

Wednesday, July 29, 2020 - 2:00-3:20 pm
Town Hall Meeting with
Associate Provost Kleinman, Dean Jeffries-EL and GSO Representatives

<p>Introduction 2:05 pm (Khadija, GSO President)</p>	<p><u>Opening statement:</u> Before we start, I want to make sure we collectively remind ourselves, together, that we're working for an effective and productive meeting in a very short one hour.</p> <p>First please make sure to give everyone an opportunity to speak. We will be using the stack method virtually. So, we will mute everyone, and as soon as you have a question, please use the "raise your hand" button. One of the GSO Eboard members will call on you and unmute you. This method allows for equity while going through all the questions. If you worry that you'll forget your question, please feel free to write it down somewhere. This way you will not forget your question (or have something to add onto it) and you know you will be called upon.</p> <p>Second, we want to stress respect for everyone, fellow graduate students, as well as Dean Jeffries-El and Provost Kleinman. I understand that we are all passionate, concerned, and want answers, but please be mindful of others and give them a chance to express their opinions. I am asking to please keep the conversation focused on the issue at hand. You can and <i>always</i> should feel free to contact anyone on the GSO Eboard about specific concerns. This is why we are here to advocate for all of us when concerns arise.</p> <p>Third: the goal of this town hall is two-fold. We have questions combined from various documents shared by other graduate student groups, our own surveys, and the questions sent less than 48 hours ago. We are going to post these questions in the chat so everyone knows what we plan to go through. Then, our second goal after these questions is to ask how graduate students would like to suggest ways to improve communication between the administration and us. We would actually like to strongly encourage this because it is a good opportunity to <i>directly</i> request solutions and know if they are or are not feasible.</p> <p>I'm sure you all know, honest and constructive discussions are necessary to get the best result, so please be respectful of one another throughout this meeting.</p>
<p>Initial Questions Compiled from July 27, 2020 survey 2:10 pm (Khadija, Provost Kleinman,</p>	<p>Safety on Campus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How will facilities and public places be cleaned and what is the process/protocol for that? Have some facilities been updated for ventilation and air circulation? Are restrooms being updated?

Dean Jeffries-EL joins shortly after start)

- Kleinman: Acknowledges that he's not an expert on strategies for cleaning on campus and maybe should have invited a panel to answer some of these related questions.
 - They're redoubling cleaning protocols in classrooms (contact surfaces in particular). However, he's unsure about whether there will be cleaning between class meetings.
 - Building ventilation systems have been upgraded for better filtration and better airflow
 - He's more of the messenger than the policy-maker on campus so he only has access to a certain amount of information
 - Has heard that opening windows is great for increasing ventilation but understands its not the same as having good air quality and circulation
 - [Dean Jeffries-EL joins discussion]
 - He hasn't heard anything about restrooms being upgraded
- Will PPE be provided for faculty, staff and students? What about disinfecting wipes?
 - Kleinman: faculty and students must provide their own PPE. However, medical students who require additional PPE will have it provided by their college or program
 - Kleinman: Wipes should be available in each classroom regardless, although he doesn't know for sure
- Testing for graduate students? Will TFs be able to time their weekly COVID tests with their class schedules? Email was unclear.
 - Kleinman: students will be placed in categories and although he doesn't understand it well he can provide a brief overview.
 - Most grad students will be in category 2, which amounts to testing once a week
 - Students will get a message (text or email) about completing testing and you'll need to make an appt about completing your testing within a given timeframe (by the end of the week)
 - If additional trips to campus are required to complete your testing requirements, please contact Kleinman to find a solution.
- How will positive tests and quarantines be enforced in a way that allows for the safety of others and respects patient confidentiality? If someone tests positive, what is to stop

them from attending class or visiting the library? And what enforcement will there be for the regular testing?

- Kleinman: testing enforcement isn't being troubleshooted at the moment
 - The Dean of Students is working on a protocol for escalating enforcement for undergrads if they don't participate in testing (e.g. getting kicked out of the dorm). Undergrads have been the main focus for any of these discussions that he knows of.
 - HIPAA requires commitment to privacy though and so people who test positive will receive a phone call (not an email or text) and be told what the protocol is. After that initial phone call, people will check in with people who've received positive test results to check on their health and remind them of isolation protocols.
 - Undergrads who are living on campus are going to have a way of isolating away from their current dorm
 - People who live off-campus will be adopting the same risk they take when living with any large group of people.

Insurance

- If a teaching fellow were to test positive for COVID, will BU cover all related medical treatment expenses?
 - Kleinman: addressing an earlier concern, he wants to reiterate that coverage will not be terminated.
 - Based on what occurred in March, he assumes that any COVID-related treatment will be covered
 - Jeffries-EL: Is the university responsible for covering the cost of care for someone who got COVID from elsewhere instead of getting it on campus?
 - Kleinman: To clarify, health insurance should be covered
 - Liz Neill (representative) comments that Massachusetts requires health insurance companies to pay for COVID-related treatment:
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/bulletin-2020-13-coverage-for-covid-19-treatment-and-out-of-network-emergency-and-inpatient/download>
 - ***See the end of this document for more information about Health Insurance coverage for COVID-related treatment***

Teaching

- What happens if a TF or any of the course's instructors gets sick? What is the protocol for their teaching responsibilities? Will they be expected to teach remotely?
 - Kleinman: Any TF who's too sick to teach, will not need to teach. If they're asymptomatic, they can teach remotely based on what they negotiate with the instructor of record.
 - Who takes over their classes if they're unable to teach remotely should be worked out at the department and instructor level. There have been conversations with departments already, he believes.
 - There's a draft of a policy right now to provide sick leave for 14 days, but is unsure when it will be made official, if at all.
 - "if someone is too sick... i assume through the end of the semester we will support them...."
 - Jeffries-EL: GRS is also considering "a buddy system" to help with covering sections for larger classes as well as for smaller courses, but this presents some difficulty when very different content is taught with different knowledge within the same department, such as in Romance Studies when a professor who teaches French would need to assist with instruction for a Spanish course. Departments are being tasked with seeing who can be shifted to cover courses.
- James Aglio: what about senior TFs, who are graduate students who are the sole instructor for a course?
 - Jeffries-EL: Same thing applies for both senior TFs and faculty. Department chairs are figuring that out on a department basis

Maintenance of Social distancing rules

- Who enforces social distancing? How do TFs and faculty address students who come to class without PPE?
 - Kleinman: Instructors should confront the student and tell them to put on a mask. If the student refuses, then you can ask them to leave because they're not behaving according to public health protocols. If the student is still not complying, Kleinman would cancel class and would report the students' name to the department chair who could then reach out to the Dean of Students about that students' behavior for disciplinary action.

Campus closure:

- Has BU established a threshold for when to close campus?
 - Kleinman: this is a great question. If BU has established a threshold, he doesn't know. BU is working closely with the city and state and will adhere to whatever thresholds they have in place.
 - Kleinman: "I'm not an expert on this, but probably it would be problematic to give one, perhaps the threshold is too

	<p>high given what’s happening in surrounding communities. There will be some kind of dashboard, i’ve heard mention of a public dashboard, but I don’t know that kind of information will be included.””</p> <p>Public Transportation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many graduate students rely on public transportation to get to campus, with many living too far to feasibly walk. How does BU plan on protecting its students from the risk of transmission that we will have to face in commuting to work? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kleinman: unsure BU can protect anyone who gets on public transportation. There is some discussion with Parking to ascertain if there are discounted parking spots available for doctoral students in services roles, but he can’t say for sure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ MBTA will not allow as dense occupation on public transit as before, and there may be additional service roles. He is unaware of specifics, however.
<p>Open Q&A Time 2:30 pm</p>	<p>Liz Neill: if a TF is asked to take on an additional section for 2 weeks, will there be additional compensation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jeffries: This will be decided at the department level. It’s hard to predict in the grand scheme of things when or if someone will need to be out, and 2 weeks is too short of a time in the context of the semester to warrant additional pay. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pay over base-pay hasn’t been paid to TFs before but it has been paid to others. For instance, if one student goes out on medical leave mid-semester, there are mechanisms called “over-base” to provide additional compensation for the TFs who take over their sections for the remainder of the semester. Departments typically don’t ask for “over-base” unless the person isn’t coming back. Usually short term, there is an exchange level, like trading lectures or sections. ● Follow up from Liz: In the DPH bulletin (linked below), there was a description of coverage of COVID-related illnesses being mandatory. However, she would appreciate a statement from AETNA detailing what they do cover. See the end of this document for additional information about AETNA coverage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DPH Bulletin: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.mass.gov/doc/bulletin-2020-13-coverage-for-covid-19-treatment-and-out-of-network-emergency-and-inpatient/download ○ Kleinman: He will note this and will bring this information to the people who are responsible for health communications. Would like the link to the Bulletin Liz is referring to. He assumes that if it’s the law to provide coverage for COVID-related illnesses, we should be and need to adhere to it

- Liz: It would be helpful to know for enforcement of social distancing measures and to keep people honest about their symptoms. Instead of thinking that they'll be penalized for reporting their symptoms, they know that they would be covered.

Sarai Garcia: [questions asked through chat due to microphone issue; each question and their accompanying responses described below]

- Is there an approximate date when they are going to release info about classroom capacity, details about the tech in each classroom, etc?
 - Kleinman: Classroom capacities have been defined and additional technology is being installed in classrooms now.
 - Information about classroom capacity will be released to the faculty member who is the instructor of record or department chair.
 - There is not a designated due date for when technology will be installed in classrooms.
- Also, is the information of which students are enrolled as online or in person will be available before or until the semester starts?
 - Kleinman: This information should be available at the beginning of the semester.
 - Classroom capacity defines who can be in the classroom at any one time. If needed, rotations of in-person students will be set up to accommodate all students who want to be enrolled and attend the class in-person.
 - Students can decide or rescind their decision of whether they'd want to remain remote or not.
- Are you all aware that international undergraduate students are still facing problems regarding their visas and the in-person requirements of their classes?
 - Kleinman: International students who aren't currently in the US are facing significant problems getting a visa to come here.
 - Jeffries-EL: International students are being advised to pick classes that are hybrid and not entirely online to avoid any visa issues. The issue with immigration for students extends beyond BU.
 - Particularly, students are being advised that online-only courses may make it difficult to make a case for their visa. However, hybrid courses provide a way around this even if the student attends class largely remotely. Hybrid is acceptable, even if the international student is only taking the course online.

James Aglio: Even before the pandemic, some departments faced a shortage of TFs, and he could see this being a particular issue now. Has thought been given to courses who aren't able to enact the buddy system in departments that face these shortages?

- Jeffries-EL: GRS is looking at increasing the number of lecturers or part-time faculty to act as backup resources. Faculty may also need to take on TF responsibilities, dependent upon the scenario, content, etc.
 - There is the possibility that there will be tremendous overages and hiring temporary instructors, who are also being propositioned by other institutions, like Harvard. However, first, GRS is trying to get everything together for the beginning of the fall.
 - In the worst case scenario, they may need to cancel a few classes when no one else can be found to take over the class responsibilities.

Perri Meldon: BU is creating a safety contract for undergrads that they need to sign upon arrival on campus. Will BU require students to sign other waivers for pandemic-related issues?

- Kleinman: He believes students are being asked to sign an attestation form [he thinks this is what it's called]. Students in BU housing may also need to sign additional documents about keeping themselves and others safe. Otherwise there is nothing else that he is aware of.

Khadija: What is the situation around BU graduate housing for potential cases and isolation of undergraduate students?

- Kleinman: To be clear, the people being quarantined in select buildings are those who have come into contact with people who have tested positive. He wants to be very clear that he has sent notices to all students who rent in these buildings as of July 29, 2020.
 - To reiterate, there are a limited number of buildings that are designated as quarantine locations.
 - If a person who is currently under quarantine in graduate student housing tests positive, that person will be moved from the quarantine apartments to another spot on campus.
 - There will not be known COVID cases in the graduate student buildings; only suspected cases or people who need to comply with two-week isolation. They will be housed in apartments with private bathrooms.

Liz Neill: What's the threshold for campus closure? Additionally, is there going to be a community dashboard, such as the one created by Massachusetts Department of Health?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kleinman: BU is working closely with city and state public health authorities, and will adhere to any thresholds they have in place. BU has not delineated a threshold yet. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ He feels that it could also be problematic to provide a threshold because you also need to adapt to the situation both within BU and the surrounding area. ○ He has heard that there will be some kind of dashboard but there is nothing clearly planned yet. ● Liz: Regarding library closure, is there any possibility of keeping the library open in a contact-less manner? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kleinman: He recognizes PhD students and faculty need access to the libraries on campus. He believes the Chief librarian is working on this, but he doesn't yet know of any specific plan that is going to be implemented. <p>Rini Kaplan: A lot of the answers to our questions indicate that decisions are going to be made on a department level. Who should we be talking to besides the department head? Who should be the next person we should follow up with?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jeffries-EL: She understands that graduate students are not a monolith, and they have different needs with different levels of on-campus interaction depending on their field of study. Dept chairs and DGS' would be the main point of contact. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Another resource is the Office of Sponsored Research which sends out information that would be important to keep in mind as campus opens up. Department chairs should be hearing information from faculty, office of sponsored research, among other groups, so they should be your main resource.
<p>Brainstorming Effective Changes 2:50 pm</p>	<p>Shannon Bewley: One of the problems she sees is that new comes to different departments in different ways and at different times. It causes problems among graduate student groups who all come from different departments, and it becomes a gossip mill. She proposes that direct communications be provided to students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kleinman: For the record, he wishes BU's communications had been better from mid-March until now. He sees problems with the way communication has gone out that he never anticipated--though maybe should have, he admits. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What makes the problem difficult is the fact that there are both central offices (Provost) as well as schools and colleges who make decisions about what they will do. In this crisis, the centralized offices have been making decisions that then need to be communicated to everyone through the schools and colleges. ○ There is no comprehensive list of TFs across schools that Kleinman's office has access to. For instance, the workplace

adjustment requests had to be sent to Associate Deans in the various schools and colleges who then ask departments to communicate information to those who need it.

- It doesn't always work and BU intends to improve their lines of communication. It's unclear whether it'll be improved before the pandemic is over, but he intends to address it.
- ***He implores us that if we see something that looks fishy, problematic, troublesome, or irrational, please take your concerns to Dean Jeffries-EL or Associate Provost Kleinman.*** They would like to know what the issue is before the information becomes news or shows up on Twitter.
 - When people are doing this with incorrect information, then the rumor mill is perpetuated; they haven't done anything to make it better but they need to work together
- Jeffries-EL: The pandemic situation exposes the issues within the system, and from these problems with communication, we got to a point of intense mistrust. However, it is important to keep in mind that delays of information aren't necessarily sinister.
 - She is advocating for information to be sent to all graduate students regardless of their current status (particularly referring to responsibilities and information for TFs but also for a general flow of knowledge regardless of funding or service status).

Liz Neill: Generally all of us prefer more information to less information. Regardless of what part of the BU community--undergrad, grad, or postdocs--it's directed to, it's better to let all of us know. She suggests that we can get a list of all TFs in each department for Kleinman & Jeffries-EL to utilize.

- Kleinman: His office doesn't have a singular list and so they go to Jeffries and her counterparts in other schools, who do have these lists.
- Jeffries-EL: Because people's situations change quickly, particularly now, she would like to default to sending information about TF responsibilities and other information to everyone.
 - To clarify, GRS does have a list of all TFs in CAS.
- Liz: If someone doesn't receive information they should be getting, who should we contact?
 - Jeffries-EL: DGS' in each department also need to update spreadsheets for GRS so that they have an accurate list.
 - She has no control over what's being communicated to undergrads, and acknowledges that is a huge problem for where different groups intersect and interact on campus.

- Has heard about the additional communication with undergrads, and is advocating for additional information/communication to graduate students as well. She sees the housing situation as a prime example of this need to bring graduate students into the discussions being had with undergrads.
- Kleinman: The people in charge of the university's operations think of the university as a place for undergrads. As a result, people who are involved in these decisions largely leave out other actors who may be affected, like graduate students.
 - He has a mission to educate people within admin/facilities etc to think through grad student education, inform them of what graduate students do, and what PhD education does for the university.
 - For instance, he had a meeting with the Board of Trustees to inform them that the university pays graduate students to study *and* conduct original research at BU. He needed to explain to them what PhD education looks like.
- Liz: Let us know if we can provide Kleinman with any resources. It might be helpful to have a weekly digest from his and other offices to help people understand what's been happening and what decisions are upcoming but haven't been made yet. This could prevent the rumor mill from starting even though it's a bit more work for him and people in his office.
 - Kleinman: Having PhD students help advocate and educate other administrative members of the BU community would be a great resource.
 - Jessica Garber: GSO eboard and reps would be happy to help, so please don't hesitate to reach out!

Khadija: The GSO also has a weekly newsletter that we put out so we can coordinate with Jeffries and Kleinman if news needs to be spread that way.

- Kleinman: From his perspective offering this is helpful but doesn't solve the whole issue because GRS is only one of several graduate schools with separate administrative teams at BU. GRS was the first graduate school at BU and others branched off from it before establishing their own schools/colleges. It would make sense that GRS students have their own issues, but to him it would be helpful to have coordination between GSO and other graduate student organizations on campus.
- Khadija: The GSO would be happy to reach out to other organizations and work with the social media presence we already have.

David Malamud: Libraries at other universities have offered contactless options (scan chapters, just picking up one book etc) pre-pandemic and

now that would be particularly helpful. Are there any plans to implement these practices at BU?

- Kleinman: He asks David to send him an email about that. He would be happy to contact the library and see if there's money in the budget to do it now or next cycle with the eye to potentially making it a permanent service.

Khadija: Princeton University has graduate students who work in administrative offices throughout the university to provide their insights. This could be helpful for BU and beneficial for grad students to get experience with the administrative side of the university.

- Kleinman: BU has started this practice, and would be happy to have more information. Could she send additional information about Princeton's practice to him and Jeffries-EL?

Liz Neill: She wanted to bring up the issue of extending the time to degree. Has there been any discussion about whether time to degree for PhD students will be extended due to COVID?

- Jeffries-EL: There are two parts to this issue: 1) giving more time to complete the degree and 2) extending the students' funding timeline.
- Kleinman: He has fielded requests lobbying for extensions since the day we left the BU campus in March. If he's being honest, it's hard to know whether people are going to need extensions, particularly on a university-wide scale. He knows it's possible that people will need extended times to degree as a result but it may not be necessary for everyone.
 - Department Chairs, Deans etc are generally fine with individual students extending time to degrees, but extending funding is another issue.
 - Administratively, discussion has stalled because there were more pressing matters but the issue is likely to come up again.
- Jeffries-EL: Regarding how GRS' students were impacted, her own lab was shut down for 100 days, but it depended on the students' level or stage of their PhD they were in whether they were impacted greatly or not. Students who had just started were generally not impacted at all, but students further along, were more impacted. She fully expects to get an increased number of requests to delay in the future as a result of the spring and fall semesters.
 - To clarify, anyone who takes a leave of absence is already being pushed forward because that leave of absence stops the time to degree clock. Those are already on her radar.
 - Additionally, she is skeptical of people in their 10th year citing COVID as a reason that they need an extension to time to degree.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ She repeats that extending funding is more difficult, but she's willing to start the conversation around how that could occur.
Closing 3:20 pm (Khadija)	Thanks to everyone who attended. We hope this is a start to greater communication between admin and BU grad students.

Regarding health insurance coverage for COVID-related illness, Associate Provost Kleinman reached out to the GSO with this information:

Does my Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) cover care for COVID-19?

Yes, COVID-19 is covered the same as any other illness. If you see a provider in the United States you will be covered the same as if you are in Boston. You can log onto Aetna Student Health's Boston University homepage and select the "Find a doctor, hospital or pharmacy" option to search for in-network providers for the best coverage anywhere in the United States. Students who are on SHIP and are outside of the United States can still use their plan as primary or secondary insurance. Students will need to pay for care received and submit for reimbursement through Aetna.

You can find this in the FAQs at: <https://www.bu.edu/shs/coronavirus/#general-questions>