

Dear Colleagues:

Good evening! We at UIC United Faculty are delighted that a representative from the union is now an official part of the Task Force. That, along with the appointment of a representative from the Senate, will go a long way toward making this Task Force what it needs to be—an instrument of robust shared governance during our crisis.

Having a member of UICUF on the Task Force means that you now have the wisdom of hundreds of your faculty colleagues instantly accessible to you. For that reason, we will be continuing our letters to the committee, hoping that the eloquence of the voices and the significance of the issues that we present will support your deliberations.

This evening's issue could be—as with so much related to the virus—literally a matter of life and death. How will the university responsibly extend the circle of at-risk people who are our collective responsibility to keep safe? I feel this issue intensely in my bones, as my spouse is deeply medically compromised, and my mother—for whom I serve as guardian—is substantially at risk.

Please, though, take heed to one of our members—someone I know as a very dedicated and talented teacher:

I am really concerned about safety issues if we teach on campus. This is partially because of my individual situation, but I am sure there are other people in a similar situation. My partner has some of the health preconditions that make them more vulnerable to be severely affected by the coronavirus. The administration is talking about the possibility of a medical leave, etc. But even if we do not qualify for a medical leave, many of us have someone at home who is in a high-risk group. I think it is very important to press for specific safety measures such as mask dispensers on campus and testing for faculty and students. I don't think it is safe to return to campus without these measures firmly in place. Another possibility is coming up with an individualized approach to specific courses and faculty who are teaching. The possibility for remote teaching should not be based just on enrollment numbers, but on the specific situation of the faculty member and the type of class.

Thank you again for your consideration—on a day when Anthony Fauci has warned us of the dangers of re-opening campuses. And finally: if you ever wish to run any ideas that you are considering past your faculty colleagues—always a best practice—we can reach out quickly and effectively to canvass our extremely thoughtful and committed membership.

With best wishes,

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