



TO: SUNY University Faculty Senate
FROM: Undergraduate Academic Programs and Policies Committee
RE: Resolution: On Academic Planning for Responding to Future Crises
DATE: 188th Plenary, April 22-24, 2021
LOCATION: Online
RESOLUTION #: 188-03-1
VOTE TALLY: For: 46 / Against: 1 / Abstain: 0

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS SUNY, along with all other institutions of higher education and the country as a whole, has experienced a major crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS most, if not all, SUNY campuses were not adequately prepared in advance to deal with this unprecedented crisis; and

WHEREAS this crisis required significant, rapid, long-term changes in academic and co-curricular policies and programs, most especially the shift of most instruction from face-to-face to remote or hybrid education; and

WHEREAS the remote teaching environment creates special educational challenges and opportunities for which there had been limited institutional preparation on many, if not most of the SUNY campuses; and

WHEREAS these required changes created unique challenges that had, and continue to have, a major effect on the lives and careers of students, faculty, and staff; and

WHEREAS some of these mandated changes were done without proper consultation and involvement of the relevant campus governance organizations; and

WHEREAS we need to anticipate the possibility of future crises due to public health, political, environmental, economic, or social problems; and

WHEREAS the focus of this resolution is the educational duty of campuses, and not other aspects of their functioning (e.g., housing, food service, business affairs).

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that SUNY University Faculty Senate urges System Administration, with appropriate consultation and participation of relevant campus governance organizations, to develop plans now as to how it will effectively manage the fundamental responsibility to educate students - modes of teaching, learning, and assessment - when these may be significantly disrupted by future crises, such plans to be reviewed and updated annually. These plans should be readily available to the University Faculty Senate, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, and the SUNY Student Assembly; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the SUNY University Faculty Senate urges System Administration

to require all campuses to develop plans with their campus governance organizations, as well as other relevant stakeholders, now as to how they will meet their educational duty in future crises. These plans should be made with an awareness of the System-level plan, be reported back to System for reference, and be made readily available to members of the campus community; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that campus leaders, with the collaboration of their governance organizations, look carefully at policies related especially to the various instructional modalities that have emerged from our experience with remote instruction (including but not limited to student codes of conduct; college policies for use and access and ownership of instructional materials; procedures for maintaining the integrity of examinations; institutional storage, access to, and use of course recordings; approvals, design, and reviews of online course content) and consider creation or revisions as necessary where gaps or updates seem appropriate.

BACKGROUND:

First presented to UFS at the Winter Plenary 2021, this resolution was recommitted for clarification of its scope. Revisions to the language of the resolution clarify that the focus of this resolution is on preparation for emergencies (like the Covid-19 pandemic but not exclusively related to public health) that severely disrupt the direct educational environment and pedagogy on SUNY campuses. The intent of this resolution is not to cover emergency planning in all aspects of the University (such as housing, food service, business affairs, and so forth), but to ensure there is a plan in place for when the fundamental function of academia, teaching and learning, is significantly disrupted.

The March 2021 document “SUNY Continuity of Operations Plan for a State Disaster Emergency Involving a Communicable Disease” neither acknowledges the fundamental academic nature of the institution nor directs campus leadership to plan for the considerations outlined in this resolution.