

August 20, 2020

Additional Questions after the August 10 Faculty Meeting

Most of these questions were submitted by the Department of English and Modern Languages to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee after the August 10 meeting. Additional questions were from the August 10 Faculty Meeting and appeared in the Chat function in Zoom; they were not answered during the meeting because of time limitations.

Contracts:

When asked about the COVID contract language, the Provost's answer was that "tenure-track and tenured faculty have not signed away their rights and protections." Her chosen wording suggests that lecturers do not have the same protections – is that true?

The change in contract language is not due to COVID. As the Provost stated at the July 29 faculty meeting, the changes in the contract language and wording were in motion before COVID, upon advice from the Attorney General's office to bring Longwood contracts more in line with wording at other state entities and institutions. It concerns employment liability and damages. It does not address or concern any faculty process in the FPPM or any rights or protections associated with tenure.

While lecturers have the same contract rights as tenure-track and tenured faculty, the expected duration is different. Unlike tenure-track and tenured faculty who have an expectation of continued employment from year-to-year, lecturers have annual, one-year contracts that are renewed based on enrollment and other academic program needs. Senior lecturers have a two-year rolling contract with similar renewal considerations.

Classes:

When will faculty know WHICH (if any) of their students has permission to be online? If faculty have not been notified yet, should they assume none of theirs has requested to be online?

The college associate deans and staff in Enrollment Management and Student Success have been working with students who have requested through questions@longwood.edu to take their courses fully online but not be on campus this semester. As stated in the Provost's email on July 31, while we are not making guarantees that a student can take a full load of online courses, we will work to help students on a case-by-case basis with this possibility. In some cases, these students may not be currently registered for any courses that will be offered online due to faculty teaching adaptations. In those cases, your college associate dean may reach out to you to ask whether the way you plan to offer a particular course would enable a student to participate fully in an online format. If that will not work with your course plans, then you may recommend to the associate dean that, if possible, the student find a different option.

This adaptation process for students through questions@longwood.edu is now completed. Faculty who are teaching in-person courses will have already been contacted by their Associate Dean to ask if a student may take their course fully online. Jennifer Green, associate vice

president for enrollment management and student success, has also sent a confirmation email to faculty who agreed to allow a student to take their course fully online.

What classrooms have 8 feet distancing? It is stated at least twice in the websites and has been stated twice in the faculty meeting that classroom seating is distanced 8 feet apart. This is not true. In Grainger the seating is 6 feet apart. Please correct the website and inform the administrators that are probably unwittingly giving false information.

While some classrooms have eight foot distancing and we attempted to do so wherever possible, others have been limited to smaller distances. All spacing should allow for a consistent six feet of distance, if not more. Six feet is the recommended CDC guidance.

The Provost mentioned that there would be communication to students to let them know to be on the lookout for contact from their professors about the nature of their classes, because students do not realize that in-person may actually mean hybrid or hy-flex and they will most likely spend at least half of their class time online. When is it expected that that communication will go out? Faculty are ready to contact students now to explain about their set-ups for in-person classes, but the advance notice would be very appreciated.

Students have been told that they should expect all courses to include hybrid elements, so they should already expect more virtual learning. A communication was sent to students on Tuesday, August 18 (shared with faculty and staff on August 19) that includes more specifics about the classroom experience, including that due to physical distancing requirements not all students will be able to attend class at the same time in some classes.

Should we require students to sit at the same desk in each class?

If you cannot easily recall where students are sitting in your class or if you think students will not be able to recall who was sitting near them in class, then it would be helpful to have students sit at the same desk/table in each class and have a seating chart. This may be helpful in the event that a VDH contact tracer reaches out to you about who was seated in your class. Under the current definition of "contact exposed" and the physical distancing of classrooms, we do not anticipate that this will be an issue. However, knowing where your students have been seated seems prudent.

In-person classes and the student petition:

By what criteria did the administration determine that the majority of students WANT in-person classes? Was there a survey? A poll? I ask because there is a student petition circulating with more than 100 students who do NOT want in-person classes, but would prefer online instruction because they do NOT feel safe returning to campus or taking in-person classes.

Has anything been done to address the student petition regarding moving to online instruction? It is addressed to President Reveley. Has he received it? Has he responded?

Various offices at Longwood have fielded and responded to student feedback in many forms, including focus groups, online comments and emails. There are about 150 students who have reached out via questions@longwood.edu to see if they can arrange to take more classes online, or all classes online, including international students. We are also working with students who are disappointed their classes were moved online and would prefer to take in-person classes. Based on that feedback and the numbers we are seeing, while there are exceptions, in general students are eager to return to campus for in-person learning.

Has anything been done or will anything be done to address the offices where the student who originated the petition visited and encountered almost no one wearing masks? Will those offices continue to ignore the campus policy for wearing masks or have they been requested to follow the mask policy?

All staff must follow the face coverings policy, which has been updated to clarify it applies in any indoor public areas. It is important to note that the three staff members in the College of Graduate and Professional Studies were following the mask policy when the student who wrote the petition walked through their office suite. They were sitting in their private offices with their doors open and were at all times socially distanced from the student. When the student approached the office of the staff member she came to visit, the staff member put her mask on. Dean Jeannine Perry has since spoken with the student about her experience, and earlier than they had planned, the CGPS has closed their double doors and installed a doorbell for guests to ring to be let in their office suite.

Masks:

Although of course faculty and students will be providing their own masks, the fact that Longwood is distributing masks sends the message that the ones they supply will help protect people from us if we are spreading the virus, or help protect us from others spreading the virus. We recognize that we (and students) are able to reject these masks and use our own, but given the assumption that what Longwood provides should be of acceptable quality, please address concerns sent to Senate by the department of Biological and Environmental Sciences about the quality of the fabric and fit of the LU masks. BES faculty stated that the ones provided to faculty and presumably provided to students are not of a material conducive to helping stop spread of the virus. Justin Pope explained some information at the faculty meeting, but did not address these concerns.

What Longwood requires is cloth face coverings that meet the Virginia Department of Health standard: they must fit snugly, cover the nose and mouth, be secured with ties, include multiple layers of fabric, and be laundered without changing shape. It is the responsibility of all students and employees to have an appropriate mask with them at all times and wear it in indoor public settings or when they cannot maintain physical distance outdoors. We ordered thousands of face coverings in April and May to increase the supply in circulation in the community. These meet VDH and CDC guidance, which Longwood will continue to follow. It is important to

remember the difference between PPE, which includes surgical masks and also things like N95 masks, and the standard face coverings recommended for workplace and educational settings. PPE such as surgical masks and respirators are considered critical supplies that should be reserved for healthcare workers and first responders.

Are students (and are we) allowed to briefly remove our masks to take a drink during class? This is not a frivolous question. If we interpret the language in the policy in its strictest terms, the answer would be no, but I know that there are several times when my throat gets dry talking in class. Should there be language added to the policy (or should we just let it be known) to allow brief removal of a mask to take a drink or do we not want to give the students even the tiniest of loopholes out of fear they would abuse it?

If a faculty member wants to be able to take a brief sip of water and is comfortable with allowing students to do so as well, then they can let that be known in their classroom. It's probably a good idea to remind students that they should not eat in a class.

What do we do if a student says they have a "medical exemption" from wearing a mask? Will students have gone through the questions@longwood.edu process to get that waiver? May we tell them they may not enter the classroom, and they must attend class through Zoom?

There are no medical exemptions from wearing a face covering in classrooms. If students are coming to campus for the semester, then they are expected to wear face coverings in the classroom and elsewhere on campus consistent with Student Handbook requirements.

The COVID web site on Solomon specifically states that faculty will be issued clear masks or clear face shields. Will we be receiving those?

Clear face shields have been delivered to academic departments. Clear face masks have been given to faculty in several programs at their request. We have ordered additional clear face masks so each faculty member may have one if requested. Department chairs will be notified when they arrive.

Testing:

During the previous meeting it was noted that Longwood will not be testing students upon their arrival to campus following consultation with the local health authorities. It is true that getting test results takes too long to make them very effective, but what makes us different from VT, VCU and UVA, where they are testing students upon arrival to campus, and say they are doing it upon the recommendation of health authorities? What is different about the Piedmont health district?

Have we considered doing randomized testing of students/faculty/staff to detect asymptomatic carriers?

We can't speak as to what health authorities are informing decisions elsewhere; we can say clearly that VDH locally and its leadership in Richmond do not endorse mass testing of students upon their return. To complement the PCR testing at the University Health Center that public health guidance says should be the top priority and where we have sufficient capacity, we are working hard to explore some possible ways to do some surveillance testing. For colleges across the country, the backlog for the types of rapid-turnaround testing machines and tests that make randomized testing possible has been an obstacle, but we continue to work to make this feasible.

Will the school recommend (require?) the state's COVID WISE tracking app be installed on all student, staff, and faculty smart phones? The COVID WISE app is only useful if everyone uses it pro-actively.

Not at this time, based on a number of factors. Faculty members are welcome to discuss the COVID WISE app with their students if they feel it is appropriate.

Contact Tracing / Positive test results

It was stated that because of the 8 foot distancing and the mask wearing, it is "highly unlikely" that Covid can be contracted in a classroom, social distancing or not. What data was used to back up the statement? Keep in mind that there is not 8 feet of distance between seats, but 6 feet in the classrooms in our building. Does this make a difference in whether it is likely for someone to contract the virus?

It was stated that we will not be notified if a student in our class has tested positive because it is unlikely that anyone else could be infected in our classrooms. We are just assuming that nobody else in the classroom was exposed, because we are disregarding the evidence that aerosols can travel further than 6 feet and that they can stay suspended in the air for hours within indoor environments, and the masks our students are given will not protect them as much as some other kinds? Can this assumption be reassessed please?

The Virginia Department of Health is in charge of contact tracing and determining who has been contact exposed (with Longwood staff assigned to provide support as needed and requested). The CDC guidance and criteria for determining who may be considered contact exposed based on timing, distancing, and nature of interaction can be found [here](#) and the VDH version [here](#). It considers the nature of exposure (was someone within six feet for more than 15 minutes) and whether the exposure took place within two days of symptoms or a positive test.

If a student feels sick or are worried they've been exposed or whatever, whose permission do they need before they stay home from an in-person class?

They do not need to request permission. On the contrary, they are required under the Student Handbook to avoid public spaces and contact a health care provider.

Do we have a sense of how many students on campus would NOT handle this virus well and are at elevated risk?

The public health protocols we have created are in place to protect everyone in the Longwood community. Students are encouraged to take COVID-19 and public health protocols seriously independent of their perceived health status.

If we know of a student in one of our classes who tests positive, do we then have the freedom to move our classes online if we choose to do so?

The determination to move more courses fully online will be made by University leadership, in close consultation with public health officials. Faculty who do not have approved teaching adaptations may hold up to thirty percent of their class periods virtually, during which the entire class meets online. Faculty who are concerned about a student testing positive in their class should consult with their department chair and their dean, who can then discuss the matter with the PVPAA.

Will faculty be quarantined if a student in one of their classes tests positive?

No, only if the VDH determines that a faculty member has been contact exposed using the criteria noted above. In general, classroom physical distancing and other precautions such as face coverings should prevent contact exposure.

How long will such contact quarantine last for students? Does a positive in my class mean my whole class will be quarantined? First question influences disruption length to our class.

When will students be released from self-isolation? What criteria will be used, especially if testing is not used?

Having a student in a class identified as contact exposed or testing positive does not mean the whole class will be quarantined. Per above, the VDH would directly contact anyone it believes has been contact exposed, generally defined as being within six feet for more than 15 minutes. However, VDH contact tracing would consider other context as noted above, so it's possible some but not all students who shared a class would be considered a contact exposure.

In general, the quarantine for someone who has been contact exposed is 14 days. However, the CDC guidance has evolved and in some cases may be as short as 10 days (if they have symptoms that have resolved) but may also be longer in some cases. Students will not return to class unless they have met the requirements and are cleared to do so by the University Health Center or another medical provider.

Are you saying that we will not even be notified if a student in our class has tested positive and we are just assuming that nobody else in the classroom was exposed, because we are disregarding the evidence that aerosols can travel further than 6 feet and that they can stay suspended in the air for hours within indoor environments?

We are following the public health guidance that tries to identify those at meaningful risk versus those at negligible risk. You may always consult the University Health Center or another provider if you are concerned you may have been exposed.

So when symptoms are gone, students are free to come back to class even though they are still contagious?

No. Students will not return to class unless they have met the requirements and are cleared to do so by the University Health Center or another medical provider.

Criteria for Moving to Online:

What are the criteria you are going to use to decide whether to lock down (send online) a class, a building, or the whole campus?

Will the university commit to letting students who live on campus stay on campus for the duration of the semester, even if we decide to go fully online and even if the online will last the rest of the semester? (This is very important information for our students who have poor bandwidth or no internet at all at home.)

Unlike last spring, there are a number of steps short of moving fully online that we could take – further D-Hall restrictions, further steps regarding extracurricular activities, some but not all classes moving online. As far as when to do those, or further steps, that is something we would do in consultation with the Virginia Department of Health. There is no exact number of cases. It would depend on local health care surge capacity, the nature of cases (community spread vs. known source), community and Virginia trends. VDH has also indicated that from a public health perspective even if classes moved online it may well be preferable that students not return home, but rather stay in place. That would of course also be preferable in terms of ensuring students have the needed online access to continue their coursework.

Reporting students for infractions:

Who are the "student leaders" mentioned in the faculty meeting who assisted in policy-making (names not necessary, but positions)? How big is this group and from where are its representatives drawn? Are any faculty involved in these discussions?

Student leaders in the Student Government Association (SGA), the Interfraternity Council (IFC), the College Panhellenic Council, the Sports Club Council, and student athletes helped to develop the Shared Commitment statement.

Is visiting a different dorm a Jboard offense, and if so are they prepared for the significant increase in Jboard offenses? If not, what consequences are there?

We have made it clear to students that at this time, visiting another student's assigned residential community is not allowed. There are six residential communities at Longwood: Lancer Park, Longwood Landings, Moss Hall, Johns Hall, Arc Quad (Sharp, Register and Stubbs Halls), and Cox/Wheeler Halls. Students living in these residential communities, some that include multiple residence halls, may visit one another.

Visiting other students outside of their assigned residential community is currently prohibited. Those students not living in Longwood Managed Housing may not visit anyone in those residential communities. Please note that per the email that students received last week, we will revisit these current restrictions as the semester progresses. Therefore, that particular expectation is subject to change, of which students will be notified by an update to the student handbook and notification of such if and when adjustments are made.

What are the specific levels of consequence for student noncompliance with required safety measures? Yes, we refer them to the Reporting Form or Office of Student Conduct & Integrity, but what specifically will the consequences be? Some universities are making very clear what consequences students will face: warning, levels of fines beginning at \$1000, then suspension and expulsion. If noncompliant students are not facing real consequences, then again, the gesture feels little more than lip service to our safety. Will a specific policy with real consequences be articulated and communicated to students, and if so, when?

The [Longwood Student Handbook 2020-2021](#) (pp. 5-7) was updated to include a section on COVID-19 expectations. The official handbook notification email was sent to students last week. Those alleged to be in violation of those expectations will face a variety of Code of Conduct violations depending on the specific circumstances of the situation. Specific code sections that have been identified include, but are not limited to: Failure to Comply, Interference - Classroom Disruption, Endangering. Included in the expectations outlined in the student handbook is clear notification that students who do not comply with the expectations may face sanctions that range from disciplinary probation, to disciplinary suspension, to expulsion, depending on the severity of the offense(s).

Since we're already seeing students gathering off-campus in groups with no masks and no social distancing, even before the full student body returns, how will gatherings like this be monitored and what will the consequences be? Landlords in contract with universities elsewhere have committed to real action in response to such gatherings, such as pulling leases. What have local landlords in partnership with Longwood committed to doing? How will they respond? How will the university respond? What, specifically, will be the consequences for groups of students gathering without masks or social distancing?

We have included expectations in the aforementioned COVID-19 section of the student handbook regarding off-campus gatherings. A meeting of local landlords and a variety of campus partners (Jen Fraley, Matt McGregor, Dr. Pierson, Jen Cox, Student Conduct and Integrity, Fraternity and Sorority Life, and Student Engagement) was held last week to discuss their concerns and the University's. The landlords who were in attendance were committed to upholding their specific standards. Landlords are also aware of the temporary reporting process put into place ([COVID-19 Non-Compliance Reporting Form](#)) to assist in holding students, faculty and staff accountable for the University's expectations.

Recognized Student Organizations are held accountable to the same expectations contained in the student handbook as individual students, and the same disciplinary process applies.