

Resolution 173: Faculty Discretion to Teach On-line If Students Are Infected or Where Classroom Conditions Make Social Distancing Impossible

Q3 - Do you support the resolution titled "Resolution on faculty discretion to teach on-line if students are infected or where classroom conditions make social distancing impossible?"

Resolution 2 (Y = 53, N = 34, Abs = 10; DNV=31)

Comments

it is certainly crucial that faculty concerns about potentially unsafe teaching conditions be taken into account by the university leadership, and that policies be designed for teaching in the humanities no less so than in the sciences (e.g., discussion based, small group settings; typically older buildings; etc.). Nonetheless, I don't believe individual faculty discretion is advisable since most of us are not trained epidemiologists and do not have the professional capacity to make scientifically informed, sound decisions in the current circumstances.

As the previous proposal suggests that collaboration in decision making is an advantage, I think that collaboration in decision making for this proposal is essential, also. Students and graduate assistants may differ in their opinion from faculty and their input should be considered.

Anonymous please -- The title of this resolution, which includes "or where classroom conditions make social distancing impossible" makes it seem unlikely that the administration will favorably consider it, as there are likely very many classrooms in use this fall that aren't large enough to accommodate the student enrollment and allow for social distancing, so many classes could be moved on-line according to that criteria (though the text of the resolved doesn't state it as such).

YES, POST ANONYMOUSLY. We support this resolution, while also being mindful of the fact that students and staff are not being given the same choices as faculty here. Based on first-hand accounts, many initial classroom assignments were far from satisfactory. In some but by no means all cases, the situation improved, though only after vocal protests. Still, the abandonment of the social distancing requirement in the classroom and other professional situations remains a central cause of concern. Lastly, graduate students should not be treated as automatic backup labor for faculty members who may become ill and thus need in-person substitutes.

I have chosen to Abstain from voting on these Resolutions. Because the vote was called immediately following the exceptional Senate meeting, I was unable to discuss the issues with my fellow department members. I think that Cornell has an imperative to provide the highest quality of instruction to our students, and this means teaching in person whenever possible. I am convinced that COVID transmission in classroom settings is rare, and that the risk of infection is low. Although a large number faculty were signatories, by my estimate they represent only about 5% of the University faculty. Also, virtually all the signatories were from the Humanities, with very few representatives from STEM fields. This suggests a polarization within the Cornell faculty on these Resolutions. I would like to better understand the challenges that the Humanities faculty face while teaching. In the College of Vet Med where I work, academic life seems to have settled to a new normal that involves widespread use of masks, and near-universal in-person teaching. Doug Antczak, Microbiology & Immunology / Baker Institute for Animal Health

It seems to me this situation requires both individual perspective and global (community) perspective. Certainly these decision should involve discussion, at least with department leadership (DUS,DGS,Chair,..., and report to the larger entities (program, school, college). The present resolution does not reflect this. Nevertheless, many thanks to the colleagues who put effort into it in a thoughtful fashion.

I strongly support this resolutions and believe, that once it passes, the Dean of Faculty Office should present and strongly support the contents in discussions with the central administration. For the record, I never post anonymously including this one and the one I just wrote for the "Accommodations" resolution.

anonymous please: Maybe the university will next decide that take-home exams are inappropriate and insist that all exams be in-class and that they be exactly three hours long.