



## AFT and AAUP Principles for Higher Education Response to COVID-19

March 13, 2020

### Principles

1. Colleges and universities exist to create knowledge and serve the common good. During this coronavirus pandemic, these institutions should keep in mind their obligation to ensure the safety of the campus community. At the same time, they must firmly defend academic freedom, shared decision-making, and the important role our institutions and these principles play in our society.
2. Racism and bigotry have no place in anyone's response to COVID-19. Institutions, faculty, staff and unions should condemn and respond to instances of racism and bigotry connected to this virus in the same manner and to the same extent they would at any other time.
3. College campuses are sanctuaries for many of their students; a college campus may be the only location where students have steady access to food, shelter, safe living quarters and internet access. Students, particularly those from countries or regions of the United States most affected by COVID-19, may have no safe alternative places to live. Colleges should consider these students' needs and provide substantial practical assistance to meet those needs. They should plan to assist students who do not have viable strategies for relocation from campus or alternatives for online learning.

### Treatment of employees

4. Clinical faculty members and academic staff at teaching hospitals or engaged in healthcare should be provided with adequate protective equipment.
5. All plans should reflect appropriate care for any staff, including support staff, who are asked to remain on campus to enact those plans. Special care should be taken for the protection of employees who are, or have household members who are, at higher risk for complications from COVID-19.
6. Every employee should be held harmless economically and professionally for the dislocations caused by COVID-19. This particularly includes adjunct and contingent faculty and graduate employees and staff—including hourly staff.
7. Specifically, fixed-term employees (like adjuncts and graduate assistants) should receive all of their promised pay, regardless of the dislocations caused by COVID-19.

8. No college or university employee should be required to use paid sick leave in order to enact the institution's response to COVID-19 or in order to quarantine, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, in the event of known exposure.
9. All staff members should be provided the authority to telework, and the appropriate equipment and supplies to support telework, during this crisis, regardless of their faculty, staff, exempt or nonexempt status. All who use telework should be protected from any negative evaluations associated with telework arrangements.
10. Institutions should have plans in place for employees with children whose regular school or daycare situation is interrupted by closures due to COVID-19.
11. Faculty members, particularly adjunct/contingent faculty and those on the tenure track who are not yet tenured, should be protected against the punitive use of negative teaching evaluations during the period of the disruption (e.g., a quick transition to an online format may create a lack of depth; a faculty member may not have been adequately trained to teach online, etc.).
12. Tenure-track faculty members whose work is disrupted by the institutional or governmental response to COVID-19 should have the option to stop their tenure clock for the duration of the disruption. For guidelines on stopping the tenure clock, see the American Association of University Professors' "Statement of Principles on Family Responsibilities and Academic Work" (<https://www.aaup.org/report/statement-principles-family-responsibilities-and-academic-work>)
13. Faculty and graduate assistants who were expected to present at conventions, conferences, artistic events or other gatherings that were canceled due to COVID-19 should be held harmless for their inability to do this; institutions should not attempt to reclaim nonrefundable conference expenses from members of their academic communities.

#### Effects of COVID-19 on curriculum and instruction

14. Decisions that affect curriculum, method of instruction, and those aspects of student life that relate to the educational process, should be made after consultation with the faculty and academic staff through their unions and campus governance bodies (see <https://www.aaup.org/news/statement-covid-19-and-faculty-role-decision-making#.XmIXqhKi70>).
15. Institutions should provide the necessary support and supplies for transitioning teaching to an online format and for supporting telework wherever that is part of the institution's response plan for COVID-19. Staff who work outside their usual job duties or hours to assist faculty and other employees in enacting these transitions should be offered additional compensation.
16. Any faculty member who is not already teaching online and is required to do so as part of the institution's response plan should be compensated at a reasonable hourly rate for transitioning to online teaching. Faculty and graduate employees who have to move specific courses' classroom format to online should be compensated at a reasonable hourly rate for doing this.

17. Institutions should acknowledge that transitioning a course to an online environment in a one-time crisis does not necessarily mean the course can be successfully taught in an online environment under normal conditions, and does not obligate the faculty member to teach the course online in the future. Decisions to continue teaching a course online after the COVID-19 crisis has abated should follow the principles laid out in AAUP's "Statement on Online and Distance Education," which requires consultation with appropriate faculty decision-making bodies (<https://www.aaup.org/report/statement-online-and-distance-education>).
18. If an instructional term is extended due to the virus, institutions should be prepared to provide additional compensation for faculty and staff who would normally not be under contract beyond the end of the semester/quarter, and who may be obligated to other jobs in the ensuing semester/quarter. Institutions should also plan to have academic counselors and other appropriate personnel available to guide students in fulfilling their academic requirements.

#### Intellectual property

19. Institutions should not take this opportunity to appropriate intellectual property to which they would not otherwise have had access; teaching materials moved online because of the one-time emergency created by COVID-19 are not the property of the institution for future use.
20. New contracts signed with online program managers specifically to handle this crisis should be of short duration, should contain robust protections for faculty intellectual property, and should be fee-for-service only (not a percentage of tuition).

#### Protection of whistleblower researchers

21. Academics working on grants from non-intelligence agencies who may develop or uncover unflattering information regarding governmental responses to COVID-19 should be advised that they have protections through the Whistleblower Protection Act and under the principles of academic freedom. Employers cannot block grantees from speaking, nor can they mandate prescreening of communications through legal departments or public information officers. Grantees can file a whistleblower retaliation claim if they experience reprisal for disclosing information that the employee reasonably believes is evidence of an abuse of authority relating to a federal contract or grant, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety. For more on the rights of whistleblowers see <https://whistleblower.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/WhistleblowingScienceGuide.pdf>.