



The Hostos Senate COVID Response Task Force:
Recommendations for the College:
September 2020; Expanded: January 2021



Introduction

The Senate COVID Response Task Force was created in May 2020 by the Senate Executive Committee, building on a recommendation first raised by Professor Nelson Nuñez-Rodriguez at a Chairs, Coordinators, and Directors meeting. As an ad-hoc Senate committee, the Task Force's directive is to engage the campus community in dialogue to address the challenges we face during a global pandemic and the pivot to distance learning. We believe in continuous improvement and productive collaborations at the college, with our students and the community that we serve being the primary focus of our explorations. This crisis has revealed the necessity of deeper collaborations across the college, as budget, enrollment, advising, pedagogy, technology, mental well-being, and physical health are deeply imbricated. The Task Force gathered information from a multitude of constituents to make recommendations to our administration and the college community. To ensure this college-wide effort, the Task Force is made up of members from across our college's constituencies, departments, and divisions. The Task Force listened, gleaned patterns, analyzed operational strengths and weaknesses, and decoded data in order to make our recommendations.

The Task Force would like to thank the college administration for the changes that are already underway as a consequence of the dialogue that has been nurtured between administrators, the Senate Executive Committee, the Hostos Chapter of PSC CUNY, and the Senate COVID Response Task Force during the pandemic.

There are still more areas for improvement. Recommendations within these pages originate from careful curation and cultivation of information and sources, and from an abiding commitment to the betterment of the college and empathic citizenship.

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Recommendations for Communication & Consultation

Introduction – These recommendations are intended to support and promote coordinated and clear **communication** and appropriate, consistent **consultation**.

Communication: The recommendations in this document will support productive, effective and clear communication and collaboration at the college as we work through this difficult period as a community. This includes more information shared more broadly on a regular basis about college operations including enrollment and registration, as well as student success indicators including course completion. The pandemic has exacerbated socio-economic inequities, and we need information to guide effective and timely responses. Also, while we recognize the importance and significance of the University and the Mayor's and Governor's offices in guiding decisions that affect Hostos, the college community would benefit from more frequent updates about the college's plans. This would minimize the sense of confusion and anxiety among our college community, promote clarity and, ideally, create collegial opportunities to have questions asked, shared, and addressed.

Consultation: The framing of these recommendations is informed by the [Charter of Governance](#), [CUNY Bylaws](#), and academic freedom as defined by the [AAC&U](#). If our recommendations are implemented, as we move through the turbulent period ahead of us, we can more firmly uphold principals of shared governance even in a time of crisis rather than bypassing these principles in the service of expediency, as has sometimes been the case, however well intentioned. Faculty (particularly Chairs and Coordinators), students and staff are eager and ready to engage in the robust consultation that leads to the development of more effective policies and implementation.

Effective communication and consultation are not easy to achieve, especially in a complex institution like CUNY, but they are vital to a college's successful operation. Effective communication is grounded in transparency and consistency in policies, expectations, and procedures within departments, across departments, and across colleges. It requires a willingness to engage in candid discussions to examine and question long-held norms, creating an *intellectual community* that fosters a sense of belonging and an inclusive work environment. The COVID pandemic exacerbated gaps in effective communication and consultation, precisely at a time when they were needed to help us navigate the crisis. A concrete example of the

shortcomings in the college's approach to communication and consultation was the implementation of online training for the faculty, the way it was envisaged, and the way it was rolled out. This was a critical initiative, but addressing the fallout has taken much more time and energy than getting it right the first time.

To facilitate effective communication, college leadership should:

- articulate their vision for the college and state their priorities and rationale for embracing a particular plan, initiative, or policy;
- ensure staff and faculty have opportunities to provide feedback when decisions are made that affect them directly;
- deal equitably with all members of the college, particularly those who are underrepresented;
- strive for buy-in among faculty, departmental leaders, program directors and staff when important institutional decisions are made; and
- consult regularly with union leadership about matters concerning workload and the workplace beyond labor-management meetings, and with the Senate Executive Committee regarding issues of shared governance, especially with regard to the faculty's prerogative over curriculum.

Part 1: Communication of Institutional Data – The Pandemic and Beyond:

The recommendations in this section are largely focused on the need for regular communication of timely institutional data, and the identification of appropriate means by which these data are disseminated and discussed.

Develop and regularly share a report on application, admission, acceptance and enrollment numbers with the President/Cabinet, Academic Chairs and Coordinators, and the Task Force. It is often unclear to Academic Departments (and other Units across the college) how many students are expected to enroll and the factors that impact this number. Departments are asked to close or consolidate sections without having the larger picture of what is happening with

enrollment. It is recommended that a regular report (2x/week) be shared with the President/Cabinet; Chairs, Coordinators and Directors [CCD]; the heads of advisement units; and the Task Force once registration begins for the Winter/Spring 2021 semesters. This would continue and expand a process initiated by President De Filippis in August 2020. Whether the report emanates from Office of Institutional Research and Assessment [OIRA] or Student Development and Enrollment Management [SDEM], it should be the product of coordinated data flows. The report should include application, admission, acceptance and registration numbers, with comparisons from the previous year. While the enrollment crisis continues, Hostos should extend the traditional enrollment periods and delay the course cancellation dates, as occurred for the Fall 2020 semester.

OIRA has an internal repository and archive (SharePoint) for sharing data, accessible by Chairs and Coordinators; OIRA should regularly present on this material to CCD and/or Academic Council. Given the difficulties faculty and students faced since the Spring 2020 semester, it would be useful to discuss the implications of the number of Fs, Ws, WUs, NC's, and INCs, particularly in relation to the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters. Additionally, the college is facing an enrollment crisis. As such, we recommend that OIRA appear at CCD and/or Academic Council on a regular basis to briefly present its data and analysis, and to answer questions. It is hoped that OIRA's expertise in data production and analysis will help shed light on the results of past administrative and curricular decisions, and provide informed guidance on how the college can meet the needs of the students we have, and help increase the enrollment we need. OIRA should also meet with CCD and/or Academic Council at the beginning of the academic year and explain its Data Request process, as well as send out a related communication to all faculty and staff, so that a more synergistic relationship is built between data production and analysis, and decision-makers.

Part 2: Communication of Opportunities to Support Emerging Workforce Development Needs, and Create New Pipelines of Students Enrolling at Hostos:

Crises create opportunities for creative responses. The communities we serve depend on us to provide training for in-demand careers that yield a living wage. We are a powerful and proven engine of socio-economic mobility. And, we have depended largely on traditional modes of

degree attainment based on credits earned for course work completed at Hostos, or a similar post-secondary institution. It's time to communicate information about alternatives available at CUNY, and facilitate conversation and consultation about these opportunities:

Hostos should establish a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) office and a college-wide PLA committee. For several years, the Division of Continuing Education and Workforce Development [CEWD] has worked in close partnership with the Office of Academic Affairs [OAA] to create credit articulation agreements from CEWD's occupational training programs to the college's academic degree programs. We recommend that Hostos create a formal PLA office to help students obtain credits for their prior relevant work experience and for successfully earning valuable industry-recognized credentials. CEWD's Transition & Advising Coordinator could staff the office, help students prepare materials for prior learning assessments, and continue to act as a liaison with Academic Departments and other offices (advising, admissions, etc.). In addition, we recommend the establishment of a college-wide PLA committee, which would meet quarterly and consist of representatives from relevant Academic Departments, CEWD, OAA, and other college offices. Using the parameters set by the CUNY-wide PLA policy, this committee would help develop a more robust college policy towards credit for prior learning (which would be subsequently presented to the College-Wide Curriculum Committee and College Senate for approval).

Hostos should institutionalize the use of Pell Grants to fund noncredit occupational training programs and provide students that successfully complete these programs with credits towards a Hostos degree program. As proposed in a recent concept paper written by Adult and Continuing Education programs at BCC, BMCC, HCC, KCC, and LGCC, CUNY can use a "clock hour" formula to access Pell Grants to fund noncredit occupational training programs.¹ In order to access this funding, students must be enrolled in a certificate program that leads to gainful employment and provides at least 600 clock hours of instructional time over a minimum of 15 weeks. In addition, we recommend that Hostos utilize the new CUNY-wide Prior Learning Assessment policy to grant credits to students that successfully complete a Pell-funded

¹ Sunil B. Gupta, "CUNY's NYC Workforce Response: A Staged Plan (A Collaborative Paper by CUNY ACE Divisions: BCC, BMCC, HCC, KCC, & LAGCC)", The City University of New York, July 4, 2020.

occupational training program, particularly those that result in an industry-recognized credential. For example, at Hostos there is a credit articulation agreement that grants college credits to students who successfully complete CEWD's Medical Billing and Coding certificate program and enroll in the AAS Degree in the Business Program's Office Technology Medical Office Manager Option. If this were a Pell-funded program, students would receive financial assistance while earning credits and gaining advance standing towards their degree. This would make college more accessible to unemployed and low-income residents of the South Bronx and the surrounding communities served by Hostos.

Part 3: Faculty/OAA Communication and Consultation – Roles and Responsibilities:

The recommendations in this section aim to better position the role of Chairs and Coordinators in relation to faculty, one another, the Provost, as well as the college, more broadly.

Faculty set the policies and make the decisions about teaching, curriculum advancement, the hiring of other faculty, and recommendations for reappointments and promotions of faculty members. Hostos has a strong culture and understanding of local governance and of academic freedom. This is a matter of pride, and an indicator of an effective institution, as per the [Middle States Standards of Accreditation](#).

The Provost, as representative of the faculty, is charged with sustaining and advancing both local governance and academic freedom, and thus should be in frequent contact with Senate leadership to resolve any issues identified as a violation of shared governance, faculty prerogatives over curriculum, or faculty determination of reappointment and promotion criteria.

As elected representatives of the faculty, Chairs and Coordinators can help ensure the Provost achieves their goals for the college. The Provost should listen, advise, and help departments to reach their objectives and help departments work together to advance institutional goals.

Chairs are well informed regarding faculty research agendas and other service commitments and can provide insight into proposals made by the Provost regarding faculty participation in initiatives outside their respective departments. To this end, when faculty are identified by OAA to participate in an initiative outside of their department, the Provost must consult with their

respective Department Chair before an invitation is extended to faculty. The Provost must consult with the Chair about any matter that directly impacts their department.

The Provost should immediately address the concerns brought to their attention by the CCD and provide clear and factual responses to those concerns as well as providing space for candid discussion of these concerns. CCD meetings should be used for collaborative and informed discussions leading to decisions with broad buy-in.

The Provost should be mindful when Chairs request resources needed to ensure their faculty can perform their duties at the college, and should engage the CCD in discussions about resource needs on a regular basis.

The Provost's role is to advance all departmental curricular initiatives that have been approved by the Senate; these initiatives must be acted upon in a timely manner. What is approved at Senate must be immediately, and accurately, transmitted by OAA to CUNY Central for ultimate approval, and then local implementation.

Part 4: Reopening Plans and Updates – Opportunities for Effective Communication and Consultation:

Talk of reopening is a source of fear and anxiety for students, staff, and faculty during this uncertain time. And, there are many voices discussing and guiding responses to COVID-19, including reopening plans.

We view the situation as an opportunity to get communication and consultation right, and to use the long road to reopening as a site of community building.

The Chancellery and Executive Vice Chancellor Cruz, in particular, send regular updates on reopening. We recommend that the President or Provost distribute said memos to the entire college population, *and* summarize the new policies and specify how they will be operationalized at Hostos.

The college has recently centralized most of its COVID-related materials onto one webpage, the college's [Ready](#) page. This is a marked improvement over the scattered information that previously appeared across the college's website, including the [Announcement's](#) section of the

college's webpage, amongst various office's webpages, such as the [Office of Finance and Administration](#), as well as the college's [Ready](#) webpage.

Room for improvement, however, remains in the college's Reopening Plan. The college has a dedicated page for its [Reopening Plan](#). And it also has a detailed [Phase In Plan](#) listing what each phase of reopening would look like. However, this document focuses on Phase I, is far less detailed on the subsequent phases leading to full reopening, and does not provide any guidance as to the dates when each phase may come into effect. More detail on these matters would greatly alleviate the concerns of the college community.

Most importantly, the college needs to have the opportunity to weigh in on any reopening plan that Hostos submits to CUNY before it becomes operationalized. This should be done via a series of Town Halls, and there should be a means for anonymously submitting comments on a public discussion board once the plan is posted online. There is currently a means for submitting a suggestion on the [Ready](#) page, but it should be more closely connected to the Reopening Plan, and encourage submissions on the plan.

Finally, there should be sustained meetings regarding the progress of reopening at Hostos, and other COVID-related matters, with the Senate Executive Committee, and the PSC CUNY Executive Committee.

Part 5: Remote Work and Online Training– Training and Support:

This section addresses training and support for staff and faculty at the height of the transition to remote work and teaching. The HEO organization and the Senate COVID Response Task Force undertook independent surveys to obtain information during this difficult time.

HEO Survey (See Appendix 1):

For staff, 79.1% of respondents experienced challenges with remote work. 60% of 110 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had to create their own infrastructure for remote work, which included deciphering the many institutional platforms to stay connected with staff. In addition, 51.9% had to build their own outreach systems to support students. The respondents were split with regards to the resources and guidance provided by the college for remote work,

indicating an ambivalence and confusion with what was communicated and provided by the college. Ultimately, 63.6% conveyed that they were working more than 7 hours a day.

Recommendations:

- Directly communicate with all HEOs regular updates from the President regarding the college's plans, policies, procedures, and direction
- Identify a dedicated technical liaison to provide optional technology workshops on Teams, Zoom, and Blackboard Collaborate, and to respond to questions
- Communicate workload rules to all staff and promote work/life balance
- Provide guidance on how to manage staff remotely
- Provide more support for those with IT needs (especially for Apple devices, VPN access, wireless hotspot, or low internet connectivity)
- Remunerate staff who have been required to purchase supplies, equipment, internet connection, personal Zoom accounts, and other materials for remote work
- Systematize communications to students about expectations for distance education, online curriculum, and technology workshops
- Identify and implement the best online resources to communicate with students and schedule appointments

Online Learning Initiative Survey of Faculty (See Appendix 2):

For faculty, the Online Learning Initiative [OLI] was rolled out in late April 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic without the appropriate consultation of Academic Department Chairs or much communication with faculty. This had a number of practical implications:

- Untenured faculty received direct requests from the Provost and felt pressured to take on extra responsibilities to be OLI mentors
- Chairs were impeded from planning, coordinating, and aligning their department's circumstances with the priorities of the college

- Curricular needs and departmental best practices were not adhered to by the Educational Technology Office [EdTech]
- Training did not reflect the gaps in knowledge faculty might have had due to disciplinary specificities
- Anxiety and confusion reigned about whether the training was voluntary or mandatory
- Profound dissatisfaction about academic freedom and pedagogical prerogatives

In response to widespread confusion and dissatisfaction, the Senate Executive Committee issued a statement affirming the faculty's prerogative over curriculum, that trainings could not be mandated, or course assignment contingent on said trainings, and informed the college that NYSED and CUNY had waived the requirement of online training for Summer and Fall of 2020 (See Appendix 3). Similarly, the Hostos Chapter of PSC CUNY issued a statement that catalogued a host of other concerns with the rollout of the OLI (See Appendix 4).

In August, the Senate COVID Response Task Force created the Online Learning Initiative Survey and made it available to faculty from August 10 to 31, 2020. The survey was anonymous.

Highlights from the Online Learning Initiative Survey of Faculty

The majority of faculty (60%) stated that they were prepared to teach online in Fall 2020. More than half (37/65) had moderate knowledge with online teaching before the training. 27 out of 65 respondents (41%) expended *more than* 30 hours on the training and completion of a Blackboard shell. For an overwhelming majority of respondents (53 out of 65, 81%), the time spent was above 20 hours, the number of hours for which the first cohort of faculty was remunerated. (Subsequent cohorts who took the training during the summer were only paid for 10 hours of their time.)

Only 15 out of 65 respondents (23%) had the impression that the training was voluntary. Trust in the college administration is eroded when consultation and communication are cast aside for expediency. More concerning, 48 respondents (74%) believed that approval from EdTech was required for faculty to teach an online course—which is not the case—and yet there were numerous complaints that queries during the training were not answered in a timely manner.

Many respondents were happy with their interactions with faculty mentors during the training. However, only 28 out of 65 (43%) were happy with the support for their chosen modality, asynchronous or synchronous.

Of the respondents who had created course shells for their departments' use, 11 out of 39 (28%) indicated that they were not comfortable with others using their shell. This is a serious matter of consent and academic freedom. It is unclear whether faculty were asked permission to have their shells cloned. The breakdown in communication between faculty, EdTech, and the Provost is evidenced in the comments left anonymously.

Extremely disconcerting is the comment left by a respondent who wrote: "My course contained a "bot" user with an EdTech email address. I am concerned EdTech staff had full access to my course while I was teaching it--in violation of Union rules. The bot has since been removed."

The surveilling of faculty countermands a culture of intellectual freedom and pedagogical diversity. Surveillance is not an acceptable or respectful training or educational ethos.²

Additionally, EdTech pre-loaded information about Campus Resources without consulting unit heads, resulting in, with the case of the Writing Center, incorrect information that took over 2 months to rectify, and only at the persistence of the Writing Center Director, who reached out to EdTech on three separate occasions.

Other comments included:

"I am probably the exception. I have working on this course for months, and I'm not finished yet, but I'm closer than ever. I haven't even had the time to apply for payment. But I must say that I opted into this. It was voluntary. I chose this path before the pandemic struck."

"The training had too many parts and it was hard to prioritize what was most important whether one was a novice at Blackboard or comfortable with the basics already; it was overwhelming and daunting. There was a lot of busywork (homework that was not curricular development) that did

² This principle was recently affirmed by the University Faculty Senate in its "Resolution Affirming the Privacy of Learning Data and Principles of Working with Third-Party Vendors," <http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/cunyufs/committees/senate/standing/libraries-it/meetings-2019-2020/> (accessed September 14, 2020).

not actually help me with the nuts and bolts of teaching online. My individual mentor was great but EdTech was not good at communicating in a timely or clear manner. They demanded much of faculty but were not able to support us in return. It took me many hours to complete my course development even though I skipped a lot of the homework from EdTech.”

“Carlos and Wilfredo are wonderful, but on-line teaching/learning is FAR below person-to-person!!!!”

“The OLI should become standard throughout the CUNY network for all faculty and staff members.”

“It was very unclear, I struggled through it but didn’t find it that helpful. Some of the journal articles were way too long.”

“Everything was excellent and presented in a professional fashion with clear expectations.”

“It was not specific to the needs of my situation. It was way too general and wasted a lot of time. The mentor was excellent, and that is where the time should be focused.”

“Personnel needs to learn to adequately respond to concern and approach faculty members in more respectful manner.”

“I was very unhappy with the evaluation processes, in which evaluators pushed their own ideas about course presentation onto the faculty. Also, when a course was not accepted, there were no clear procedures for communication or fixing the problem. Also, it felt mandatory.”

“The quizzes are a real waste of time. Many times, I felt that the training organizers were requesting this as an awful joke.”

“I learned a great deal from it. It was well organized and comprehensive. There may not have been time to go as deep into specific tools, but they will be available in the fall.”

“The biggest concern I have is faculty being able to support and communicate with students using Blackboard, so any tips that EdTech can offer would be appreciated. But honestly, what I really would like is more timely and responsive support when faculty and departments make requests.”

“Disorganized, poorly communicated, and (again) restrictive with information so as to prevent faculty success.”

“[I would like to] learn more in regards to Panopto and other applications used.”

“There was no clear timeline or structure of modules. It felt disorganized and resources were not properly explained or provided.”

“I don't feel like I ever saw an example of good on-line teaching. The course itself was uninspired. I couldn't post a syllabus because I didn't know how I wanted to structure my course, but the course wouldn't let me look at that until I'd posted a syllabus. I ended up just taking the quizzes and working on my own. But I hate on-line learning as a teacher and as a student and was hoping for something that felt a bit inspiring.”

“I really enjoyed learning from this course. I feel like this prepares everyone even those who have prior knowledge on this topic.”

“The feedback from the course evaluators of the courses developed should be given timelier to the course developers.”

“[What is needed are] Discipline-based workshops.”

“Our department had smart people who did resources that were far better than what was offered.”

“I felt that the training itself, the synchronous part, was a bit disorganized at first. I would say it was pandemonium, with professors flooding the chat with questions, connectivity issues, etc. The second and third sessions were better. Also, I couldn't understand why we couldn't be put in breakout groups via departments.”

“It was clearly originally targeted for asynchronous teaching.”

“Individuals involved [should] not assume that all participants are equally prepared and know about all the technology.”

“Please, make it more user friendly and write a quick protocol to follow the training.”

“EdTech should provide tech instructions--teach how to use BB, Turnitin, surveys, instead, they thought they knew about our content, our curriculum, and our students.”

“The materials were no help--Roadmap was a lot of stupid graphics, there was zero discussion of BB, the entire site is like ca. 1980. SPS, UCal, everywhere else is better. I learned most from Google. EdTech and CTL should be run by faculty, or have a committee that actually does work.”

“I and other people felt like we were secretly monitored. There is a way to see when everyone logs on so it would be nice to just be upfront and talk to people about this. This is about pedagogy and it is useful to talk about these issues up front.”

“Perhaps testing the classes as far as connectivity and features [should be considered]. I know flubs happen, but we are an academic institution, so we should excel when it comes to instruction.”

Analysis

The training, originally established in the pre-pandemic era as a semester long, voluntary course of study, neglected to consider the exhaustion and mental fatigue faculty experienced in the midst of a global pandemic—having to care for themselves and their families, as well as their 75-125 students.

John Jay, City College, BMCC and other institutions created flexible modules and provided faculty with the opportunity to opt-in to different development workshops that would answer their specific needs. While the School of Professional Studies, the gold standard in online training and education in CUNY, streamlined their online certification process and required only 10 hours, Hostos asked faculty at the end of an emotionally and cognitively taxing semester to steal time from their lives to complete a “20-hour training,” which did not include the “Roadmap to Teaching Innovation” pre-course, and the creation of a shell to teach in a summer course on June 4. After concerns were raised, the hours paid for training that took place during the summer were reduced to 10, but the process remained the same, and lengthy: The Roadmap to Teaching Innovation was still a recommended step, all units were seemingly mandatory, faculty were graded through unit quizzes, on which they had to score 100%, and the structure of the shells was pre-determined by weekly folders.

The data from the survey indicates that the training bluntly ignored the majority of faculty’s prior knowledge with online education. The majority of respondents felt that they had moderate or

extensive knowledge of online teaching prior to the training. Only 13 out of 65 respondents (20%) indicated that they had little knowledge of online training. It would be productive to give up this dogmatic approach to online training where faculty are evaluated and graded, rather than inspired and encouraged to embrace the rich possibilities of online teaching.

Recommendations

The difficult labor that faculty undertook for the OLI was simultaneous to the enormous work completed by the EdTech team, along with the faculty mentors and instructional design specialists. Much of this work could have been productively channeled had there been strong communication and consultation between EdTech and the Academic Departments. Chairs and faculty appreciate the Educational Technology Office as a support unit, but remain steadfast in their conviction, as supported by the Hostos Charter of Governance, and the CUNY Bylaws, that academic and pedagogical purview had been overstepped. As such:

- The Provost and EdTech must consult with Chairs and Coordinators about the needs of the Academic Departments when seeking to implement widespread transformations to teaching practices and modalities
- Training rationale and faculty enrollment in the OLI should come from the Chairs and Coordinators of Academic Departments, who are in the best position to assess the needs and online capabilities of their faculty
- EdTech must coordinate an effective assessment of the needs of faculty through pre-training and post-training surveys, so faculty with more experience can access an accelerated training and those with little familiarity with online teaching may opt in for more intensive training
- EdTech's Instructional Design Consultants must yield pedagogical expertise to faculty and act as technological support, providing prompt resolutions to questions and support for Blackboard glitches
- Faculty Mentors should provide on-going pedagogical workshops on specific topics that faculty choose to attend
- EdTech must respect academic and disciplinary freedom

* After this report was published in September 2020, representatives from EdTech (the Office of Educational Technology) and ETLC (the Educational Technology Leadership Council) requested the opportunity to add a response to the Task Force’s report concerning the Online Learning Initiative. Their response, the Task Force’s preamble to their response, and further supporting documentation from EdTech and ETLC are available in **Appendix 5** of this document. We invite readers to review that section.

Recommendations for Advisement & Registration

The Senate COVID Response Task Force identified advisement and registration as areas for examination because of the critical role they play in supporting entering and continuing students at Hostos as part of the overall enrollment process (admissions, advisement, registration, Bursar). While advisors are deeply invested in student outreach and support, organizational confusion results in delays and frustrations for students. The college does not have a clearly articulated vision for providing advisement services to students or identifying which advisement programs will most effectively meet the individual needs of our students. We conducted interviews with key stakeholders from the college's advisement units, Registrar's Office, Admissions Office, and others with deep experience with the enrollment process, and reviewed relevant supporting documents.

We learned that our advisement units³ face the following key challenges:

- The college does not have a comprehensive intake process that would help students identify which advisement unit would best suit their personal circumstances and academic goals.
- Advisement units are spread across various divisions. As a result, onboarding and professional development is the responsibility of each individual unit and communications and best practices are inconsistently disseminated.
- There is no clear person responsible for closing the loop from admissions, through advisement, to registration, to the Bursar. As such, this overall enrollment process lacks a comprehensive plan to ensure student success. The absence of a dedicated Dean creates difficulty in implementing systematic changes.
- Communication needs to be strengthened between the faculty advising students on their academic programs and the established advisement units noted above.

³ Hostos Community College's Advisement Units: ASAP, College Discovery, CUNY Start, CLIP, Student Success Coaching Unit. Website: <http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/Academics/Advisement>

- The Student Success Coaching Unit (SSCU) shoulders much of the responsibility for registration, and, as a result, cannot provide advisement services at the same capacity as other advisement units on the campus.
- There is no alignment or coordination between faculty, curricular developments, and the college's advisement units.
- Evaluation metrics between advisement units are opaque, resulting in difficulties for measuring student success, or their own performance across the college, so they cannot identify and share which strategies are most effective for supporting students at Hostos.
- Orientation for new students, especially “direct admits”, do not provide a comprehensive overview of degree and certificate programs, college policies and resources, nor adequately introduce students to the functions of various college resources. What we call orientation sessions focus on registering students in classes.

As a result of the challenges described above, the Senate COVID Response Task Force proposes the following recommendations:

- **Consolidate all advisement units under one division and have them report to a Dean of Advisement & Enrollment Management.** In order to encourage advisement units to collaborate and strengthen transparency, these units should report to one division and a designated chief. The Cross Divisional Advisement Committee (CDAC) previously recommended that the college consolidate advisement units under one division. This would allow all the appropriate stakeholders to work together to develop a clear vision for providing comprehensive advisement services that focus on barrier reduction so students can successfully graduate. This would also prevent advisement policies and processes from being implemented without input from the advisement units, and make advisement part of the holistic process of admitting, advising, and then registering students. Designating a Dean of Advisement & Enrollment Management would highlight the critical role advising plays in the broad enrollment process from recruitment, application, admissions, advising, registration, and Bursar.
- **A point person in OAA should be designated to oversee all advisement tasks conducted by the faculty.** This key person (Dean level/Director) should work closely

with the Dean of Advisement and Enrollment Management and ensure that the efforts of the faculty advisors to promote their academic programs are effectively communicated to the advising units, and thus students receive a consistent message as they make their way through an academic program.

- **The Dean of Advisement & Enrollment Management should establish a clear passage for students, advisors, and all stakeholders to enroll, retain, and support students throughout their time at Hostos.** This Dean would set goals for admissions, advisement, registration, and the Bursar's Office, working with each group to achieve these goals and comprehensively respond to the college's changing needs. They would also establish common benchmarks across advisement in order to determine which advisement strategies are effectively supporting Hostos students; conduct research into best practices for advisement; disseminate this information to CDAC members; be responsible for providing/creating/offering a professional development series for all advisors; work with Chairs, Coordinators, and Directors to inform and to solicit feedback about recruitment, orientation, curricular and college-readiness advisement; develop pathways between advisement units and faculty to sync up curricular knowledge; manage and modulate the use of personnel energies at different stages of the academic year; assess the effectiveness of CDAC's enrollment, recruitment, and retention practices; and provide a clarity of vision for the college's advisement and general enrollment path for students.
- **Institute a comprehensive intake process to help students identify the appropriate advisement unit and degree of study.** One of the major challenges we face is helping students identify the advisement unit and degree program that best suits their needs. Students should make informed decisions about what will work for them based on reviewing their personal circumstances and their academic and career goals with an advisor. Our current system encourages advisement units to compete for students to meet their enrollment targets. As a college, we need to shift to a student-first approach in order to help our students graduate and meet their future academic and career goals. Students should not be seen, first and foremost, as FTE (full time enrollment) numbers.

- **Advisement and registration functions must be part of a holistic process.** All advisors, faculty representatives, Admissions, and the Registrar's Office should be part of the registration conversation with the Dean of Advisement and Enrollment Management to help identify best practices for converting admitted students to enrolled ones, and with registering returning students.
- **Create structured orientation sessions to help students explore the college's degree and certificate programs.** The college should develop an orientation fair that affords students the opportunity to explore the various degree or certificate options available at Hostos as well as the career options upon graduating. All advisors should be part of this event, along with Financial Aid experts, First-Year Seminar (FYS) representatives and other faculty. An Orientation Fair would create a unified sense of the college for incoming students. Additionally, at this fair, the students should be given an effective introduction on how to register themselves on CUNY First, thus reducing the burden on the advisors who would have to walk new students through such a process. A comprehensive Orientation Program Office should be developed at Hostos to coordinate such an event. Orientation programming would serve as an excellent tool for conversion (from admitted to committed students) and can work to reduce summer melt. Orientation promotes student persistence by providing incoming students with access to various campus support areas. An Orientation Program Office would collaborate with the entire Hostos community to create a culture that places value on each student and on their academic success. The return on this investment for prioritizing student onboarding would be recognized in higher conversion and retention rates, as well as increased student satisfaction.
- **CDAC's membership should be expanded.** CDAC should be directed by a Dean of Advisement & Enrollment Management; its membership should comprise established members as well as the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment, representatives from the Bursar's Office, Registrar's Office, Transfer Office, and faculty representatives (preferably Chair-status). The group could comprise an executive committee empowered with making decisions, with the rest of the members providing advisory functions. In this manner, a balance would be found

between a breadth of knowledge as part of the discussion, and an efficient means to turn the discussion into action. The selection process for the committee should be transparent for the whole college.

- **CDAC should formalize its relationship with faculty.** CDAC should record meeting minutes and make them available and accessible to Chairs, Coordinators, and Directors. CDAC should also develop a plan for the effective use of Succeed/Starfish as a professional development tool and educate faculty on its strengths. It should also encourage all advisors to work with faculty, especially those who teach the First-Year Seminar, to create a sustained web of contact with continuing students. Any discussion on Succeed/Starfish should include faculty representatives, and there should be outreach at departmental meetings to educate faculty about the uses and goals of the system.
- **Develop a Summer Institute to help students prepare for their college experience.** A Summer Institute would introduce students to the college, help the college begin to address any barriers that would prevent students from being successful in college, and help them develop a sense of community. This could be modeled after College Discovery's four-week summer program, which creates a community, provides academic tutors, connects students that need it to college workshops for their remedial needs, and addresses any barriers ranging from personal ones to registration requirements. For our late registrants, we recommend a 2-3 day orientation session that may run concurrently with students' classes at the beginning of their first semester at Hostos.

Final Thoughts: Building a (Remote) Community for our College

Hostos has very active student groups, faculty-led initiatives, and committees, and this does not even include the projects emanating from the Cabinet and the various Divisions. Now is the time to bring together the workings of these various groups into a community in the virtual realm to discuss common goals and to strategize initiatives. We recommend a team be formed of representatives from OAA (faculty and administrators), SDEM, CEWD, the Student Government Association, and the Office of the President to discuss programming plans/calendars for the semester. These plans/calendars should be aligned whenever possible and highlight programming that aligns with institutional priorities (for example: Strategic Plan/Operational Plan goals, Service Learning/Civic Engagement tied to faculty and student led initiatives, and to time-sensitive opportunities, such as the upcoming elections). While challenging because many events are planned during the semester, not before it commences, we believe coordinated, intentional communication could contribute to developing a sense of belonging and would sustain our Hostos identity even as we continue operating in a primarily remote mode. Additionally, all public events should appear together on a combined Hostos calendar, which is easily accessible from the Hostos webpage. In this fashion, the workings of the many parts of Hostos appear as they should be: as part of the whole.

Additionally, we need to bring together the lessons learned as we transitioned to the remote realm, in our classes and in our administrative work. Having successfully moved much teaching and administrative work online, what have we learned? What are the pedagogical best practices for remote learning? What are best practices to training novice remote teachers, and advancing more experienced ones? What are best practices for remote departmental meetings, committee meetings, Cabinet, Senate, Admissions, advising, registration, the Bursar, Human Resources, the College-Wide Personnel & Budget Committee, mental health, the Writing Center, the Hostos Academic Learning Center, etc.? We recommend that a college-wide team be formed by the Office of the President that systematically collects these best practices and adapts them to the post-COVID world. We cannot assume we will go back to the same ways as before, as we have, perforce, discovered more efficient ways of doing things during the pandemic.

Appendix 1: HEO Remote Work Survey

Hostos PSC CUNY HEO Meeting

Thursday, July 23, 2020

Daliz Pérez-Cabezas,
Hostos PSC CUNY Delegate



Agenda

- Welcome
- Hostos HEO Remote Work Survey
- Discussion



Hostos HEO Remote Work Survey



- Administered: May 11, 2020 - June 2, 2020
- 110 Responses
 - 32.7% HEO
 - 26.4% HEA
 - 26.4% HEa
 - 14.5% aHEO
- 13.3b Status
 - 67.3% No
 - 32.7% Yes

Hostos HEO Remote Work Survey



- 78.2% or 86 HEOs strongly agree that they feel safer working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic



Hostos HEO Remote Work Survey



- 60% of HEOs agree or strongly agree that members of their team had to build their own infrastructure to work remotely
 - 31.8% Agree
 - 28.2% Strongly Agree
- Examples
 - Established communications tools
 - MS Teams, Webex, Zoom, Phone, Blackboard Collaborate
 - Setting up VPN access

Hostos HEO Remote Work Survey



Challenges

- No guidance on what platforms to use
- Not having access to phones on campus
- Not being able to get IT help with Apple devices
- Having to borrow or buy a laptop
- Limited or no technology training provided to staff
- Purchasing equipment or technology (e.g. Zoom) to work from home
- Poor Wifi connection at home

Hostos HEO Remote Work Survey



- 51.9% agree or strongly agree that members of their team had to build their own online/remote infrastructure to support their students
 - 26.4% Agree
 - 25.5% Strongly Agree

Hostos HEO Remote Work Survey



Examples

- Developed surveys to assess student's technology needs
- Created scheduling platforms for meetings
- Identified tools to communicate with students
 - Zoom, Google Voice, MS Teams, Webex, Blackboard Collaborate
- Developed expectations for online learning
- Created online curriculum and/or workshops

Hostos HEO Remote Work Survey



- Frequency of submitting work plans
 - 46.4% Weekly
 - 25.5% Not Applicable
 - 18.2% Daily
- 56.3% of HEOs agree or strongly agree that they have taken on new responsibilities
 - 34.5% Agree
 - 21.8% Strongly Agree

Hostos HEO Remote Work Survey

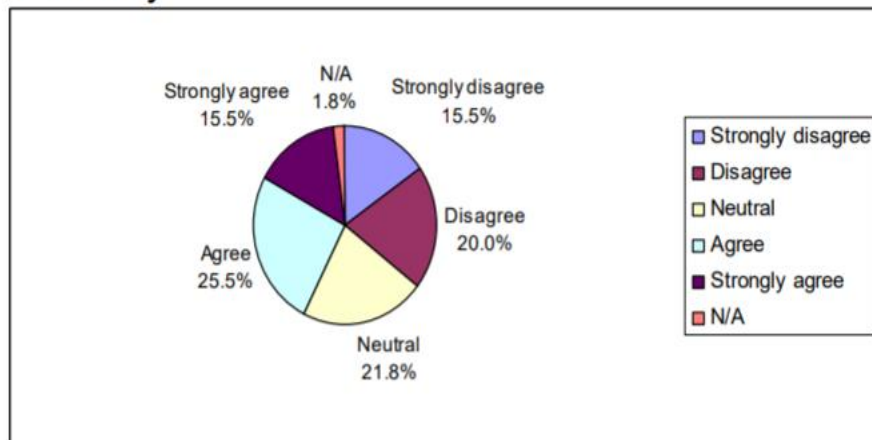


- The majority of HEOs find working remotely to be moderately or slightly challenging
 - 29.1% Moderately Challenging
 - 23.6% Slightly Challenging
 - 20% Not Challenging at All
 - 17.3% Very Challenging
 - 9.1% Extremely Challenging
 - 0.9% N/A

Hostos HEO Remote Work Survey



- HEOs were split on whether the college provided them with the resources, technological guidance, training, and the platforms needed to work remotely.



Hostos HEO Remote Work Survey



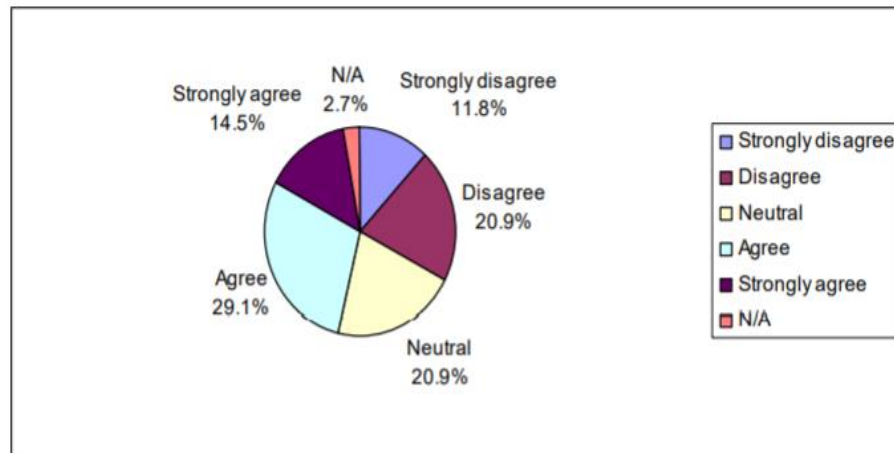
- 57.2% of HEOs agree or strongly agree that their remote work day is more challenging than working on campus.
 - 32.7% Agree
 - 24.5% Strongly Agree
- 63.6% of HEOs strongly agree or agree that their remote work day averages more than 7 hours.
 - 33.6% Strongly Agree
 - 30% Agree

Hostos

HEO Remote Work Survey



- HEOs were split on whether they can more effectively carry out their duties on campus vs working remotely

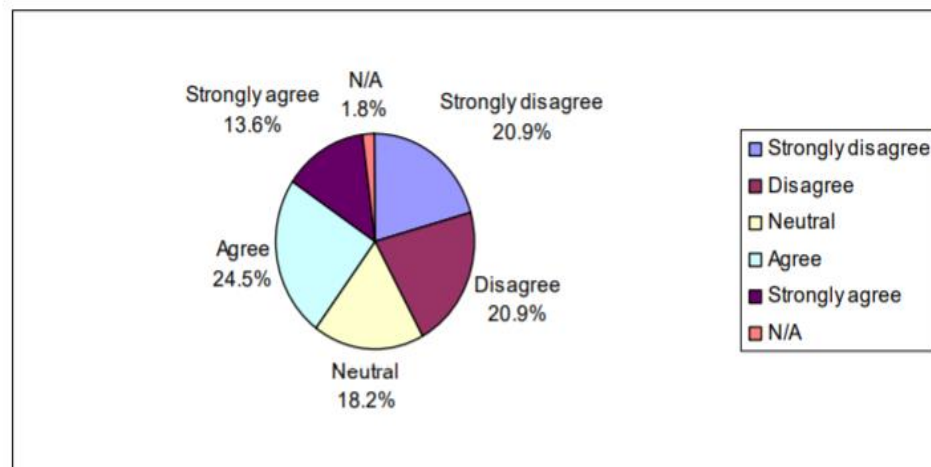


Hostos

HEO Remote Work Survey



- HEOs are split on whether working remotely is more stressful than working from campus



Hostos HEO Remote Work Survey



- 71% of HEOs strongly agree or agree they would like the option to work remotely once the COVID-19 pandemic is over
 - 54.1% Strongly Agree
 - 22.9% Agree
- 40.4% of HEOs report they will **not** be able to return to campus if they cannot make arrangements to care for their dependents

Recommendations on the resources and support HEOs need



Communications

- Regular communications from the President and Cabinet
 - What the college is doing
 - Changes to policies and procedures
- Improve communications to Hostos students
- Provide guidance on how to manage staff remotely
- Communicate workload rules so staff are not being required to work hours beyond their regular schedule

Recommendations on the resources and support HEOs need



Returning to Work

- Create a detailed health and safety plan
 - Building cleaning schedule
 - PPE for employees
- All staff with underlying health conditions should continue to work remotely

Recommendations on the resources and support HEOs need



Work-related Expenses

- Staff should be reimbursed for work-related expenses
 - Upgrading internet connections
 - Increased electricity charges
 - Personal cell phones bills
 - Purchasing equipment or new technology
 - Office supplies such as paper, ink, etc.
- Hostos should provide office supplies to staff while they are working remotely

Recommendations on the resources and support HEOs need



Technology and Technical Support

- Provide staff and faculty with Zoom accounts
- Identify and implement the best online resources to communicate with students
 - Navigate for mass texting/appointment scheduling
- Provide IT support to staff with Apple devices
 - Applications such as virtual phone should be compatible with Apple devices

Recommendations on the resources and support HEOs need



Technology and Technical Support

- Provide staff with guidance on selecting the technology needed for remote work
- Hostos should provide support and training to staff on CUNY Central supported platforms
 - MS Teams, Webex, etc.
- Help staff obtain better devices so they can work from home effectively
 - Laptops or computers

Recommendations on the resources and support HEOs need



Supporting Students

- Students need additional training to use technology effectively
 - Computer literacy
 - How to use the various learning management systems
- Help support students that cannot afford to purchase internet services and/or do not have Wi-Fi access
- Provide emergency funds for pre-matriculation students in CUNY Start, Math Start, and CLIP

Recommendations on the resources and support HEOs need



Professional Development and Training

- Provide trainings on the various online platforms
 - MS Teams, Webex, Blackboard Collaborate, etc.
- Provide training on how to engage students online
- Identify a dedicated technical liaison to provide trainings and to respond to questions
- Develop technology trainings with a schedule similar to what has been offered to faculty

Recommendations on the resources and support HEOs need



Supporting Staff with Dependents

- Encourage managers to be flexible with staff who have dependents at home
- Develop a plan for staff with dependents who cannot return to work if they cannot find reliable care and/or schools do not open

Appendix 2: Faculty Survey of the Online Learning Initiative



Forms

Online Learning Initiative Survey - Saved



Tram Nguyen TN

Online Learning Initiative Survey

65

Responses

11:45

Average time to complete

Active

Status



Ideas

1. In total, including any pre-training steps and the creation of your course shell, approximately how many hours did the online certification take?

| | |
|-------------|----|
| 10-20 hours | 11 |
| 20-25 hours | 14 |
| 25-30 hours | 12 |
| 30+ hours | 27 |



2. Was it your impression that the training was:

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Voluntary | 15 |
| Mandatory | 29 |
| Unclear | 20 |



3. What was your knowledge or experience with online teaching before this training?

| | |
|---------------------|----|
| Extensive knowledge | 15 |
| Moderate knowledge | 37 |
| Little knowledge | 13 |



4. How satisfied were you with the communication between you and your mentor?

| | |
|--------------|----|
| Satisfied | 33 |
| Neutral | 24 |
| Dissatisfied | 7 |



5. Were the differences between asynchronous and synchronous explained in a meaningful way?

| | |
|---------|----|
| Yes | 47 |
| No | 8 |
| Unclear | 10 |



6. Were you provided with flexibility with regards to a choice of asynchronous or synchronous modalities?

| | |
|---------|----|
| Yes | 37 |
| No | 7 |
| Unclear | 21 |



7. How satisfied were you with the support provided for your chosen modality?

| | |
|----------------|----|
| ● Satisfied | 28 |
| ● Neutral | 28 |
| ● Dissatisfied | 8 |



8. Did you have the impression that your course must be approved/certified in order to teach an online class during COVID-19?

| | |
|-----------|----|
| ● Yes | 48 |
| ● No | 7 |
| ● Unclear | 9 |



9. Did you create a course shell, along with the certification process?

| | |
|-------|----|
| ● Yes | 40 |
| ● No | 24 |



10. If yes: Do you feel comfortable allowing the shell to be used by faculty taking the training in July and August?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | 28 |
| No | 11 |



11. Did you use a course shell previously created by another instructor?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | 19 |
| No | 45 |



12. If yes: Did you have enough freedom to modify the previously created shell?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | 19 |
| No | 0 |



13. How prepared do you feel to teach online effectively after completing the Online Learning Initiative?

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Prepared | 39 |
| Neither prepared nor unprepa... | 19 |
| Unprepared | 6 |



14. Did you feel that the content and structure of the training fit with your department's curricular plans/needs? Please comment:

53

Responses

Latest Responses

"I felt that the training itself, the synchronous part was a bit disorganize...

"Our department had smart people who did resources that were far bett...

15. What support would you recommend Ed Tech provide in the Fall as we continue with online teaching? Please comment:

47

Responses

Latest Responses

"Discipline-based workshops."

"Edtech should provide tech instructions--teach how to use BB, Turnitin,...

16. Is there anything else you would like to share about the OLI? Please comment:

38

Responses

Latest Responses

"Perhaps testing the classes as far as connectivity and features. I know fl...

"My course contained a "bot" user with an EdTech email address. I am co...

"The materials were not help--Roadmap was a lot of stupid graphics, the...

**Appendix 3: Senate Executive Committee's Response
to the Online Training Initiative (Emailed June 11, 2020)**

Senate Executive Committee's Response to Online Training Initiative for Faculty

IALONGO, ERNEST

Thu 6/11/2020 10:04 AM

To: IALONGO, ERNEST;

Cc:

Bcc:

Dear Senators and the Hostos Faculty,

Since the lockdown of our college began in March because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Senate and its standing committees have made significant efforts to maintain the continuity of college business online. The committees continued to meet, and the Senate met at its mandated meeting times in April and May and approved all items on its agendas, including over 100 curricular items, various Charter amendments, and a resolution creating an Academic Integrity Committee.

We persevered in our duties to make clear that, regardless of the emergency facing the college, shared governance remained an integral and active part of the college, and that the Senate expected that all standard policies and procedures required to conduct college business would continue during the campus closure. This latter point was in fact explicitly made in various communications to the college regarding the work of the Senate and its committees.

As such, the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) has looked on with growing concern at the Online Training Initiative that was launched in late spring, and has now been significantly expanded in the summer.

The SEC feels this program, as it is widely understood, is a violation of shared governance and faculty prerogative over curriculum.

Communication on this initiative has been poor, leading to widespread confusion, anxiety, and frustration over its purported scope and its implementation. Chairs and Coordinators were insufficiently consulted, and requests or suggestions made by them on behalf of their departments or units were brushed aside or ignored.

In our discussions with mentors, design consultants, participants, Chairs of Academic Departments, and Unit Coordinators, the overwhelming message we have received from them is that the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) is requiring all faculty, full and part-time, to complete online certification training, as administered by the Office of Educational Technology (EdTech). In addition, all faculty are required to create online courses which must be certified by EdTech before the faculty are permitted to teach online in the summer and in the fall.

Furthermore, Blackboard “course shells” for each of the courses taught in the fall are to be developed, and each faculty teaching the different sections of a course must use this course shell. The completed online section must be approved by EdTech. And, if a faculty member should insist on developing their own online section for the fall, it would still need to be submitted to EdTech for approval before it could be taught.

The CUNY Bylaws (<https://policy.cuny.edu/bylaws/>) and the Hostos Charter of Governance (<https://bit.ly/2XS8lev>) clearly stipulate that curriculum falls within the purview of the faculty and their elected bodies, and the assignment of courses to faculty are the prerogative of Department Chairs.

Neither OAA nor EdTech have the authority to mandate training, nor to act as final, unilateral arbiters on the content or delivery mode of curriculum, nor to withhold a course from a faculty member because of said training. This authority did not exist in the pre-COVID era, and the faculty did not surrender their rights during this emergency when all faculty must, perforce, teach online. Every relevant governance document in the university and our college are clear on faculty rights.

Section 8.5 of the CUNY Bylaws notes that one of the central duties of the faculty is the “formulation of policy relating to...curriculum”. Furthermore, Section 8.6 establishes that “Each college shall have a faculty or academic council [in our case the College-Wide Senate], which shall be the primary body responsible for formulating policy on academic matters. The composition of a college’s faculty or academic council shall be set forth in its governance plan approved by the board of trustees.”

The Hostos Charter of Governance follows the logic of the CUNY Bylaws. Article I, Section 1, C of the Charter stipulates that “The College Senate shall...Have the power to formulate new policy recommendations and to review already existing ones in areas including but not limited to the following:...Development of curricula”.

To achieve this end, the Senate relies on its College-Wide Curriculum Committee to, amidst other duties “evaluate and recommend new courses”, to “evaluate and recommend any modifications of current courses”, to “establish and maintain the standards and integrity of College curricula”, to “review existing curricula periodically and recommend changes where appropriate”, and to “present to the College Senate, for its approval, any items voted upon and recommended by the committee” (Article VII, Section 10).

Additionally, both the CUNY Bylaws and the Hostos Charter of Governance stipulate that it is the Chair of a Department, as the duly elected representative of that department’s faculty, that has the authority to assign courses. Section 9.3 of the CUNY Bylaws notes that it is the duty of the Department Chairperson to “Assign courses to and arrange programs of instructional staff members of the department”. The Hostos Charter of Governance similarly notes that the Department Chairperson shall “Assign courses to and arrange programs of instructional staff members of the department. (The execution of this duty may be delegated to the Unit Coordinators)” (Article VI, Section 2, G).

Moreover, neither the New York State Education Department (NYSED) nor CUNY have mandated any training or certification for online teaching during this time of crisis, nor would they in contravention of university and college governance documents. The CUNY website dedicated to [“Guidance on Academic Continuity”](#) explicitly states that “As of May 15, 2020, NYSED has... extended its flexibility on distance education through December 31, 2020”, and, as such, CUNY stipulates that “colleges do not need to take any extra steps with regard to NYSED in order to offer programs or certificates online in Fall 2020.”

In the normal course of events, faculty who choose to develop an online section of a course (or any other modality--hybrid, writing intensive, Honors) would voluntarily go through the requisite training, would voluntarily submit their course to the requisite body for approval, and then teach their course in said modality.

As such, the faculty should avail themselves of every possible resource made available to them for online instruction, but on the understanding that such usage is voluntary, and that there should be no expectation or concern of punitive measures being meted out to them in the form of denial to teach their courses as they develop them—whether they partake in the Online Training Initiative or not, choose to use a “course shell” or not, choose to develop a fully asynchronous online course, or choose to develop an online course with a synchronous component. The choice remains with the faculty.

Finally, the SEC has purposefully limited itself to issues of governance and faculty prerogative over curriculum in this statement, as that is the essential purview of the Senate with regards to the Online Training Initiative.

However, the SEC has read and fully endorses the statement of the Hostos Chapter of the PSC released to the college on June 8, 2020, which challenges the notion that faculty could be “expected” to engage in the initiative during annual leave, argued that notification of said initiative was unreasonable and insufficient, that an undue burden was being placed on junior faculty to participate in this initiative, that Department Chairs [and Unit Coordinators] were not sufficiently apprised of the scope and roll out of an initiative that directly impacted their faculty, that the work and compensation for the initiative are far in excess of the 10 hours that have been advertised, and that there is an overall lack of clarity in communications to the faculty regarding the goals and outcomes of the initiative.

Sincerely,

The Executive Committee of the Hostos College-Wide Senate:

Professor Ernest Ialongo, Chair
Professor Tram Nguyen, Vice-Chair
Professor Catherine Lewis
Professor Diana Macri
Ms. Dalíz Pérez-Cabezas
Professor Natasha Yannacañedo

**Appendix 4: Hostos Chapter of PSC CUNY's Response
to Online Training Initiative (Emailed June 8, 2020)**

PSC response to on-line training initiative

BERNARDINI, CRAIG

Mon 6/8/2020 8:56 AM

To: MANGINO, CHRISTINE;

Cc: PSC BARGAINING UNIT; PSCgroup;

Dear Provost Mangino:

I write to express grave concerns about the on-line training which is scheduled to begin today, Monday, June 8. No matter how well intentioned, as it is currently constituted the on-line training ignores the contract and infringes on faculty purview over curriculum. Best practices with regard to timely communication, transparency, and proper consultation, particularly with department chairs and coordinators, have also been ignored.

- **Annual leave.** According to Article 14 Section 1 of the collective bargaining agreement, annual leave for faculty begins after commencement and ends three days (excluding weekends) before August 30. While the email sent by the Office of Educational Technology does not mandate faculty to take the training, it does state that faculty “identified” by their department chairs are “expected” to participate. Clearer wording, demonstrating that participation is voluntary, is necessary. Without a change of wording, the union will consider filing a grievance.
- **Notification.** Notification of the training starting date for both mentors and participants was unreasonably short. The email soliciting faculty to serve as mentors went out on Wednesday, June 3, five days before the training was scheduled to begin. The email to faculty identified to participate went out last Friday night. It is unrealistic to expect that full-time faculty on annual leave will be checking their email frequently enough to even see this announcement, let alone that they will be able to complete the work they are recommended to do *before* the training begins. Were this April, as the university was struggling to come to terms with the new on-line reality, a short turnaround time might be understandable. Coming in June, during annual leave and almost a full three months after the first recess, it is unjustifiable.
- **Junior faculty.** Several of the faculty who were invited to become on-line mentors are untenured. While this makes some sense—newer faculty are more likely to have a background in on-line learning—it unjustly takes advantage of these faculty members’ untenured status. Junior faculty need summers to produce the scholarship necessary for reappointment and tenure. Contractual reassigned time for research enables junior faculty to carry out some research during the school year; however, the heavy teaching load—which actually increased due to the move to on-line this spring—means that junior faculty depend heavily on summers to engage in scholarship. I would add that, even though the email soliciting faculty participation

was phrased as a choice, both the extremely short turnaround time and the direct appeal from OAA make it a proverbial “offer they can’t refuse.” Coming five days before the scheduled training—and this assuming faculty thought to check their HCC email last Wednesday—many may not even think to reach out to their chairs and coordinators, on whom they depend for guidance to navigate their commitments to teaching, scholarship, and service during their untenured years.

- **Communication.** Both the notification time and the direct appeal to faculty to become mentors speak to a breakdown in communication between EdTech, OAA, and faculty, particularly department chairs. Chairs were not informed of the mentoring program, and thus did not know their faculty were being solicited for this initiative. Nor were they consulted about the final shape which the online initiative would take. This is a particular concern for the PSC, coming as it does on the heels of the reduction of reassigned time for administrative work, centralized decision to keep certain fall semester sections on hold, and the restrictions on the use of junior faculty research time—all unilaterally imposed by the Office of Academic Affairs.
- **Governance and curriculum development.** The PSC is deeply concerned about what appears to be a migration of the preparation of curricula from faculty to the Office of Educational Technology. While the Office of Educational Technology has a crucial role to play in helping faculty prepare for on-line teaching, curriculum development is—and must remain—the prerogative of the faculty.
- **Work expectations.** Faculty who participated and mentored in May’s on-line training have expressed that the time commitment was in excess of what they were remunerated for. Indeed, some mentors are still being contacted to address questions from their assigned faculty, so they are working beyond their allocated compensation. The 10-hour commitment suggested in the Friday email sent by Educational Technology also appears insufficient to complete the work as outlined. To this I would add the recommendation that the Roadmap to Teaching Innovation be completed prior to the training—this in a single weekend, assuming faculty checked their email Friday night, what is, according to the spring OLI, a minimum 6-hour commitment.
- **Clarity.** Faculty have expressed concerns about the clarity of expectations and benchmarks. Some faculty began to teach the summer session without knowing whether they had passed the training, or if their prepared on-line course had been approved. Some faculty are teaching even though they have not passed the training. Overall, greater clarity is needed regarding fall on-line instruction for faculty who either do not complete or do not pass the training. It bears mentioning here that the DOE has extended the temporary waiver for the use of distance education as an alternative delivery method through December 31, 2020.

In his recent address to the Reimagine Education Advisory Council, Chancellor Matos Rodriguez spoke of the important role on-line education will play in CUNY’s immediate future. We cannot honor this commitment to on-line education for Hostos’s unique student population until our Office of Academic Affairs (1) demonstrates a clear commitment to timely planning and

notification, (2) implements reasonable and more flexible time frames for training options, and (3) involves faculty and the elected faculty leadership in a dialogue about what the most effective vision for on-line education will look like, in a way that respects our time, our expertise, and our varied commitments to teaching, scholarship, and service to the institution.

Sincerely,

Craig Bernardini, Chair, PSC-Hostos (on behalf of the Executive Committee, PSC-Hostos Chapter)

Appendix 5: EdTech and ETLC Response to Task Force's Report

Task Force's Preamble to EdTech and ETLC Response

After this report was published and distributed to the college community in early September 2020, the Chair of this Task Force was asked to attend a meeting with the President, Provost, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, the Director of the Office of Educational Technology, and the Co-Chair of the Educational Technology Leadership Council in mid-October. The topic of the meeting was the representation of the Online Learning Initiative in the Task Force's report. Specifically, the leaders of EdTech and ETLC argued they were not properly consulted, and that the report's claims regarding the initiative were inaccurate. After a lengthy meeting, it was agreed that the leaders of EdTech and ETLC should bring their concerns to the full Task Force for further discussion. That meeting took place in mid-November. The result of that meeting was the following: 1) The Task Force reiterated that they recognized the tremendous amount of work done on behalf of the faculty by EdTech and ETLC; 2) EdTech and ETLC were invited to draft a response to the report, which would be included in an expanded version of the report; 3) The Task Force determined that its findings regarding the unsatisfactory communication of the goals, scope, and mandate of the initiative to the faculty—apart from the intentions of EdTech and ETLC—would stand. The Task Force stands by its conclusion that improved communication would have greatly reduced confusion and anxiety amongst the faculty through late Spring and Summer 2020.

Below, you will find the response of EdTech and the ETLC to the Task Force's report, as well as a copy of EdTech's presentation to a Chairs, Coordinators, & Directors meeting in the Fall 2020 semester, which laid out the scope of their efforts dealing with the college's transition to fully online teaching.

The Task Force, having read the response below, reiterates the following points:

1) The Task Force's report regarding the Online Learning Initiative dealt with the communication and execution of the initiative. The very fact that the Task Force was made up of two Chairs of academic departments and two Unit Coordinators of two other academic departments, all of whom expressed profound dissatisfaction regarding the level of consultation that took place with departmental leaders on the initiative, and that the Senate Executive Committee and the Executive Committee of PSC-CUNY at Hostos both felt the need to publish public statements of concern regarding the initiative, clearly show that communication regarding the Online Learning Initiative was unsatisfactory and produced significant confusion and anxiety amongst the faculty.

2) Academic Freedom is two-fold. Firstly, faculty elect their departmental Chairs, who are responsible for the assignment of the classes for their department, including the modality of how such courses are taught. Confusion over whether the Online Learning Initiative was mandatory for the faculty, and whether faculty could teach their online classes if they had not been certified by EdTech, seemed to challenge both Chairs' prerogatives and faculty rights. Secondly, academic freedom does not cover just the content of a course, but how it is delivered. Our research found that, despite EdTech's best intentions to develop and share best practices, faculty

did not always feel that their freedom regarding the choice of modality and course content for their sections was always respected. Again, better communication regarding the Online Learning Initiative's scope would have alleviated such confusion.

[See the following pages for the EdTech/ETLC response to the Task Force's report and an EdTech PowerPoint presentation delivered to Chairs, Coordinators and Directors]

Response from Office of Educational Technology (EdTech) and EdTech Leadership Council (ETLC)

prepared by:

Carlos Guevara
Director, Educational Technology
co-Director, CTL; co-Chair, ETLC

&

Jacqueline M. DiSanto
Professor; Chair, Education Department
co-Chair, ETLC

We appreciate the opportunity to present our statement to the Senate Covid-19 Response Committee. In our roles of Director of EdTech and Co-Chair of ETLC, we want to share our response to statements included in the task force's report regarding the online initiatives and the work of EdTech. Also included is the scope of the campus-wide Online Learning Initiatives (OLIs) carried out during this unprecedented period to support the transition to distance learning and to highlight the successes accomplished.

The original research conducted by the task force did not include the voices of the office and faculty in charge of offering the online learning initiatives. No one from EdTech nor members of ETLC were consulted or were given an opportunity to provide information about what was done during the emergency, contrary to the recommendations made in the communication and consultation section in this report. The greatest impact that COVID-19 had on Hostos--on any educational institution--was the movement of all teaching and learning to online. Those stakeholders who have historically served as the key support for online instruction should have been included in the work done by the committee.

It is important to mention that academic department chairs were informed and consulted by the Office of Academic Affairs about the creation of emergency online-learning initiatives to support the impending transition to distance learning, as opposed to what is stated in this report. Trainings structures were created to offer foundational frameworks for effective online instruction and did not focus on modifying curriculum nor violating academic freedom.

Recommendations made regarding EdTech overstepping academic and pedagogical purviews are inaccurate, since the focus of the OLIs was on design and delivery of online learning and not on imposing or dictating curricular matters. Additionally, department chairs were asked for names of the individuals that needed training, there was an open line of communication between the EdTech Director and chairs about this, and EdTech had no control over whether this was or was not communicated to the faculty.

OLIs were developed with continuous improvement and assessment in mind and evolved through the subsequent initiatives based on the feedback from participants and mentors. One

example of this was removing the Roadmap as an initiative requirement. Faculty with more experience had the opportunity to advance through the initiative quickly and be in constant communication with their mentors. The level of flexibility offered to participants was created to work within their availability and to address their wide-ranging levels of preparation for online teaching. Each OLI lasted three weeks with mentorship continuing as needed through academic year 2020-2021. The goal was for each participant to build the required online components into their BlackBoard course and to develop at least one complete learning module; however, some faculty used the opportunity to develop their complete 15-week course, which took more time than the initiative offered. EdTech has always respected academic freedom, and the implementation of these initiatives was no exception. The creation of general accounts for development and evaluation was necessary for the duration of the initiatives; these accounts were removed upon completion.

The terms *course shell* and *course sandbox* were used to indicate that the prepared and certified courses could serve as a platform upon which another faculty member might build their own online section. The resources included in the shell or sandbox were basic components of effective online course-design. None of these elements were pedagogical. They included things like icebreakers, grade policies, timelines with topics, and other suggested best practices. The initiatives, the process of online course development, and the guidelines for course certification have been created by faculty and EdTech leadership through the EdTech Leadership Council, a committee that has departmental representation from every academic unit, and which has developed guidelines based on national standards. These guidelines were presented to the proper governance channels in 2007 and 2018 and have been recognized and awarded for their quality by CUNY. These processes are not arbitrary impositions by EdTech.

The following document includes a detailed report of all the work done by EdTech and ETLC to support the transition to distance learning during Spring and Summer 2020. The OLIs included assessment and continuous improvement elements, such as pre- and post-initiative surveys. From Across the four OLIs offered, 278 faculty completed the trainings, while 70 faculty mentors, instructional design consultants and EdTech specialists provided support. About 10 of the mentors participated in all four initiatives. Some examples in this report reflect that participants who completed the OLI and filled out the post-survey ($n = 196$) reported gaining approximately 20 percentage points in confidence and skills development related to online teaching.

Preparedness efforts for distance instruction due to the pandemic

Chairs, Coordinators & Directors Meeting
09.21.2020

Carlos Guevara
Director, Educational Technology
Co-Director, Center for Teaching and Learning





Agenda

- ❖ EdTech team support structure and resources
- ❖ Online Learning Initiatives
- ❖ Faculty Mentoring & Support structures
- ❖ Continuous improvement approach
- ❖ Next steps

EdTech Team Support Structure and Resources

- ❖ Immediate creation of support plan for academic continuity
 - ❖ Developed [academic continuity page](#) to support transition to distance instruction
 - ❖ Streamlined the [EdTech](#), [Online Learning](#) and [CTL](#) websites to include additional resources and information.
 - ❖ Worked with IT to setup virtual phone lines to provide support
 - ❖ Team operations never stopped, operated on extended schedule M-TH 9 am to 8 pm and F 9 am to 5 pm
- ❖ [EdTech Leadership Council \(ETLC\)](#) and [CTL Advisory Council](#) members offered support to their departments



EdTech Team Support Structure and Resources

- ❖ Offered several workshops to assist with the transition (March 16th to August 20th)
 - ❖ 65 workshops
 - ❖ 194 faculty (non-unique)
 - ❖ 120 faculty (unique)
- ❖ Provided one-to-one support
 - ❖ 658 (non-unique)
 - ❖ 195 (unique)
- ❖ 67 devices have been loaned to faculty
- ❖ Several virtual mindful conversations and Teaching Tidbits Facebook live sessions have been offered by CTL



EdTech Team Support Structure and Resources

- ❖ Offer several workshops to students (March 16th to August 20th)
- ❖ Over 800 students completed the Are You Ready course in this period
- ❖ Over 700 students completed the new version of the course for the Fall semester
- ❖ **PROUD** to share that this course is now deployed CUNY-wide and almost 7,000 students completed the course in the first 2 weeks of launching.

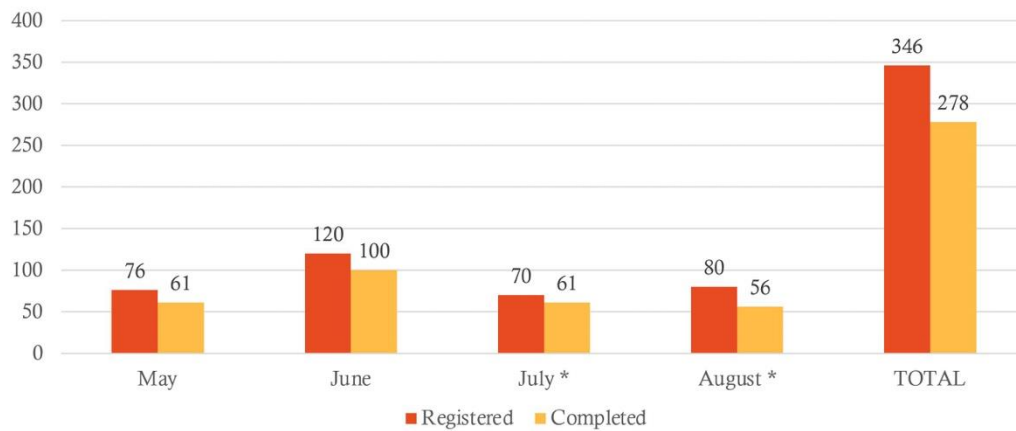


Online Learning Initiatives

- ❖ These initiatives are centered on mentoring and the course development guidelines established by EdTech and ETLC (latest update presented at the Hostos Senate in 2018); which includes five pillars for effective course design and delivery based on national standards and best practice.
- ❖ Offered four initiatives to support remote instruction in Summer and Fall semesters
 - ❖ Two focused on design and delivery and two only on delivery of online learning
 - ❖ 278 out of 346 completed the initiatives and 200 courses were certified



Online Learning Initiatives



Online Learning Initiatives

❖ Hybrid & Asynchronous Initiatives

- ❖ As of Spring 2020, 398 (223 unique) developers, 115 (82 unique) hybrid and 237 (170 unique) asynchronous/synchronous courses developed
- ❖ 4 faculty members developed new courses in Fall 2019
- ❖ 155 (unique) faculty members participated in Spring and June 2020
 - ❖ 27 from ALH ❖ 23 from EDU ❖ 11 from L& C
 - ❖ 20 from BSC ❖ 55 from HUM ❖ 22 from MAT
 - ❖ 15 from BUS ❖ 13 from ENG ❖ 35 from NAS



Faculty Mentoring & Support Structures

- ❖ Each initiative counted with faculty mentors/instructional design consultants and EdTech instructional design specialists
 - ❖ May: 12 faculty, 4 EdTech specialists (1 part time)
 - ❖ June: 26 faculty, 6 EdTech specialists (2 part time)
 - ❖ July: 7 faculty, 3 EdTech specialists (1 part time)
 - ❖ August: 7 faculty, 3 EdTech specialists (1 part time)



Faculty Mentoring & Support Structures

- ❖ Faculty members from ETLC evaluated courses submitted for certification
 - ❖ Usual # of evaluations per AY is about 30
 - ❖ Almost 500 evaluations done during this summer

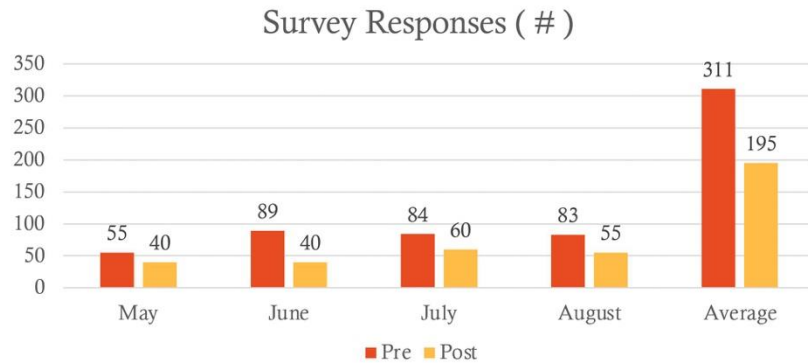


Continuous Improvement Approach

- ❖ Initiatives were designed with built-in pre and post surveys
 - ❖ Pre survey: 311 faculty
 - ❖ Post survey: 196 faculty
- ❖ Improvements to subsequent initiatives were based on feedback from participants and mentors

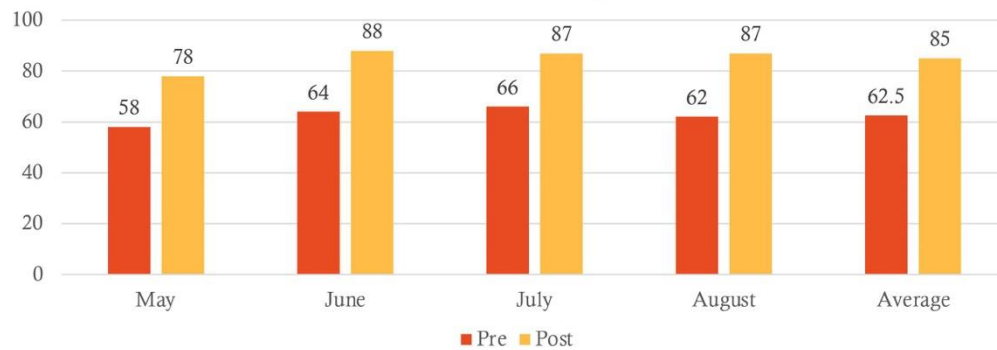


Continuous Improvement Approach



Continuous Improvement Approach

How would you rate your familiarity and experience with Learning Management Systems (e.g. Blackboard) in general?
Range Effective to Expert (%)



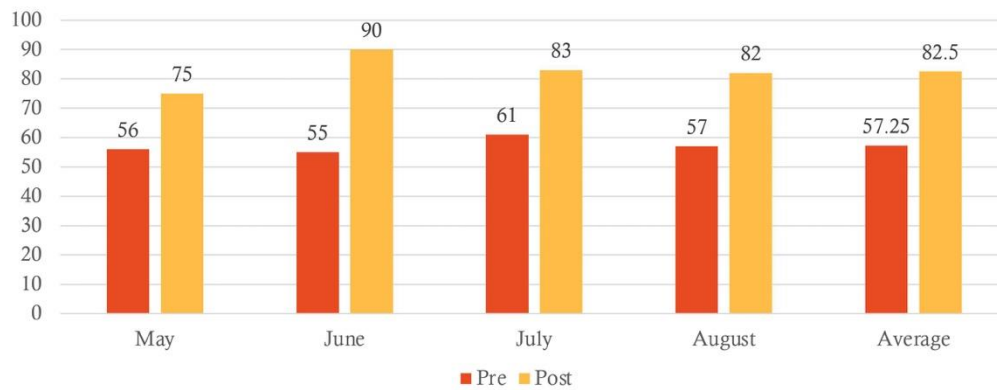
Continuous Improvement Approach

How would you rate your proficiency in creating effective learning unit structures in Blackboard? Range Effective to Expert (%)



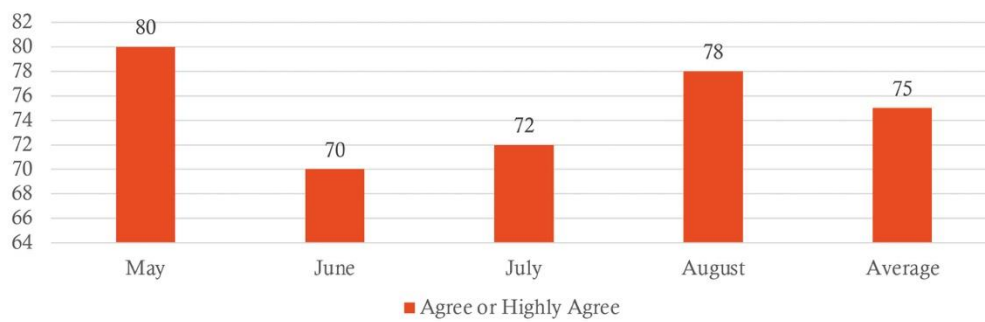
Continuous Improvement Approach

How would you rate your proficiency in creating assessments in Blackboard? Range from Effective to Expert (%)



Continuous Improvement Approach

This course was very helpful in preparing me for teaching an online course. (%)



Continuous Improvement Approach

- ❖ Faculty Mentors/Instructional Design Consultants were surveyed at every initiative
- ❖ 40 survey responses
- ❖ Close to 100% rate the structure of the initiative to help faculty develop their online course to be above average or higher
- ❖ Over 90% rate the participants understanding of the expectations of the online initiatives to be above average or higher
- ❖ Over 90 % rate this initiative to be beneficial for participants



EdTech & CTL Teams

EdTech

- ❖ Carlos Guevara, Director
- ❖ Prof. Jacqueline DiSanto, ETLC Co-Chair, Faculty Liaison to EdTech
- ❖ Prof. Kristopher Burrell, Online Learning Assessment Coordinator, Faculty Liaison to EdTech
- ❖ Wilfredo Rodriguez, Coordinator
- ❖ Iber Poma, Student Services Coordinator
- ❖ Eric Ritholz, Online Learning Coordinator
- ❖ George Rosa, Sr. EdTech Instructional Designer & Blackboard Administrator
- ❖ David Dos Santos, Instructional Designer
- ❖ Danny Wu, EdTech Instructional Designer
- ❖ Catherine Man, Instructional Designer (PT)
- ❖ Juan Soto-Franco, Instructional Designer (PT)
- ❖ Dontae Richardson, CA
- ❖ Jeffrey Pena, CA

CTL

- ❖ Carlos Guevara, Co-Director
- ❖ Prof. Cynthia Jones, Co-Director
- ❖ Luz Rivera, Coordinator
- ❖ Itzel Ortega, CA
- ❖ Juberth Tueros, CA
- ❖ Kevin Gonzalez, CA



Advisory Teams

- ❖ **EdTech Leadership Council (ETLC)**
 - ❖ 19 members
 - ❖ Every academic department is represented
- ❖ **CTL Advisory Council**
 - ❖ 14 members
 - ❖ Every academic department is represented
 - ❖ 5 faculty inquiry groups with over 30 faculty members
- ❖ **Hostos Online Learning Assessment (HOLA)**
 - ❖ 10 members
 - ❖ Experienced online instructors and EdTech staff



Next Steps

- ❖ Continue providing the same level of support and identifying areas for improvement to better serve faculty and students
- ❖ Continue offering professional development opportunities
- ❖ Launch the Self-paced Online Learning Initiative for new faculty or those who need a refresher



Next Steps

- ❖ Work with Department Chairs and Unit Coordinators to take advantage of and continue improving the over 200 course sandboxes created over the summer
- ❖ Work with ETLC and HOLA to
 - ❖ Re-evaluate student and faculty perceptions to online learning research projects to reflect current reality
 - ❖ Analyze online initiatives feedback data and provide recommendations for improvement
 - ❖ Analyze student online readiness course - Are You Ready?



Questions

