FCTL/ FS Survey on Teaching Fall Semester 2020
Brief Overview of Results

Fall semester 2020 held unique concerns for faculty. Over the summer, MSU developed guidelines to deal with COVID-19 related absence and illness among students. Faculty were given opportunities to learn and practice online teaching skills. Once Fall semester began, it was time to begin the evaluation of the preparations. The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL) in collaboration with Faculty Senate (FS) developed and distributed a survey in the last week of fall semester to all the full-time faculty (N=419). Keeping in mind that President Morgan confirmed FS determination of full-time tenure/ tenure-track faculty in fall to be approximately 186, the remainder of the persons receiving the survey may have been department chairs, instructors, and *others*. A full list of the recipients was not visible to parse the *other* category. With this in mind, the total response to this survey was N= 164 or 39% response. The survey results are presented as graphs for questions 1-5 and as representative narrative for questions 6 and 7.

Question 1: Thinking about your Fall semester 2020, how manageable was your teaching requirement?

Question 2: How easy was it to obtain the resources you needed for teaching?

MSU Faculty Experience Survey
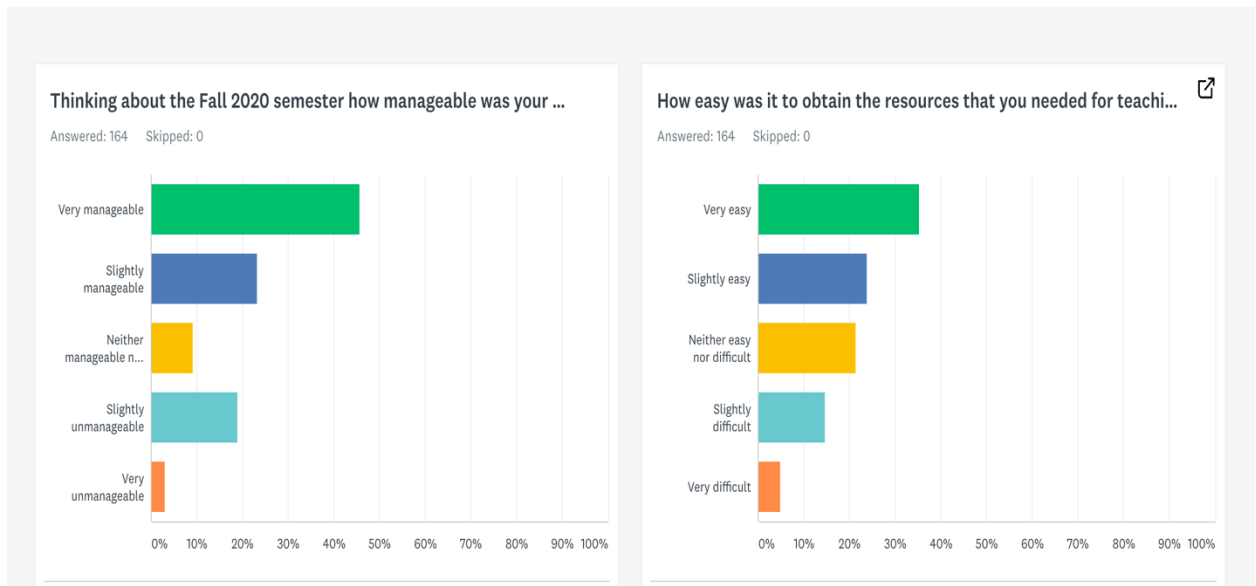
Question 3: How easy was it to focus on your students' education and well-being?

Question 4: What is your overall level of satisfaction with the resources received to support your teaching?

How easy was it to focus on your students' education and wellbein...

Answered: 163 Skipped: 1

MSU Faculty Experience Survey

What is your overall level of satisfaction with the resources receiv...

Answered: 164 Skipped: 0

MSU Faculty Experience Survey
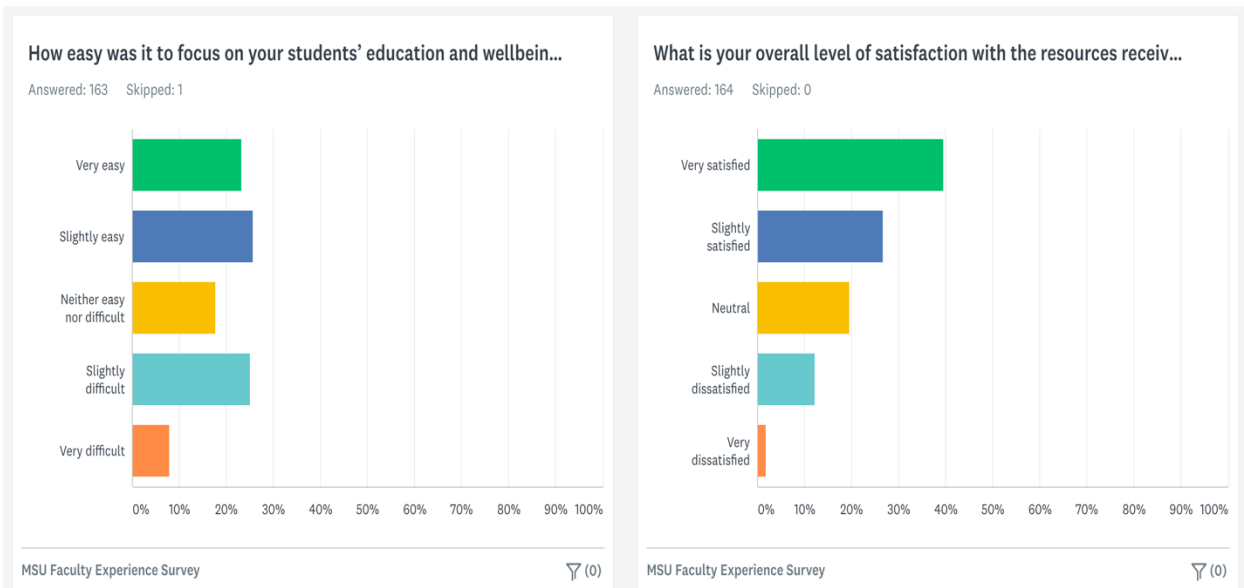
Question 5: What is your overall level of satisfaction with the Fall 2020 semester?

What is your overall level of satisfaction with the Fall 2020 semest...

Answered: 164   Skipped: 0

MSU Faculty Experience Survey
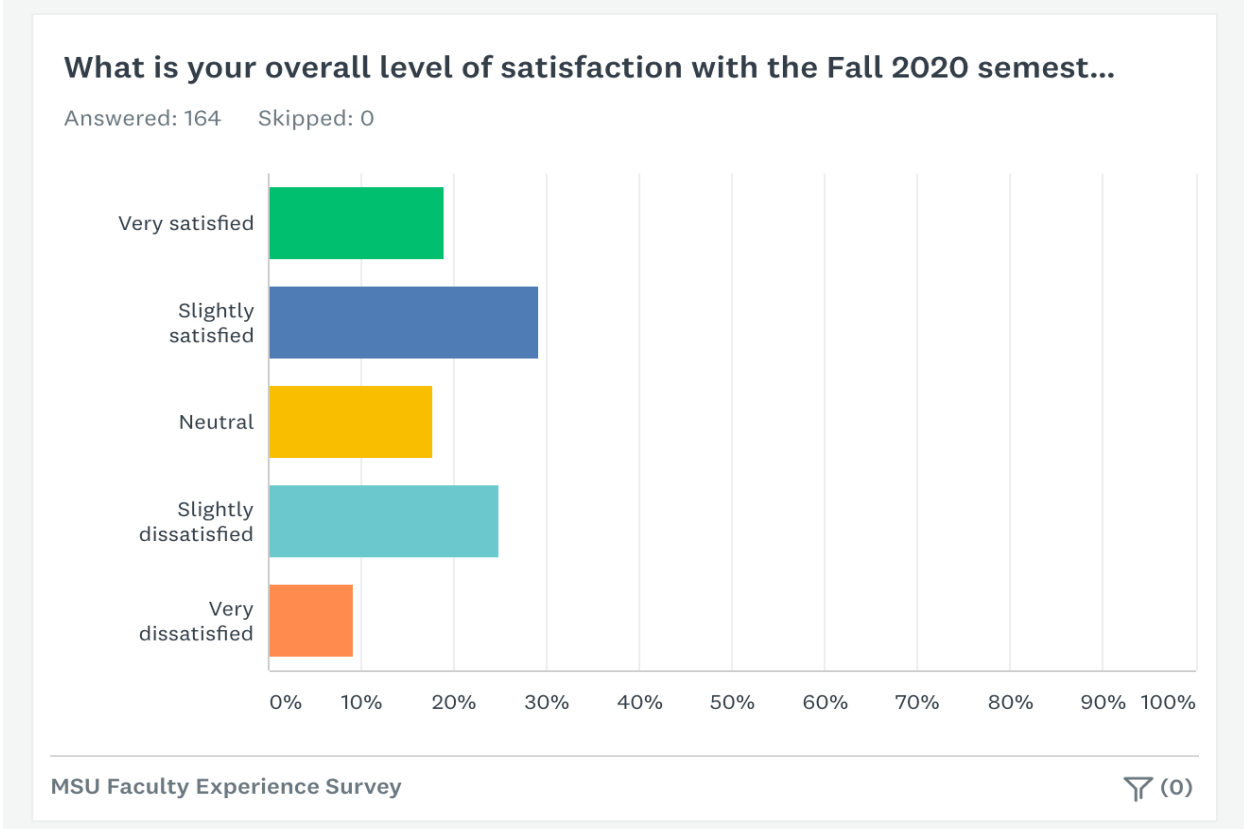
Question 6: What questions, issues, or concerns do you have regarding teaching in the upcoming Spring 2021 semester?

Question 7: Additional comments

Questions 6 and 7 responses resulted in numerous comments which could be grouped into four broad themes, consistent comments on two topics, and directed appreciation. The consistent comments related to desire to (1) improve student engagement and (2) provide a specific repository for students seeking institutional information. The directed appreciation was stated as "thank you" to FCTL Director Daryl Privott, Distance Education and Instructional Design (DEID) team David Flora, Xavier Scott, and Jing Zhang, FS President Grupe, and President Morgan. The broad themes are: (1) Faculty- Administration

Shared Governance, (2) COVID-19 Concerns, (3) Teaching (workload, tenure/promotion, engagement), and (4) Technology-Related Teaching Concerns or Equipment Issues. There was a high volume of narrative responses with many being similar in concerns or statements. Following are representative quotes from each of the four broad themes.

<mark>Theme 1: Faculty-Administration Shared Governance</mark>

"I am most disappointed in our J Morgan and Greg Russell lack of leadership and vision for how to navigate a safe environment for faculty, staff, students and the community as whole is shameful and embarrassing. Their mercenary attitude to fill the dorms and sell meal cards, was unconscionable."

"The push for face-to-face courses was unwarranted, and was driven by a minority of vocal students, and a University President with a political agenda. We are an older faculty, and we have documented cases of asymptomatic students giving SARS-CoV-2 to faculty in face-to-face classes. Do we have to have a faculty member or student die? Even the asymptomatic, and lower level sickness may still result in damage to major organ systems, such as potentially permanent cardiac and lung damage. Like with the US President, science seems to be ignored."

"Students did not show up in person to my hybrid courses. Felt pointless for me to show up in person to teach to 3 or 4 students in the classroom and the other 30 via WebEx. I am not sure why the university thinks the students want "in person" classes because that was absolutely not my experience."

"I'd say that we need better leadership in Academic Affairs, but that implies there's actual leadership. There's not. We just have a bunch of confused people, who cluster in rooms, stumbling over external mandates they themselves make more complicated, waiting to be told what to do by the President, who is more than happy to put his finger on ever scale, then, when caught doing so, pretend deference to some VP who is doing the President's direct bidding. The semester was mismanaged because one person thought he could completely control the chaos that arise from a global health crisis, and instead of seeking help from the campus community, he slow walked or ignored simple queries then crowed that he had proven the naysayers wrong."

<mark>Theme 2: COVID-19 Concerns</mark>

"I have F2F courses next semester, however I am afraid that the pandemic wouldn't be under control. For personal health issues, I would like to have the option to teach online again in case isn't save. Could MSU support faculty with that?"

"If we have WebEx access, then stop forcing us into a classroom. Start reporting actual numbers and stop trying to make campus look like we aren't dealing with the same problems as other Universities did this semester. Just because our admin doesn't believe in Covid doesn't mean it doesn't exist. The students and faculty/staff deserve better from our leaders."

"Will my students show up to my in person class? Will there be a huge spread when students come back from their various hometowns. If a vaccine becomes available, will there be a program at MSU to distribute it quickly to students and faculty/staff?"

"Teaching went as well as it could. The students hung in there the best that they could. The administration did nothing other than provide technology. Contact tracing or any kind of reasonable precautions against COVID were nonexistent. Positive tests were obscured by vague health notices. No sure count of cases among students or employees was ever provided."

<mark>Theme 3: Teaching (workload, tenure/promotion, engagement)</mark>

"I think a lot of expectations were placed upon us without a lot of guidance or support. Given the reliance on course evaluations for tenure, I'm genuinely concerned that my difficulties managing the technology this semester, which were largely outside of my control, are going to be reflected in my course evaluations, which is going to hurt my performance evaluations. I also have concerns about students'

wearing of masks. Students wore masks well in my classroom, but as I walked to my classroom, I saw many students not wearing masks."

"For one, I am concerned about my mental health. It has been absolutely exhausting this semester, and I don't know how many more semesters I can take with this format. I don't mind wearing masks; that is no problem! What I mind is getting pulled in so many different directions in the classroom and outside the classroom that I feel like I am constantly working with no breaks. I like that you all sprinkled in 2 days of breaks for students, but you should really consider sprinkling in all 5 days throughout the semester considering you are taking away a much needed spring break for these students. People need time to catch up and recharge."

"Online learning methods are not ideal for student learning in many classes, and with many types of students. Nonetheless, killing, or permanently handicapping faculty, staff, and students should have been taken into greater account. We should not be "touting" our face-to-face" percentages (which are skillfully, and unethically skewed). We should be touting how we do everything to keep staff, faculty, and students safe. Also, given the hardship for students, we should have realized this semester would be rife with student complaints. The administrative response seems to be "placate student demands any way to can, in all cases". This is not a good strategy to create a 21st Century workforce—unless potential employers want employees who don't want to have to show up, meet deadlines, pick up new ideas or skills quickly and efficiently, or adequately complete task. If you want create whiny complainers, with potentially dishonest excuses, and demands that expectations be lowered, we are well on our way to creating those workers."

<mark>Theme 4: Technology-Related Teaching Concerns or Equipment Issues</mark>

"What support is there for students who need devices, in particular, computers, to be successful. Several students had their computers crash during the semester. They went to the library to complete assignments and used their phones whenever possible, but because our classes were forced to be hybrid, this put these students at a real disadvantage. Can the university loan students a laptop or tablet when this happens?"

"May we have financial support to purchase platforms or programs to make synchronous and online learning more effective? Software is very expensive. Would it be a good idea to channel monies into this?"

"What additional support will you be implementing to ensure students and faculty are able to manage the technology needs. Additional trainings are helpful, but not sufficient if the issues are related to a) equipment and b) time spent managing. To what extent will teaching evaluations be relied upon given that students are stressed and likely to be evaluate all classes lower on the whole, but since tenured faculty are the ones required to have evaluations, this won't matter for tenured faculty. Greater coordination of assignments and exams, particularly final exams would be helpful. Students are overwhelmed with the condensed semester, and they are not sure how to manage having so many exams condensed within a short period of time."

Summary

Fall semester 2020 presented a set of conditions which we had hoped would be non-applicable Spring 2021. Spring semester, like Fall semester, has been announced as having approximately 31% online courses and 58% face-to-face. Faculty have been assured by President Morgan (November 9, 2020 streamed address to campus) and Provost Russell (November 19, 2020 FS meeting) that faculty have determination of appropriate course modality for Spring semester. Having the ability to pivot online if necessary is absolutely crucial for faculty at MSU. As we have one-third of faculty with more than 20 years of experience, and thus in a higher-risk category, no plans from the state for vaccination of university faculty as a priority group (Lennex verified from Rowan Health Dept. December 30, 2020), and increasing numbers of potentially infected persons bringing the virus to classrooms, the faculty appreciate the ability to pivot online with a simple approval from their Department Chair/Associate Dean.

Shared governance is a foundation for institutional excellence. MSU has excellent constituent representation within its Faculty Senate and Staff Congress. Working together with Student Government Association and Administration, the campus can utilize its best resources in the most productive manner. Comments indicate that shared governance did not occur Fall semester 2020. Embracing shared governance would be most beneficial for MSU. The concerns about many unsettling aspects of fall semester could have been alleviated with shared governance and a trust in working together to solve problems.

Comments regarding Fall semester teaching and technology indicate that most faculty believe they are somewhat supported instructionally. Faculty are concerned with student evaluation and tenure/promotion requirements. Faculty Senate has discussed, and continues to discuss, several resolutions regarding student evaluations and faculty performance criteria. Departmental discussions regarding revision of tenure requirements and annual performance review should occur so that changes may be affected to departmental FEPs. Many FEPs have not been revised in any way since 2015 (Lennex review of FEPs in Provost Office July 2020).

Providing faculty intermediate and advanced instruction on the available software/ hardware will enable them to deliver best possible instruction in their respective disciplines. Video demonstrations created through FCTL and posted internally to DEID pages may be a good beginning solution for this type of training. Supporting students in a clear, widely communicated effort, to obtain needed technologies for classes, is essential.