

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Chair: Ronda Wright
Co-Rep to UTK Diversity Office:
Rana Abudayyeh

Members:
Katherine Ambroziak
Alex Bonner
Felicia Dean
Florence Graves
Justin Lenten
Sarah Lowe
Joanna Martin
Scottie McDaniel
Brooklyn Poff
Nick Stawinski

WHY THIS DOCUMENT?

COVID-19 is a virus that affects all humans, but not equally. What it does to the body does not discriminate, but it does affect vulnerable and marginalized populations in disproportionate numbers. It is important to recognize the social injustices that surround this virus. We encourage everyone to familiarize themselves with who is affected, and how, in the collective effort to develop plans that will 'preserve the wellbeing of all.'²

WHO IS THIS FOR?

As COVID-19 brings unprecedented threats to the individuals we serve in our college, the CoAD Council for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion has prepared this document for Task Force members as a point of reference for consideration as plans are being made to prepare for an unconventional Fall.

01. TASKFORCE EDITION

CONSIDERATIONS FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION AND COVID-19 IN FALL PLANNING

Now more than ever, we must be bold in our support for diversity, equity, and inclusion to ensure that our plans and decisions foster an environment of care and belonging for all.¹

A SAMPLING OF STUDENT EXPERIENCES SINCE LEAVING CAMPUS³⁻⁹

College was their safe space. They have now returned home, and back into the closet.

Increased harassment of Asian and Asian American populations. Many have been targeted as related to the origin of the virus.

Moving home adds stress
Students re-enter scenarios of sharing rooms with siblings, taking care of grandparents, or can lack needed quiet space to work.

Internet access at home can be weak or non-existent.

Rural areas can lack the infrastructure to support needed broadband, while inner-city areas may suffer from a lack of service. In 2018 Memphis had one of the slowest average internet speeds in the country.

College made them feel equal. Student disparities are made apparent when video chat exposes how unequal their lives are.

Food security was an issue before COVID 19. Many students have come to depend on the food provisions supplied by meal plans and on-campus food outlets. Ensuring nutritional food is now a daily stressor.

Some students did/do not have a home to go back to.
Trans students face the obstacle of having to find shelter after having been kicked out by their family prior to college.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE RUSH OUR DECISION MAKING PROCESS? ¹⁰

Changes are happening fast as we prepare for Fall. When we are rushed, we often default to what we are most familiar with, what we believe, and what we may have experienced.

However, we need to be cognizant that our individual experiences do not represent all. Confirmation bias, where more weight is given to evidence that confirms our own beliefs, and implicit bias, when our decisions are grounded in associations made on difference, increase when we do not have the time for thoughtful consideration.

So what can you do? Be sure that you draw from a wide range of voices before making a decision. Consider your decisions through the lens of various stakeholders. And build in time to reflect and consider the suggestions being made.

WHAT MAKES FOR AN INCLUSIVE VIRTUAL ATMOSPHERE? ¹¹

A virtual atmosphere does not allow for many of the subtle cues that we can anticipate and read like in a physical space. We can't scan the room and get a sense of the overall mode and tone. The opportunities for impromptu chats with students that can often provide insight into their situations have disappeared. The CDEI offers the following for consideration in task force planning:

Remain flexible in decision-making

Be inclusive and remember that everyone has different circumstances that can be affecting their participation and engagement.

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Be kind and understanding regarding expectations. Relax requirements that can become impositions, such as demanding business attire for online video meetings or classes, or penalizing participants in online classes for wearing casual attire.

... recognize members of our community experience different challenges associated with the COVID-19 outbreak.¹

Remember that people may be operating without resources and access to many material items and services.

..

Keep the focus on what is most important.

Setting the tone for all student experiences

Reject racism, sexism, xenophobia and all hateful or intolerant speech, both in person and online. Be an "up-stander," and discourage others from engaging in such behavior.

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Encourage patience with one another giving the same amount of respect to everyone both in their presence and in their absence.

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Refer to the virus as either "COVID-19" or "coronavirus" in both oral and written communications. And be vocal should you hear someone use terms such as "Chinese Virus" or other terms which cast either intentional or unintentional projections of hatred toward Asian communities.

..

Support the front line workers, many of whom are our own students, in our community; abide by guidelines set forth by the university and federal and local governments.

Remember to practice self-care! Recognize your own stress, manage yourself before managing others, and make time for your physical and emotional needs.

Be mindful of the need for equitable access to technology

Address unequal access to technology, hardware and software. Ask students about their level of access to technology –both hardware and software– and assist in guiding them to available resources. Individuals with increased needs for accommodations may be the most reluctant to ask. The Council for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion can be a neutral contact for a student too uncomfortable discussing their lack of resources with their faculty. Ensure accessibility for students with disabilities when using online learning or remote instruction.

Make clear communication streams a goal

Communication is a key component to a successful learning and collaborative environment. The COVID-19 crisis is not the time for hierarchy and process, it is time for leadership, creativity and execution. Try to be as clear as possible in online conversations. Don't assume that broad, sweeping statements will be fully understood. Remember, that non-verbal cues are lost when in an online setting.

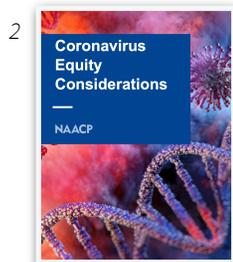
In a crisis situation, clear communications can be achieved by (1) Establishing empathy: it will help calm the recipient and help them hear your message. (2) Delivering the big picture perspective and purpose. (3) Explaining what steps we are taking to get there. ¹²

Help for faculty and staff to manage anxiety around COVID-19: 865-946-CARE

Help for students to manage anxiety around COVID-19: 865-974-HELP

LINKS TO ARTICLES AND REPORTS REFERENCED IN THIS DOCUMENT

- 1 **UTK Chancellor Re-Imagining Fall Task Force Report**



2 **NAACP: CORONAVIRUS EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS**

Resource guide for officials responsible for addressing health, economic, and other impacts, in remediating some of the issues that are disproportionately affecting communities of color.

- 3 **Campuses shutter for coronavirus, leaving some LGBTQ students with nowhere to go.**
Vox News

- 4 **Feds Sound Alarm Over Claims of Asian Discrimination in Schools**
Wall Street Journal

- 5 **'I'm in High School Again': Virus Sends College Students Home to Parents, and Their Rules**
New York Times

- 6 **Digital gap between rural and nonrural America persists**
Pew Research

- 6 **Memphis among largest U.S. cities with slowest internet speeds**
Commercial Appeal

- 7 **Colleges grapple with student food insecurity during COVID-19**
Marketplace

- 8 **College Made Them Feel Equal. The Virus Exposed How Unequal Their Lives Are.**
New York Times

- 9 **Many Trans Students Have Been Forced To Hide Their True Selves Because of College Closures**
Buzzfeed News

- 10 **The Impact of Unconscious Bias on Leadership Decision Making**
Forbes

- 10 **COVID-19— A Reminder to Reason**
New England Journal of Medicine

- 10 **DEI CoronaVirus Tip Sheet**
Michigan State University College of Agriculture

- 11 **Equity and Inclusion During COVID-19**
University of California, Diversity

- 12 **Tips for communicating thoughtfully and inclusively during a crisis**
National Inclusive Excellence Leadership Academy