




Professor Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer

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TO: Boston University Faculty and Graduate Teaching Fellows
FROM: Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer 
DATE: June 18, 2020
SUBJECT: Return to Residential Education; Process for Requesting Workplace Adjustment for Fall 2020

Residential education is core to the mission of Boston University and to the experience of both our undergraduate and graduate students. Our long-standing commitment to residential education and the in-person engagement of faculty, students, and staff is a fundamental characteristic of our University. The pivot to remote teaching that we undertook in March of this year was a necessary short-term response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and, thanks to your hard work, it enabled our students to successfully complete the spring semester and remain on track to complete their degrees. The pivot also established a new set of capacities – most significantly the capacity to conduct some elements of our academic programs through remote technologies.

This memo provides detailed information on the following topics:

- Why a return to campus is important for all of us at Boston University
- Results of the recent faculty survey, which informed decision-making
- Safety measures underway to help ensure everyone's health and wellbeing
- Process and form for faculty to request a workplace adjustment (**due June 25**)

Return to Campus

The return to residential education for the fall 2020 semester – while taking all appropriate and necessary [public health precautions](#) – is important for a number of reasons. First and foremost, our students and their families are eager to return to residential education and on-campus engagement with their peers and, importantly, with faculty. We believe that it is important to be responsive to our students. In addition, as President Brown has [recently described](#), the COVID-19 pandemic has already had a significant financial impact on the University and we must minimize additional negative impacts on the University's overall operational and financial viability so that we may emerge from this period in a position of strength.

Our efforts to return to residential education this fall have been at the forefront of the establishment of a full suite of public health precautions, including the establishment of a new

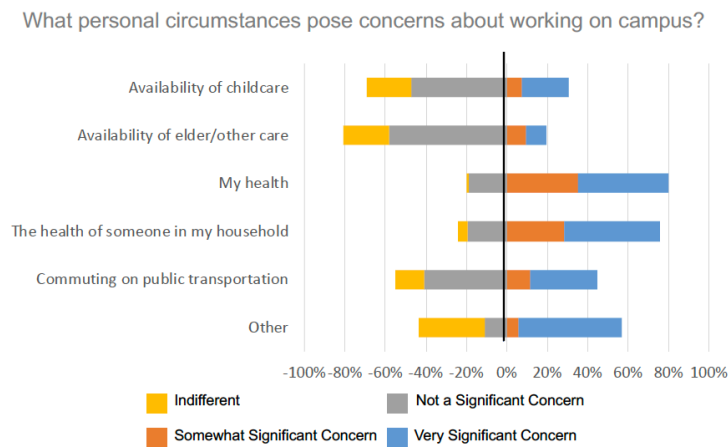
on-campus COVID-19 testing facility. These are outlined, and will be continuously updated, on the [Back2BU](#) website.

However, I know that many have expressed apprehension about the health implications of returning to residential, in-person teaching. The wellbeing of *all* members of our community is our highest concern, and I write to address the concerns you have expressed, as well as mechanisms available to offer further relief, as necessary.

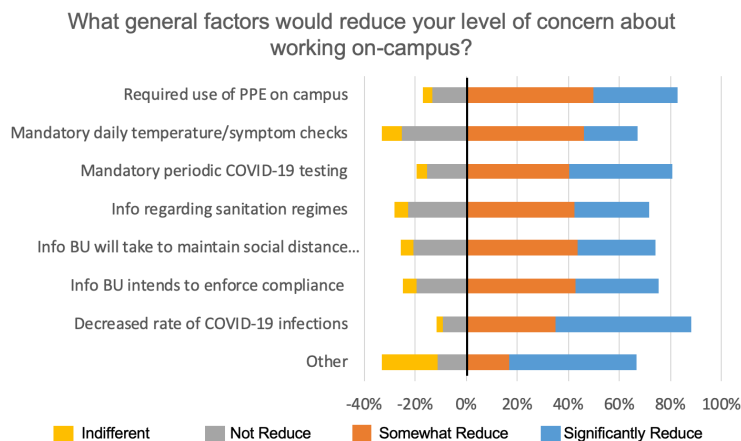
Results of Faculty Survey

I am grateful to all who responded to the survey that was distributed to faculty two weeks ago; over 1,000 faculty participated, and those thoughtful responses have informed the process that is outlined below. The full results of the faculty survey are available [here](#).

One clear theme that emerged from the faculty survey was that for many, concerns about your personal health, and the health of those in your households, are primary. This is illustrated in Figure 1:



Another important theme that emerged from the survey was what factors would mitigate those concerns, and this data is shown in Figure 2:



These are both critically important issues. We understand the concerns that you have about your health, and the health of those in your households. This message has been expressed in a variety of different forums in addition to the faculty survey, including through meetings with the Faculty Council, and we hear your concerns.

Safety Measures

I can report that many of the safety measures identified as impactful in the survey, including regular COVID-19 testing and required use of face coverings, are included in our plans for the fall. In partnership with our Medical Advisory Group, subject-matter experts across BU, other similarly situated universities, and local public health authorities, we are developing a comprehensive set of measures to make our campuses as safe as possible.

Key components of our health and safety plan include:

- An on-campus [COVID-19 testing facility](#) with the capacity to test all BU students, faculty, and staff. Details about testing frequency and locations are still being finalized and will be shared with the community as soon as they are available;
- A symptom-monitoring app to encourage all community members to actively monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms;
- Required use of face coverings and physical distancing at all campus locations;
- Building-specific reopening plans that include signage, visual cues, and de-densification where necessary;
- A comprehensive review of all HVAC systems, upgrading filters as needed; and,
- A planning effort, currently underway, to establish new maximum occupancies for all classrooms and ensure appropriate physical distancing for faculty and students.

You will hear more about this plan in the coming weeks, and we will continue to monitor and implement best practices in safety protocols and procedures as they develop.

Process for requesting a workplace adjustment

Although we are working to ensure that the campus is as safe as possible for faculty, students, and staff, we recognize that some faculty and graduate teaching fellows may still be reluctant to return to on-campus teaching. This may include individuals who are in a [COVID-19 high-risk category](#), as defined by the Centers for Disease Control, who live with someone in a high-risk category, or are pregnant. Faculty and graduate teaching fellows in these categories may utilize the following process to request a workplace adjustment for the Fall 2020 semester:

1. Complete and submit this form: <http://www.bu.edu/hr/covid-19-workplace-adjustment-request-form/>. For all requests based on risk categories other than age, medical documentation will be required. Given the limited time available to plan for the fall, we ask that anyone intending to request a modification submit this form **no later than Thursday, June 25**.

2. All submitted forms will be reviewed by the COVID-19 Workplace Adjustment Response Team (“Team”), which comprises professionals from HR and the Equal Opportunity Office. The Team will organize the requests and confidentially review personal medical information.
3. If the criteria are met to document that an individual is in a [COVID-19 high-risk category](#), is living with someone in a high-risk category, or is pregnant, the individual will be conditionally approved to receive a Workplace Adjustment. Once the submission deadline has passed, the Team will provide the dean of each school and college the names of those individuals who are conditionally approved for an adjustment. No personal medical information will be shared with your school or college.
4. Deans and their designees will then work to determine what adjustments may be made for those individuals who were approved to receive a Workplace Adjustment. The request form includes a field where individuals can specify what modification they are seeking. The academic leadership at each school will work to determine whether the individual’s requested change may be made or if another approach is more appropriate.

We hope to be able to work through all requests by **Monday, July 20**.

Please note that some conditions listed as high-risk for COVID-19 might be considered disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The process for accommodation under the ADA is distinct from the COVID-19 Workplace Adjustment Request Process and is available [here](#).

We know that some faculty and teaching fellows have concerns about returning to campus that do not fall under the specific conditions described above. We would like to collect more information to understand the scope of these concerns. If you have a non-medical concern about returning to campus, please complete and submit the same [form](#) as you would for medical conditions. When you access the form, proceed to the “Other” box at the end and provide details about your situation. After we gather this information, we will determine whether or not there are ameliorative steps we might take.

If you have questions about the process or the form, please call the COVID-19 employee support line at 617-358-4990. The support line is staffed Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm.

Next week, the University’s HR department will release a survey to all staff, which will lead to a similar Workplace Adjustment Request process for staff members. The specifics of the process for staff will be announced in the next couple of weeks.

Finally, let me reiterate how grateful I am for the work that you do and for the concern and care you’ve shown for your students and each other. Your dedication to your work is evident and greatly appreciated. President Brown and I will continue to keep you informed as our planning efforts move forward and will provide additional opportunities for you to provide feedback throughout the coming months.