

Executive Summary of the Fall 2020 Faculty and Student Surveys

Submitted September 28, 2020

The first fall 2020 faculty and student surveys were administered September 8-11 during the third week of the fall semester to provide an optional opportunity for students and faculty to provide feedback on their experiences of the first 2-3 weeks of the fall semester. The surveys were analyzed by a team of faculty (two Faculty Senators and 1 instructional staff member in the Office of Research and Graduate Studies) and of two members of the Provost's Office. A total of 1,951 students participated in the student survey (1,424 Undergraduate; 518 Graduate; 8 Certificate and 1 Missing), and 472 faculty participated in the survey (out of 1,154 full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, instructional staff, and graduate teaching assistants teaching across all undergraduate, graduate, and all other programs).

There were two versions of the survey (one for faculty; one for students), which were predominantly parallel and posed a combination of multiple-choice items (all with write-in options), along with open-ended response items. Items included questions about campus health and safety/SMU's pledge to protect, classroom experiences, university communications, and operational supports. The full reports have been submitted as separate documents, and each one draws on the descriptive statistics of questions across these domains as well as on a synthesis across all open-ended responses to explore themes related to each area.

The Provost's Office will provide monthly surveys in October and November so that faculty and students can keep providing feedback as we continue to monitor unfolding circumstances.

Key findings from September's surveys are presented below, as organized around the question domains. For a visual summary, Figures 1 and 2 on page 3 of the Executive Summary offer side-by-side comparison charts of faculty and student feedback for the specific domains relating to "Pledge to Protect" and "Classroom Experiences."

Key Takeaways on 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?)*

- Overall, a comparable proportion of just over 4 in 10 faculty and students reported being "generally satisfied" with the SMU Community upholding the principles of Pledge to Protect (41.3% of faculty vs. 42.2% of students).
- 13.3% of faculty and 17.6% of students reported that they had a few concerns and "believed they were being addressed."
- 18.3% of faculty and 14.8% of students reported that it was "too early in the semester" for them to make an evaluation.
- Students were somewhat more likely to report having "many concerns" in terms of the Pledge to Protect than faculty (16.8% vs. 11.8%).
- Themes that emerged from the write-in option and open-ended responses generally patterned around concerns of off-campus decision-making and around reinforcement of mask wearing.

Key Takeaways on Overall Satisfaction with Classroom Experiences: *How has the overall experience in the classroom been (regardless of modality) in the first two weeks?*

- Just over half of students reported being generally satisfied with their classroom experiences over the first two weeks of the semester (52.8%). Faculty were somewhat less likely than students to report being satisfied with their classroom experiences than students over the first two weeks of the semester (43.9%).
- 15.0% of faculty and 21.9% of students reported that they still have a few concerns but believe they are being addressed.
- 13.4% of faculty and 12.3% of students reported that it is “too early in the semester” for them to make an evaluation.
- Nearly 14% of faculty reported having “many concerns” with classroom experiences, while only 8.5% of students reported having many concerns.
- Themes that emerged from the write-in options were very similar to the open-ended responses and included topics that are elaborated on in the full report, primarily related to strong support of OIT and the Academic Technology Support teams, concerns with specific technology (primarily with sound issues), and some growing concerns about attendance and student engagement).

*** Satisfaction by Teaching Modality**

- Overall, students reported similar levels of satisfaction with communication and learning experiences in both Virtual and SMUFlex class formats.
- Faculty teaching in only virtual formats reported substantially higher levels of satisfaction (59.5% “generally satisfied”) than faculty teaching in only SMUFlex courses (35.3%), while faculty teaching in both formats reported the lowest levels of satisfaction (22.2%).

Key Takeaways from University Communications: *How useful have the newsletters, town halls, and department-level communications been?*

- Overall, trends in satisfaction about university communications maintained the same pattern as in the other areas, with the overall satisfaction at 51.2% for faculty and 59.2% for students.
- Adjunct faculty consistently rated the highest levels of satisfaction at 69.2% of adjuncts being satisfied and only 1.5% expressing “many concerns.”
- 11.7% of faculty and 14.3% of students reported having a few concerns that they believe are being addressed, and 14.0% indicated it is too early in the semester for them to make an evaluation.
- Themes emerging from communications was a preference for more faculty involvement in decision-making and for interactive-style Town Halls.

Key Takeaways from Operational Supports: *How have the operational supports been handled in the first two weeks (masks and cleaning supplies provided, timeliness of requests for support)?*

- This category had the lowest percentages of faculty and students expressing that they have many concerns (6.2% of faculty and of students, respectively).
- Themes indicated a few concerns about the contact tracing protocols and availability of cleaning supplies.

Figure 1: 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)?

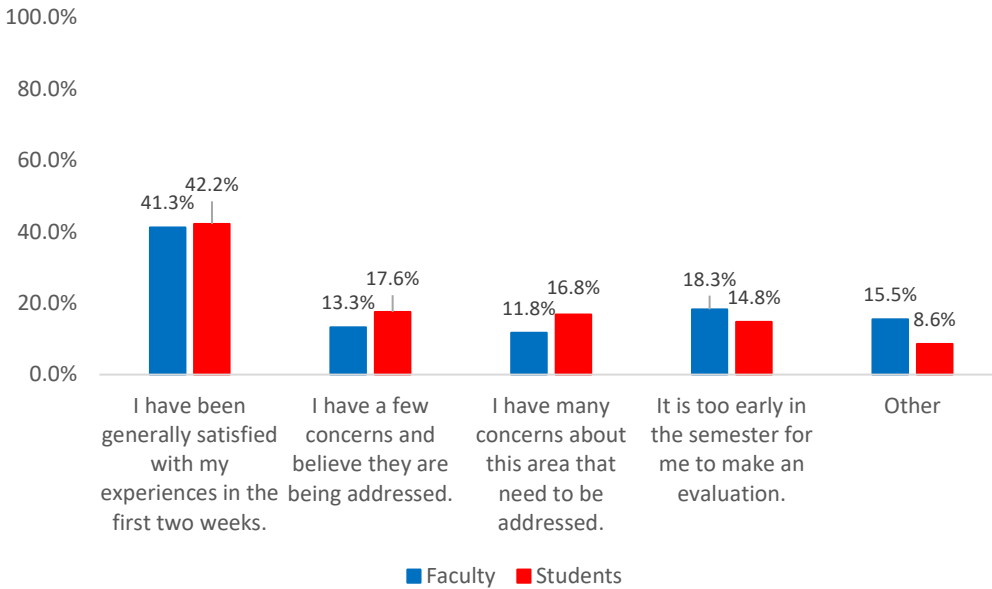


Figure 2: Classroom Experiences

How has the overall experience in the classroom been (regardless of modality) in the first two weeks?

