

Augusta University's AAUP Chapter Statement on COVID19 Crisis and its Potential Impact on Higher Ed in Georgia

COVID-19 has presented many challenges to the work and well-being of our AU community, students, faculty and staff. It will likely continue to affect us for the foreseeable future.

We are grateful for the messages of support, information, and resources that we have received from leaders of our University and the University System of Georgia. We are also proud of the great work that the AU health care community has done to fight this pandemic. AU leadership has emphasized that the university's main priorities are our patients and students. The AU community is maintaining state-of-the-art patient care and the outstanding educational opportunities of our students. We recognize the importance of flexibility as we maintain standards of patient care, teaching, and research.

We at AAUP-AU strongly support these principles of community, flexibility, and the centrality of the patient-care, research, and teaching mission and would like to see them as the foundations of all decision-making going forward. We would like to present you with some of the priorities and questions that AU faculty members raised for the Fall of 2020.

1. If we resume face-to-face classes in the Fall of 2020, what measures will be put in place to ensure the safety of students, staff, and faculty?
2. Will faculty members (of any rank) be allowed to teach online if COVID19 is still a health risk by August of 2020?
3. What resources will be put in place to safeguard the quality of our instruction if all instructions have to go back online?
4. What plans will be implemented for instruction that cannot happen online (e.g. clinical practice, or required internships)?
5. How will the quality of student experience and the most vulnerable members of the AU community be protected as we face the COVID19-related budgetary crisis?
6. How will the university consider increased demand for enrollment that has been historically associated with economic downturns?
7. How will the exceptional workload burden put on health practitioners and faculty be recognized by the University leadership?

We ask our university leadership to find ways to mitigate the impact of the epidemic. Our AAUP chapter hopes that AU will follow examples of other institutions that have chosen to lessen spending on overhead and paperwork rather than putting financial burden on the Faculty and student experience.

We also hope that our University with its strong medical research and public health expertise will follow principles of shared governance to ensure that the health of all members of the AU community are protected and AU leads within the USG system for best practices of patient-care, teaching, and research in the age of COVID-19.

The AAUP-AU chapter is proud of what the Augusta University healthcare providers, faculty, staff, and entire community have done so far, and we hope that we continue in a direction that not only protects us all but also lays the foundation for future successes.

