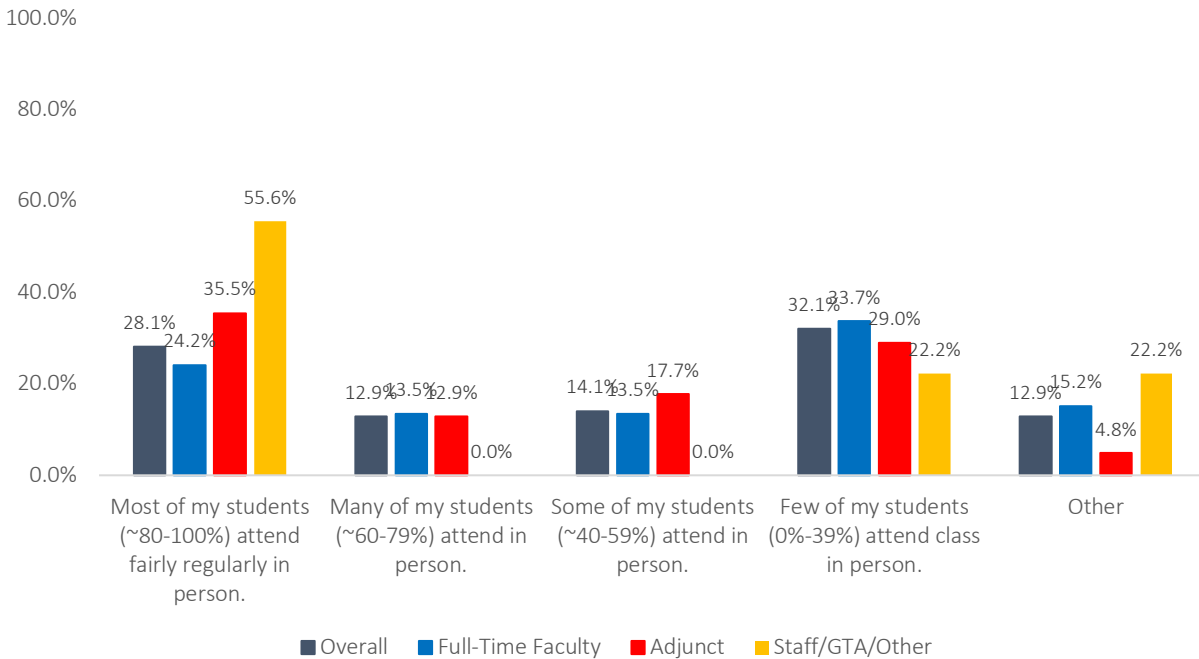
Frequency of Student Reasons for Choosing to Attend via Zoom Instead of In-Person
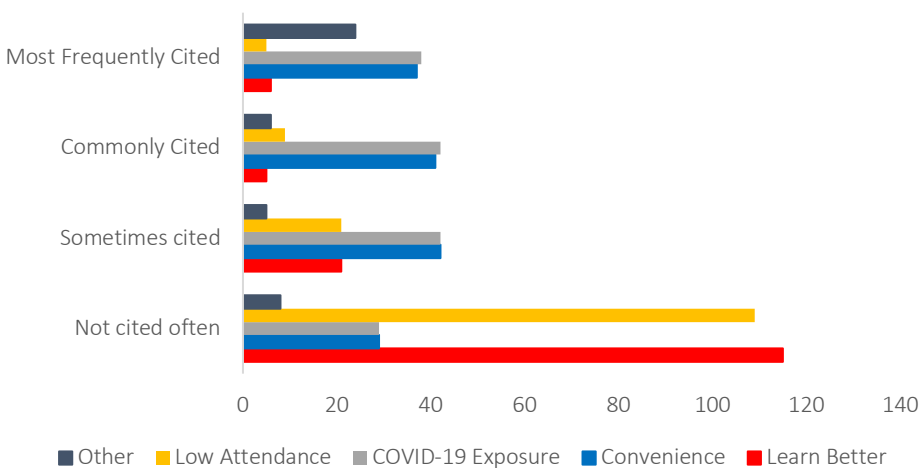

Key Takeaways on Attendance

- Overall, there was a bimodal distribution in terms of faculty reports of attendance in SMUFlex classes. The plurality of respondents indicated that few of their students (<40%) attended in person on their assigned days. However, a substantial share also indicated that most of their

students (>80%) attended in person on their assigned days. Fewer faculty reported many or some of their students attending in person.

- This varied somewhat by faculty role, with staff/GTAs reporting more students attending in person and full-time faculty more likely to report few students attending. However, staff/GTA data should be interpreted with caution due to low number of respondents.
- In terms of the reasons for students choosing to attend via Zoom instead of in person, the most frequently cited reasons were COVID-19 exposure and convenience. Faculty reported that low attendance of peers and learning better via Zoom were not cited often as reasons for attending via Zoom.

Preferred Spring Course Format

In looking ahead to the Spring semester, please indicate what would be the most effective for you and your students in each type of these classes.
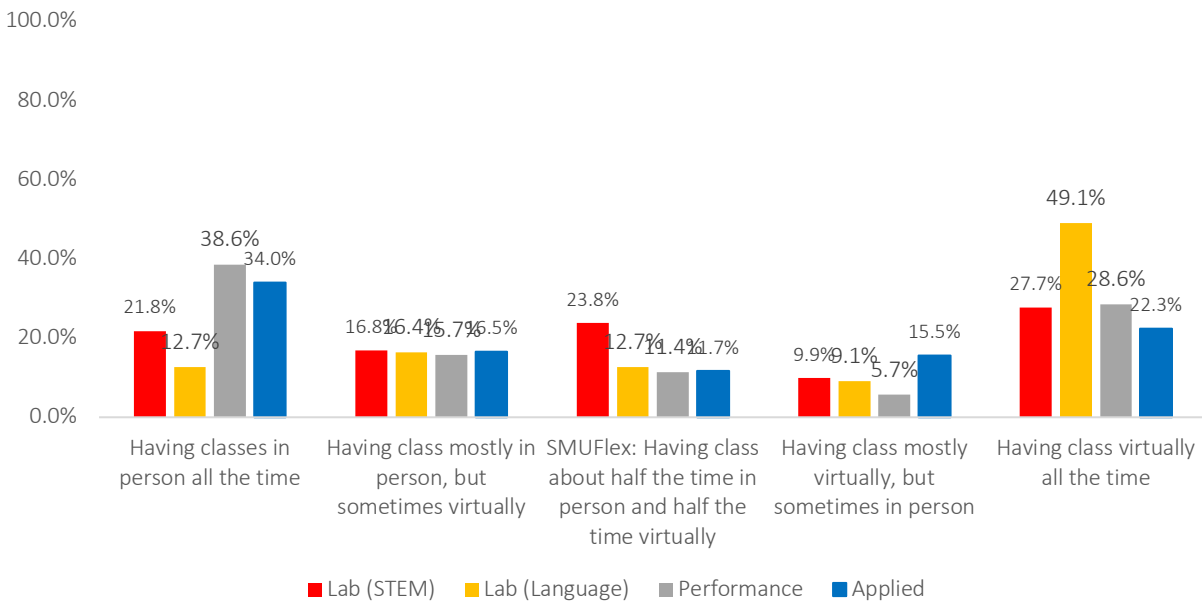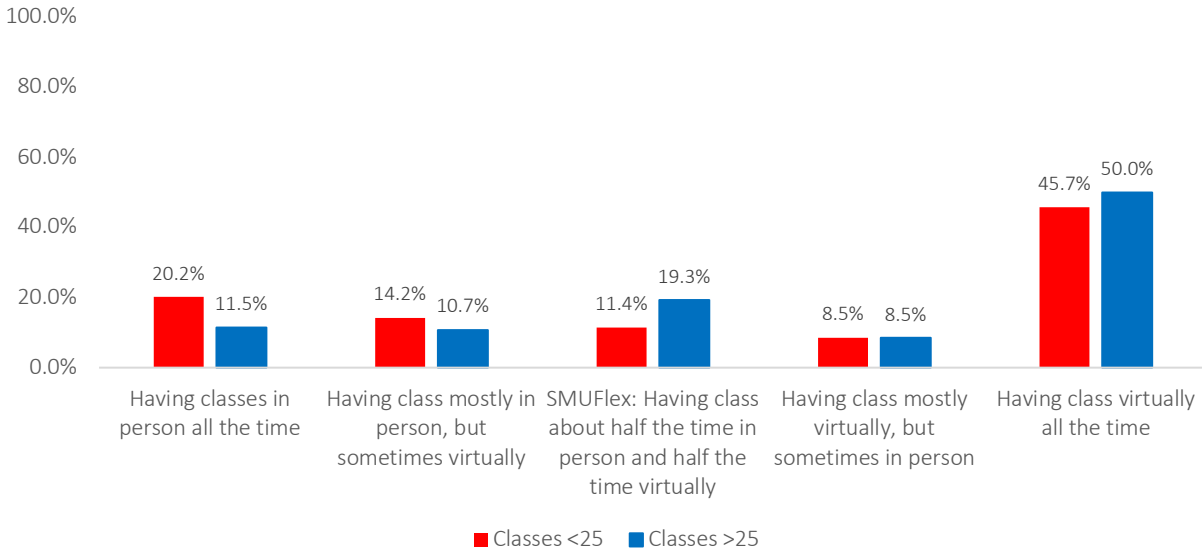
Classes <25   Classes >25

Lab (STEM)   Lab (Language)   Performance   Applied

Key Takeaways on Spring Course Format

- Faculty substantially preferred the option of having classes all virtual for the Spring semester. For smaller classes, virtual was preferred over the next most popular option, all in-person, by a margin of more than 2:1 (45.7% vs. 20.2). For large classes, the margin was even larger, with 50% of faculty preferring all virtual and 19.3% preferring the next most popular option, SMUFlex.
- For performance and applied classes, the plurality of respondents preferred all in-person, with all virtual as the second most popular option.

- For language labs, all virtual was most preferred format. For STEM labs, all virtual was the most preferred option, but faculty were more evenly divided in terms of their support for all virtual, SMUFlex and all in-person.

Themes from Faculty Responses to the Open-Ended Items

The last two questions of the survey asked for any additional feedback regarding, first, challenges experienced this semester, and second, anything that might be going well this semester under the circumstances. Each mention of an item was tallied, so the frequency counts provide an overview of the weight given in the open-ended comments around each of these items.

Themes from Responses about Challenges

The greatest number of challenges cited were based on classroom technology issues, with 82 mentions, all of which are being synthesized and provide to the OIT team, who are addressing each of them to the extent that details were provided. Of these concerns, the issues with sound technologies continues to be cited most frequently, with suggestions for lapel mics.

The next highest area of challenges cited related to student participation and engagement, with 72 mentions, both in terms of virtual classes (with students not turning on webcams and/or not staying on mute) and in terms of SMUFlex classes (with students not attending in person on their assigned red/blue rotation day). It is to be noted that issues of engagement were also cited by other faculty as one of the aspects of teaching that is going well this semester (see next section), which indicates that student engagement is being experienced unevenly by faculty across campus.

Attendance received a high number of comments, with 50 mentions, mostly by faculty whose students are not attending as frequently in person on their assigned red/blue rotation days in the SMUFlex model. As with the student engagement above, there were also many mentions that attendance is going well, both via Zoom and in SMUFlex, which might indicate uneven experiences across campus. Nonetheless, there are growing concerns that the current attendance policy needs to be revisited and revised for the spring semester. (Note: The academic leadership team will be working on a revised attendance policy, in light of these concerns.)

Many faculty are concerned poor student performance/outcomes issues at 45 mentions. Among these concerns, 16 mentions were related to mental health concerns and 10 were related to concerns about student cheating. (Note. The Office of Student Academic Engagement and Success is also reviewing both the EPR and MPR reports, together with the student survey data to reach to students who need support.)

Another main area of concern cited was faculty work/overload issues with 47 mentions. This was a recurrent theme both in the challenges and in the areas that are going well—that even when teaching is going well, it is often due to a much-increased amount of time and effort to plan and prepare class, with faculty citing the additional load for both modalities of Virtual and SMUFlex.

Many faculty (at 33 mentions) indicate that SMU FLEX is not an appropriate pedagogy and recommend either moving to fully in person when possible or to Virtual. (Note. The spring schedule should have more flexibility than the fall schedule to accommodate fully in person. Faculty can work directly with chairs to see if this can be an accommodation for their course.)

There were 16 mentions about COVID-19 concerns; an additional 10 mentions indicated concerns about masks being worn; there were 8 mentions about masks being inhibiting; and there were 7 mentions were made about the COVID notifications.

Concerns cited 12-15 times included a) reduction of class-time concerns; b) tracking attendance concerns; and c) requests for supplies and funds.

Concerns that were mentioned 1-6 times included the following: lab class issues (6); lack of research productivity concerns (5); lesser quality of work (5); OIT support (4); less connection to faculty/staff (3); lack of a semester break (2); childcare (2); and lack of speakers for public events (1).

Finally, within the "challenges" open-ended responses were also 11 positive comments about Virtual classes; 10 positive responses about SMUFlex and 5 positive responses about support staff.

Themes from Responses about Information on Aspects Going Well

Of the open-ended comments in response to help understand what is going well, the majority of the comments (55 comments) praised students and their engagement.

An additional 36 comments were directed to positive experiences with support from a variety of areas, including ATSDs, CTE, OIT, the summer training workshops, department chairs, and administrative communications.

Positive comments were evenly divided between SMUFlex teaching (30 comments) and Virtual (30 comments), with topics ranging from faculty indicating they liked having recorded lectures for students to reviewed, enjoyed flipping parts of their classroom, and generally feeling organized in different ways. Many of these comments did include notes about the extra time investment needed to create such positive learning environments for their students and themselves.

A number of ideas (28 comments) were surfaced by faculty for ways to approach creative solutions to challenges that have been presented this semester. Such ideas included the following: allow SMUFlex students the choice to attend on both red/blue days if attendance is low and the room can accommodate the numbers; using Zoom breakout rooms regularly and creatively to increase engagement; using some class time for asynchronous content while hosting small group and/or one-on-one office hours; monthly Zoom optional "connection" hours; posting lectures online ahead of time to flip the classroom; and alternating sessions in creative ways.

19 comments were provided about what is going well with general technology areas (hardware, Canvas, and Zoom).

A small number of faculty (12 comments) indicated that the semester has been more seamless than they anticipated, with the challenges diminishing in the first few weeks.