Dear President Toro,

Over the past three weeks, we have gathered and synthesized information about academic operations and developed a draft plan for Academic Year 2020-21. For each mode of operation, we focus on four main areas: (1) Instruction, (2) Academic Support Services, (3) Creative Activity, and (4) Other Academic Operations.

Our report was informed by five sources of data:

1. **The Academic Operations Survey (AOS).** Unit directors and Chairpersons answered questions about their operations under different modes of operation. They identified potential compromised services, challenges, and needs.
2. **The Instructional and Creative Activity Survey (ICAS).** Chairpersons answered questions about the instructional offerings of the department and faculty need surrounding creative activity.
3. **JotForm (JF).** Academic and administrative faculty, staff, management, and students provided feedback about traditional, remote, and hybrid operations.
4. **Student Feedback (SF).** Students relayed alerts about online learning, and student service providers (i.e., academic coaches, peer mentors from Success Central) shared their observations.
5. **Discussions (D).** Members of the workgroup sought and received clarification or elaboration from those knowledgeable about the issues. Discussions among members were informed by scholarly sources.

Throughout the summaries, we referenced these sources of data to justify claims. Further, where possible, we tagged challenges and recommendations that aligned with the identified activities of the strategic plan.

**On-Campus Operations**

**Introduction**

Of cases where a clear preference for operational mode could be identified, 37.6% of students preferred traditional on-campus operations; academic faculty (16.1%), administrative faculty (3.8%), and staff (7.4%) did not (JF). Responses reveal deep concern which impact faculty desire to teach and student desire to take on ground classes. Students and faculty have concerns about health risks which impact faculty desire to teach and student desire to take on ground classes. For faculty, 29.3% expressed concern about illness in general, 15.8% over susceptibility, 12.5% over insufficient detection or care, 42.9% over social distancing, and 17.2% over sanitization (JF). Student percentages were somewhat lower (33.1%, 6.6%, 7.7%, 27.4%, 10.9%), consistent with their general preference for on-campus operations. When constructing our responses, we assumed that social distancing measures would be in effect and require a 6-ft radius.

**Analysis of Data.** See above.

**Major Challenges Identified (AOS, ICAS, JF, SF, D)**

- To offer on campus classes while remaining safe, we may have to reduce course caps, add sections, and shift course schedules which could create conflicts for students who have already registered. Field and clinical experiences may be operating under different safety guidelines. Students would need to be retraining on safety procedures in research and teaching labs. We would need to plan for potentially disrupted classes due to professor illness. Although access to quiet study spaces and technology would be possible, students may nevertheless be concerned about health risk.
- Large events that support students (e.g., career fairs) and faculty (e.g., Faculty Day) would need to be redesigned for social distance. Faculty should develop an understanding of the socioemotional impact that COVID has had on students and their learning. Services that generally require close proximity (e.g., tutoring) would need to be reimaged in accordance with social distancing guidelines.
- In-person research with human participants (e.g., in-person group data collection) would need to be modified. Compliance with external grant rules may be impacted by safety measures.
- We would need to accommodate faculty and students who cannot be on campus because of personal or health concerns. Some employees may be reluctant to handle paper documents because of potential disease transmission.
Compromised or Unmet Services

- Large section courses (over 40 seats) might not be tenable, even in Welte (ICAS). Certain educational experiences in the field, including clinical and field placements required for licensure or certification, experiential or service learning, community engagement, and internships will depend upon institutional policy and site policy. Nursing, student teaching, counseling, and athletic training/exercise science may be disproportionately affected (ICAS, AOS, SF, JF). Collaborative student projects would be limited to smaller groups and certain projects requiring close interaction (e.g., partnered lab projects, behavioral science projects) might not be possible (ICAS). First-year experience programming will be scaled back as the proposed plan did not account for socially distanced operations or a potential return to remote operation (D). The committee on first-year experience plans to work with the CTFD to develop guidelines and online modules for use by all faculty to assist first-year students.

- Larger group-oriented services (e.g., CTFD events for faculty, drop in tutoring for students, career services events) would require restricted attendance, potentially compromising effectiveness (AOS). Some services (e.g., Center for Africana Studies, The Learning Center, Pre-Collegiate Access Services) do not have the space to maintain social distance and could not operate without compromising service (AOS). Although the Center for International Education and the Intensive English Language program could operate, travel restrictions compromise their service (AOS).

- Research experiences for students and faculty creative activity will be limited and will potentially impact students’ prospects for future advanced study (ICAS, D, SF). Research requiring access to off-campus facilities may be compromised due to actions/restrictions of host institutions (ICAS). Departments that support creative activity (e.g., IRB, Grants and Funded Research) do not have the space to maintain social distance and could not operate completely on campus (AOS).

- Many offices (e.g., SEST Dean’s Office, School of Graduate Studies) do not have the physical space to maintain social distance and could not operate completely on campus (AOS). Meetings of large groups (e.g., Faculty Senate, Curriculum, Department Meetings) may not be tenable on ground and could slow approval processes (e.g., programs) (AOS).

Solutions to Major Challenges

- Reduce anxiety with frequent, direct, and reassuring communication detailing measures taken to comply with health/safety guidelines [Goal 2.1.A.8; Goal 2.1.B.4]. Provide students option to take any on ground class "online" through lecture capture technology [Goal 1.1.B.1; Goal 1.1.E.3]. Allow faculty to move courses online at their discretion [Goal 1.1.B.1; Goal 1.1.E.3]. Model financial feasibility of reducing course caps and develop process for rescheduling courses and registering students. Faculty supervisors should maintain regular contact with placement sites and develop contingency plans if on ground placement cannot be maintained. Lecture capture could allow students to remain on track [Goal 1.1.E.3]. Update lab safety protocols and ensure students receive updated safety training. In collaboration with faculty, should Chairs develop or revise contingency plans for course coverage.

- To continue high-quality professional development for faculty, reimagine Faculty Day (D) [Goal 1.4.B.6, Goal 3.5.A.1] and CTFD could provide multiple offerings of the same event. Provide training in lecture capture software and accessibility functions (e.g., captioning) [Goal 1.1.E.3]. Explore solutions, including virtual ones for large events (e.g., career fairs [Goal 2.3.B.2; Goal 2.3.E.2]). Develop safety training for tutors and rearrange space to facilitate interaction while maintaining distance. Develop/continue procedures within each unit to deliver service to those who cannot come to campus [Goal 1.3.A.3; Goal 2.2.C.1]

- IRB should review all in-person protocols and recommends modifications to comply with social distancing policy. Grants and Funded Research should work with all externally funded individuals/groups to ensure compliance.

- Offices should develop or revise protocols to ensure continuity of operations and online procedures for document storage and processing. Directors/supervisors should ensure that appropriate technology and equipment are available.

Immediate Needs

- Identify faculty unwilling or unable to return on ground and develop plans for online instruction. Convert as many courses as possible to online or hybrid as early as possible to maximize on ground offerings. Identify maximum class sizes for fall on ground courses based on social distancing guidelines. Determine the number of on ground courses offered to meet demand while remaining fiscally responsible. Address resultant registration issues. Investigate feasibility of lecture capture software to accommodate absent students and develop usage guidelines addressing privacy, liability, and proprietary concerns [Goal 1.1.E.3; Goal 5.1.A.2]. Faculty and departments who offer programs that incorporate off-campus experiences should monitor what their partner institutions are doing and develop alternative activities in preparation for resurgence. Non-accredited programs that require students to have off-campus experiences should consider suspension of such requirements and curricular alternatives. Accredited programs should consult with their accrediting agency for guidance. Offer faculty development geared for understanding the impact of COVID on student learning and on “pivot” pedagogy in the event of a
rapid transition to remote operations or other disruption (e.g., professor illness). Refine the accommodations process (SDS) for opting into online learning even in an on-ground course.

- Create access schedule and safety guidelines for research labs, particularly for those faculty with external funding who must meet deadlines of funding agencies. Prioritize access if campus reopens. Develop a process to access physical materials in the library.

**Recommendations**

Communicate safety measures to assuage student, faculty, and staff anxiety. Publicize safety guidelines in all academic spaces. Prioritize on ground experiences for upper-level STEM labs/hands-on classes, studio classes, performance classes (theatre, music, communication), classes requiring collaboration/project-based learning, graduate classes, IELP, first-year classes (particularly developmental). Investigate feasibility of lecture capture software to accommodate absent students and develop usage guidelines addressing privacy, liability, and proprietary concerns. Create online faculty development workshops for faculty to watch at their own pace. [Goal 1.3.A.3] Ensure that first-year students are academically supported and connected to the institution. Plan for a resurgence in COVID-19.

**Remote Operations**

**Introduction**

Administrative faculty (59.4%), staff (47.1%) and faculty (39.8%) noted a clear preference for remote operations. Although not their top preference, 31.3% of students noted a preference for remote operations (JF). Notably, virtual operations produced more concerns and fewer positive statements (2514; 400) from students than did traditional operations (1960; 607). Over half of the student alerts submitted about online learning (54.5%) contained concerns about instruction (SF). We assumed that remote operations involved no access to campus. Despite limitations in and concerns about remote interactions, many services could continue to function and meet students’ basic needs.

**Analysis of Data. See p. 1.**

**Major Challenges Identified (AOS, ICAS, JF, SF, D)**

- Some courses currently on the schedule may need to be cancelled or caps adjusted, particularly hands-on courses (e.g., lab science, technology, studio art), performance-based courses (e.g., music, theatre, public speaking), research-based courses (e.g., independent study, methods), community-engagement courses, and courses relying on significant collaborative learning (e.g., Counselor Education). Several specific instructional concerns have emerged including: ensuring academic integrity (D); issues with a/synchronous online instruction; using multiple—and sometimes unsupported—technological platforms to deliver instruction, accessibility of course materials; disconnection and unresponsiveness; and student perception of increased workload. Students hope that professors would have been more accommodating, understanding, and flexible (SF) during this transition to remote operations. Students reported multiple barriers to success including poor environments in which to study (SF, JF) and increased responsibility, employment issues, and role strain (SF, JF). Potential issues with faculty workload and well-being should be anticipated, including balancing instruction and creative activity and managing larger course sections. The success of remote operations will depend upon access to appropriate technology and good connectivity. Some instructional software and hardware that had fee access this semester may require purchase. We have to ensure that student learning continues to be assessed regardless of modality.

- Faculty—particularly new faculty—will need additional support with remote operations. Large group events (e.g., career and employer fairs) will need to be reimaged in a virtual context. We must maintain high-quality service for units providing direct support to vulnerable students (e.g., ESL, probationary students). Not all student workers, graduate students, and university assistants can work remotely. Additional connection with and, when appropriate, supervision of employees is critical in an online environment. We should be ready to reschedule service hours to be more responsive to client needs, and have a solution to proctor placement testing or exams for students with disability. Although most Department Chairs reported that faculty met with their advisees (AOS), we should nevertheless make efforts to encourage and support faculty advising.

- Faculty may find it particularly difficult to progress in their creative activity with remote operations, which could cause grant compliance issues. Research with nonhuman animals is a particular challenge, especially if access to physical facilities is shut down. Certain equipment (e.g., NMR spectrometers) requires consistent maintenance.

- As with instruction, services will be as good as access to appropriate technology and connectivity allow. The vast majority of signed documents would need to be processed electronically. Program development relies upon the continuous operation of
multiple large committees (e.g., Curriculum). External program reviews and accreditation visits would need to be reimagined, especially if program-related facilities are important to discuss. Workflow/triage within administrative offices has become challenging.

**Compromised or Unmet Services**

- Some courses that cannot be taught fully online (e.g., upper level STEM) will be cancelled, delaying student progress. International student enrollment at CCSU will drop significantly and study abroad, study away, and course abroad programs will not run. Clinical and field placements required for licensure or certification (e.g., DNAP, Counselor Education, Nursing, Student Teaching, Social Work, Special Education) may not provide remote alternatives, producing accreditation challenges. Course embedded Experiential/Service Learning, field experiences, and community engagement and internships may be compromised due to actions/restrictions of host sites. Instructional experiences for particular cohorts including first-year students and ESL students could be compromised if not redesigned for remote operations. No access to quiet and technologically equipped study space in the Library or other academic spaces.
- Hard-copy documents and books not available on digital platforms will be inaccessible to faculty and students, negatively impacting instruction and research. With fewer international students, CIE and IELP operations will be compromised, causing course cancellations and decreased revenue. Units that rely on in-person contact, team cohesion, or are “high touch” (e.g., IELP, TLC, Success Central, SDS, The Writing Center, Veteran’s Affairs, EOP, CARES) would be compromised. Services that rely on student labor requiring close supervision (e.g., SDS, TLC) could have compromised service. Signature events in the academic cultural centers would be compromised. No scanntron services from IDTRC or within Departments.
- Faculty and student research will be significantly limited. Over 50% of academic departments surveyed stated that at least one faculty member required access to physical materials or equipment. Institutional Review Board, Grants and Funded Research, and Animal care will all be compromised; they can still function but may have higher workload due to modifications to existing projects, grant extensions, etc.
- Given the demands of online instruction, faculty leadership over academic programs or minors may suffer. Being unable to complete searches for clerical staff will compromise departmental operations.

**Solutions to Major Challenges**

- Support faculty in developing accessible online instructional solutions (e.g., purchase home lab-science kits for evaluation; software for distance collaboration) [Goal 1.5.B.5]. Emphasize that an abrupt transition to online learning is not the same as a planned remote opening. Communicate steps taken to improve instruction and address concerns about online learning. If courses involve synchronous meeting times, ensure that they are posted on Banner and faculty adhere to them. Online faculty office hours should be posted and honored. The CTFD and IDTRC have a large role to play in assisting faculty with online course design, strategies to engage students—especially those experiences barriers to success, and supporting instructional solutions (e.g., online proctoring) [Goal 1.1.E.3; Goal 1.5.B.5; Goal 3.1.E.1; Goal 2.2.C.1; Goal 5.1.A.2]. The Online Learning Committee and Academic Integrity Committee should with the IDTRC and consider an online learning “honor policy”. The Library can assist with access to educational materials and encourage faculty to use Open Educational Resources. OIRA and the Academic Assessment Committee assist programs/departments to ensure that we continue to assess student learning [Goal 2.1.A.8; Goal 2.2.C.1]
- The CTFD also plays a large role in supporting new faculty through virtual orientation and coffee breaks. IT may be able to assist developing solutions for host large student-oriented events online (e.g., career fairs). Ensure that workers have sufficient technology, training, and supervision to reliably provide high-quality student services [Goal 2.1.A.8; Goal 2.1.B.4]. Recognize excellent online advising [Goal 1.3.A.3].
- To support creative activity, Writing Center has developed plans for online writing circles. We should consider extending internal grant completion dates and support faculty who request extensions for external grants. The animal care disaster plan should be updated. Communicate clear policies about (non)access to facilities.
- To ensure efficient administrative processes, develop, document, and clarify procedures for digital document signatures. We also need to develop remote protocols for all constituent committees (e.g., curriculum, facilities planning, IPC) involved with program development and align meeting dates—where possible—with Academic Council meetings. Create remote protocols for external program review and accreditation. Develop online protocols and solutions that mimic in-person office operations (e.g., a virtual lobby). Develop fiscally responsible hiring plan and protocols for remote work, including student workers who provide direct student service.

**Immediate Needs**
• Identify courses requiring modification or cancelation (OAS). Refine the instructional plan to update course offerings and course caps within fiscally responsible parameters. Develop communication plan for faculty and for students to explain modifications. Ensure that Banner is updated with accurate information for synchronous meeting times [Goal 2.1.A.8; Goal 2.1.B.4]. Encourage individual departments to consider waiving required research or internship experiences depending program and accreditation requirements. Faculty should explore online alternatives to off-campus experiences. Program directors should seek guidance from accrediting bodies (nursing, DNAP, and other SEST programs). Secure software that allows students to effectively collaborate and/or perform. Vet virtual/online laboratories for STEM and purchase licenses. [Goal 1.1.E.3; Goal 1.5.B.5]

• Develop online orientation for new faculty. Develop policy and explanation for using supported technological platforms to support online instruction. [Goal 1.1.E.3; Goal 1.5.B.5] Share accessible online resources and activities/assignments/teaching tools. Provide additional training in online instruction, particularly in the use of accessible software that allows distance collaboration [Goal 1.1.E.3; Goal 1.3.A.3; Goal 1.5.B.5]. Refine the accommodations process (SDS) and guidelines for online learning [Goal 1.1.E.3; Goal 1.5.B.5].

• Explore digital access to gain access to books, journals, documents, etc. that are currently only in hardcopy at the library. Develop a procedure to gain access to essential physical materials from the Library. Develop a procedure to provide on campus access to faculty and students conducting research. Establish priority.

• Provide Chairs, administrative faculty, and staff with written protocols, instructional videos, and training for critical online functions (e.g., signing digital documents). Provide fax machines to units requiring receipt and transfer of records to/from external sources (e.g., SDS, Veteran’s Affairs).

Recommendations

• Provide strong financial support to the CTFD to develop and implement programs for faculty development as well as to attend to the social and emotional needs of faculty. Revise existing online teaching survival guides to include universal online "best practices" and develop discipline-specific versions. [Goal 1.5.B.5] Promote developing online engagement and collaboration. [Goal 1.1.E.3]

• Develop a series of live video conferences with relevant units (e.g., HR, Academic Affairs, Grants/Funding, CTFD, SDS) to introduce normal operating procedures for new faculty and recent changes for continuing faculty.

• Ensure that the Faculty Senate's Online Learning Committee is involved in efforts to provide professional development to faculty members [Goal 1.1.E.3].

• Develop protocols for faculty’s continued participation in institutional assessment for general education.

• Continue refining strategies and supports for students specific to online learning [Goal 1.1.E.3; Goal 2.2.C.1].

• Develop guidelines for student workers and graduate assistants for telecommuting.

• Encourage directors and managers to create opportunities for staff to interact with each other regularly for support, information sharing, and team building.

• Develop more effective ways of engaging students—through texting and/or video—to encourage students to access services, including faculty advising [Goal 2.1.A.8; Goal 2.1.B.4].

Hybrid Operations

Introduction

For overall preferences, 30.8% of JotForm respondents preferred hybrid operations (IF). For people who expressed a single preference, employees were more likely to prefer hybrid (39%) than students (24%). People who expressed a preference for two modes, hybrid was the most common option (45%) across all groups. Notably, employees and students used no fewer than six distinct definitions for hybrid. For our purposes, we define hybrid as a mix of online and on-ground elements in every—or almost every—class. We consider two main approaches to hybridized instructional operations: (1) all classes being run in a traditional hybrid (i.e., some class sessions entirely online, some entirely on-ground), perhaps with a phased “pivot” midway through the semester; (2) class sessions being on-ground with a small number of students attending each class. Hybrid operations will face many of the same challenges and require many of the same solutions as described for on-campus and remote operations. We focus on issues unique to hybrid operations.

Data Analysis. See p. 1.

Compromised or Unmet Services. We identified no compromised or unmet services unique to hybrid operations. See previous sections.
Major Challenges

- Despite reduced on ground offerings, people would still be concerned about illness (14.8%; JF). Students in particular, found the concept of hybrid operations confusing (8.3%; JF). Nearly 1 in 9 faculty (9.2%; JF) were concerned about logistics. Field placements and internships would continue to pose a challenge, especially if institutional and field site safety policies were not consistent. Although hybrid offerings could provide additional flexibility, we would still expect increases in student absences due to illness, responsibilities for caring for someone at home, or psychological impact. Labs, hands-on experiences (e.g., studio), performance-based courses, and collaborative activity-based courses could work well, but might still pose a challenge. Depending on the hybrid model, on-ground exam taking could pose a logistical and academic integrity problem. With a hybrid option, we might face a unique challenge to ensure that the credit hour requirement is met.
- Hybrid operations could pose additional challenges for students (e.g., organization and time management).
- Hybrid operations may cause some confusion regarding access to facilities, particularly for research.
- Employees may find it difficult to prioritize work when they are partially on ground or remote. Further, the schedule for office operations could become confusing.

Immediate Needs

- Develop process (including priority ranking) for faculty to declare preferred hybrid operation and scheduled meeting times. Update Banner accordingly. [Goal 1.1.E.3] Create a communication plan to explain hybrid offerings to students; set launch date [Goal 2.1.A.8; Goal 2.1.B.4]. Determine how hybrid options will impact field, practicum, and internship courses.
- Develop programming to support pivot pedagogy and hybrid course design, delivery, and management [Goal 1.1.E.3; Goal 1.5.B.5]. Recognize that redesigning courses for hybrid operations may involve significant curriculum development and investigate means to support faculty engaged in major curricular overhauls.

Solutions to Major Challenges (AOS, ICAS, JF, D)

- Publicize and enforce safety measures to assuage anxiety about on campus operations. Allow faculty to determine their preferred hybrid solution, consistent with their current course days/times. Develop declaration process with Registrar and rank courses with highest priority for on-ground operation. Clearly communicate course meetings on Banner [Goal 2.1.A.8; Goal 2.1.B.4]. Build safety nets (e.g., lecture capture) so that students stay on track if they miss on ground class. Provide additional support to first-year and to vulnerable students to orient them to process [Goal 2.2.C.1]. If splitting students across certain course meetings, develop a process for assigning students to particular course meetings hopefully taking into account student preference. Faculty supervisors maintain regular contact with field and practicum placement sites and develop contingency plans if on ground placement cannot be maintained. Develop logistical process for on-ground exam taking that respects academic integrity and incorporates online contingency.
- To support hybrid course development, CTFD offers workshops on pivot pedagogy and hybrid course design, delivery, and management. Deans work with Chairs to ensure fidelity of the credit hour. To help students thrive with hybrid operations, we should encourage use of Early Alert [Goal 2.2.C.1], develop training for academic coaches and tutors [Goal 1.1.E.3; Goal 1.5.B.5], and offer online modules on time management, organization, and communication [Goal 1.1.E.3; Goal 1.5.B.5].
- Communicate clear policies regarding access to research facilities and update as needed. Can we program keycard access for specific days/times to control traffic?
- Offer professional development workshops for faculty leaders and unit directors and supervisors to learn how to effectively prioritize on ground and remote work. Clearly advertise public access to hours of operation and remote contact procedure [Goal 2.1.A.8; Goal 2.1.B.4].

Recommendations

- Balance faculty autonomy with minimizing student confusion. Declaring one type of hybrid option would minimize student confusion, but could undermine certain learning goals.
- Consult the Faculty Senate Academic Integrity Committee when creating protocol for on-ground test taking.
- Faculty office hours should ideally involve a combination of online and on ground hours.