

The following questions were asked by audience members during the General Faculty meeting and town hall on Oct. 1, 2020. The answers were provided by UD staff members.

FINANCIAL/BUDGETARY

Q. Will UD sell assets (such as land or UD-owned homes) to reduce the deficit?

A. There are no plans to do so at this time.

Q. What is the UD endowment?

A. The endowment's value is currently roughly \$1 billion.

Q. Has the leadership considered issuing a bond to cover the shortfall?

A. The University is not considering a bond at this time.

Q. Will non-revenue sports be cut or eliminated?

A. There is no discussion of cutting sports.

Q. Does the possibility of future legislative aid potentially reduce staffing impacts to the University?

A. The University is seeking funding through state and federal sources to help offset the deficit. However, there are many other demands on public funding from a variety of institutions seeking assistance.

REDUCTION IN WORKFORCE - General

Q. Will you enforce a mandatory pay reduction for all employees?

A. Details about unpaid leave and other personnel measures are still being determined.

Q. Staff in lower pay grades will likely be more greatly impacted than those in higher pay grades. And I worry about the impact on marginalized groups, especially. Is leadership taking into the consideration strategies for making cuts more equitable to limit the impact to those who could be more greatly impacted?

A. The University is carefully considering the impact of cost-cutting measures on all employees, and the details of those measures have not been finalized.

Q. Many research staff fully participate in the teaching and educational needs of undergraduate and graduate students, while not teaching a class per se. Are reductions of these research staff being considered?

A. Reductions are being proposed for all UD employees.

Q. Can you talk about moving employees into open positions instead of being laid off. Will they have to go through the normal posting process, or will exceptions be made?

A. The University has a robust talent share program and thus far, 150 employees whose workloads decreased since the beginning of the pandemic have been redeployed in areas where there is need. More info: <https://www.udel.edu/faculty-staff/human-resources/careers/talent-share/>

Q. Will the university offer any support/transition services for employees who are laid off?

A. HR is working out a service offering for those who are “laid off.” The details are being worked out.

Q. My spouse lost his job seven months ago. Will any consideration be given to those of us with regard to lay-offs who have already had a job loss in our family?

A. Questions about specific situations, such as the one you asked, should be directed to HR (hrhelp@udel.edu). HR staffers are available and ready to assist.

Q. How can you close it down and have no one to work if there are still students? How will facilities come in to maintain buildings and or residence halls?

A. This would be handled in a similar way to the traditional holiday break. Some employees would need to work those days and be provided a different day of leave instead.

Q. Can you tell us how many people will be laid off? Can you tell us if only staff will be impacted since other employees are safe due to their unions?

A. University leaders are in conversations now with the unions that represent employees. The cost-cutting efforts are measured in dollars, not people, so there is no target for the number of people to be reduced.

Q. Are there going to be any changes to the parental leave policy? What if a previously approved employee's schedule is reduced below the required 30 hour/week to qualify?

A. Questions about specific situations, such as the one you asked, should be directed to HR (hrhelp@udel.edu). HR staffers are available and ready to assist.

Q. What will occur if the Faculty union doesn't approve unpaid time for them? Will staff need to take additional unpaid time?

A. It is too soon to discuss that “what if.” University leaders are in conversations now with the AAUP.

VOLUNTARY REDUCTION IN HOURS

Q. If someone chooses to take a voluntary reduction in hours, who will do their work, how will it be delegated?

A. This should be worked out with the employee’s supervisor.

UNPAID LEAVE

Q. Is there any sense as to when furloughs will begin?

A. This has not been determined yet.

Q. I am concerned that the way UD is choosing to split up these unpaid days will make it difficult for employees to apply for unemployment and other assistance. Will UD be considering this when making their decisions?

A. Yes, we have considered this and will work with the State Department of Labor regarding unemployment benefits.

Q. How would unemployment work if UD is having us take each unpaid day separately vs one chunk of time?

A. This depends on the weekly pay of the employee. The determination is given by the State Department of Labor.

Q. Will unpaid leave be subtracted from our years of service?

A. No.

Q. Will the furloughs be applied to grad student stipends too?

A. These measures are for UD employees and not graduate students.

Q. Can you please let me know how the furloughs are going to affect the employees with different Visas (eg: H1 visa)

A. Questions about specific situations, such as the one you asked, should be directed to HR (hrhelp@udel.edu). HR staffers are available and ready to assist.

Q. Can you spend vacation time to cover the "reduction in time"?

A. Using vacation days to offset furlough days defeats the cost-cutting purpose. Because UD is implementing a salary reduction and not a traditional furlough program, it is not possible to trade individual vacation days to offset the reduction.

Q. Are you eligible for unemployment benefits during that period similar to when you are furloughed?

A. Possibly. It depends on the weekly pay of the employee. The determination is given by the State Department of Labor.

Q. Is unpaid leave eligible for unemployment

A. Possibly. It depends on the weekly pay of the employee. The determination is given by the State Department of Labor.

Q. Will UD help employees understand the process of applying for unemployment for the unpaid days we have to take? Since UD is not doing these furloughs in a traditional manner it seems like employees will need guidance on how to apply for unemployment.

A. HR will provide additional details as needed. Ultimately, however, the State Department of Labor makes the determination on eligibility.

Q. When will staff have to take the required leave? When will the retirement accounts of staff be impacted?

A. The president will address these topics, though specific details are still being developed.

Q. Is there a decision on when the "unpaid leave/furlough" will be?

A. No. As Dr. Assanis described, we are still working on finalizing those details.

Q. Can you tell us how many and when the furlough days will be?

A. The details of the potential period of unpaid leave are not yet determined. They will be communicated to campus as soon as possible.

SOFT-FUNDED POSITIONS

Q. My contract, paid in full by an outside party, has already been extended for the next year. Will any of the measures the President is mentioning apply to contractors like me?

A. HR, the Budget Office and Research Office are in active discussions about how grant-funded positions will be addressed.

Q. If you are grant funded, are you impacted by the furloughs?

A. HR, the Budget Office and Research Office are in active discussions about how grant-funded positions will be addressed.

Q. Can you clarify if the measures (unpaid leave, reduction of retirement benefits) apply to those employees paid entirely from research grants in the same way?

A. HR, the Budget Office and Research Office are in active discussions about how grant-funded positions will be addressed.

Q. Will faculty/staff paid entirely off federal grants be subjected to furloughs?

A. Questions about specific situations, such as the one you asked, should be directed to HR (hrhelp@udel.edu). HR staffers are available and ready to assist.

BENEFITS

Q. Staff that take voluntary reduction in hours can keep their benefits?

A. Yes. Detailed information is available here: <https://www.udel.edu/faculty-staff/human-resources/about-hr/coronavirus/>.

Q. If a staff member is laid off and their child is participating in Tuition Exchange, would consideration be given to continue the TE for at least the following year or even to degree completion?

A. For employees whose position is eliminated, UD is determining how to handle that benefit.

Q. If you are currently an employee and are benefiting from the tuition fee waiver and are laid-off will we be able to complete the course?

A. Yes.

Q. If staff are currently enrolled in an educational program using tuition benefits, what happens if they are laid off or significantly experience reduction in time?

A. Tuition benefits will continue through the end of the semester regardless of status.

Q. Will tuition for older adults still be free?

A. The topic of tuition for older adults has not yet been addressed.

Q. Will retirees' benefit costs go up?

A. There is no change slated for retiree benefits at this time.

Q. Will health benefits for those with reduced hours be affected by these changes?

A. Unpaid leave will not affect benefits. More information about Voluntary Schedule Reduction is available at: <https://www.udel.edu/faculty-staff/human-resources/about-hr/coronavirus/>

Q. Will retiree benefits be cut?

A. Retirees are retaining their current benefits.

Q. How long will PUA [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance] benefits be available?

A. The maximum length of time an individual may collect PUA benefits is 39 weeks. PUA will no longer be available after the week ending December 26, 2020. The last week the FPUC [Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation] is payable is the week ending July 25, 2020. PUA determinations are made at the state and federal level.

Q. With benefits being considered to help bridge the deficit, this is a good time to assess some of the fringe benefits UD offers (e.g., housing assistance, spouse dual career services, etc.). Is leadership planning to use this opportunity to review benefits and address inequities?

A. The University is exploring a variety of options, though there is no specific plan to address these benefits at this time.

Q. Are reductions to retirement contributions going to be applied to faculty as well as staff?

A. None of the announced changes apply to faculty. University leaders are in conversations now with the AAUP.

Q. Would any of the mentioned measures around reduction of benefits, furlough period, etc. apply to employees paid 100% (including benefits) by an outside party, not university?

A. HR, the Budget Office and Research Office are in active discussions about how grant-funded positions will be addressed.

Q. If staff are on soft money, and funded to provide deliverables, will contracts need to be renegotiated with funders in order to account for employee furloughs?

A. HR, the Budget Office and Research Office are in active discussions about how grant-funded positions will be addressed.

Q. Other than days that might be tacked on to holidays, would the schedule of unpaid leave be left up to the department heads?

- A. The details of this measure are still being worked out. Generally, some days will apply to the entire university (such as around the holidays), while others may be used at employees' discretion.

RETIREMENT

Q. What is the retirement eligibility? President Assanis just said that age + years = 75 with a minimum of years of service? When does age + years = 80 go into effect? Do you still have to be a minimum age to retire, 55?

- A. Those individuals who are eligible have been contacted by HR. Additional information about the retirement incentive program are available here:
<https://www.udel.edu/faculty-staff/human-resources/about-hr/coronavirus/>

Q. Not long ago, UD changed the retirement formula from having age/15 years or service to 20 years. Have you considered reverting back to the 15-year service requirement along with the retirement incentives to increase voluntary retirements?

- A. There are no plans to do so at this time.

Q. Do the reductions to retirement include pensions?

- A. The details of the retirement measure are still being worked out. Generally, they would not include the state pension.

Q. Will more voluntary retirements be offered for less than 20 years of service? Staff are vested as of 5 or 10 years, depending on hire dates. How will this affect retirement for people close to their milestone for retirement if they are furloughed?

- A. There are no plans currently to offer another retirement incentive program. Unpaid leave (furloughs) will not affect an employee's years of service.

Q. Basically even if you add up to 75 or 80 if you do not have 20 years of service you are not eligible for the retirement incentive program - correct?

- A. Staff and administration who are eligible for the voluntary retirement incentive program will receive notification via email from Human Resources. If you think you are eligible and didn't receive a notification, please email hrhelp@udel.edu.

Q. When does the rule of 80 go into effect?

- A. July 1, 2022

ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING/OPERATIONS

Q. With organization restructuring, will reclasses take place to match job descriptions and salaries to new roles?

A. Details of organizational restructuring are still in development.

Q. Instead of filling grant-funded positions with external employees (as happened recently for a sponsored-programs position), why aren't new-hires being delayed until layoffs are identified in case a current employee can fill the position?

A. Exceptions to the hiring freeze may be appropriate in limited strategic areas or under specific circumstances with endorsement of Provost and EVP as appropriate, and approval of the President. HR is actively seeking opportunities to pair employees who have bandwidth with openings that meet the skills needed in open positions.

Q. You mentioned working towards shared services, what are some examples of the types of services that may be shared across areas?

A. Some types of services that are offered and needed throughout campus are IT, HR, Communications, etc.

Q. Shared services like IT, HR and Communications, what does that look like? What does that mean?

A. As mentioned previously, those discussions are still in development.

FACULTY AFFAIRS

Q. Is there an idea of when discussions with the unions will be concluded?

A. There is no timeline at this time, but conversations are happening now, and it's hoped they will move quickly.

Q. How will seniority in unions be chosen? Years of service, union seniority or classification? And who determines that?

A. The University is currently discussing cost-saving measures with the employee unions. This may be a better question for your union directly.

Q. Can we teach without receiving an S-contract on overload during winter session to help?

A. Please discuss this option with your department chair.

Q. What is the plan for the Adjunct Professors? Is there any chance to bring them back either in the Spring or the Fall?

A. Adjunct hiring depends upon enrollments and the success of our mitigation strategies.

Q. There was a suggestion faculty could volunteer to teach summer and winter courses. Could this be traded for furlough days — 5% is a big hit for some of us.

A. University leaders are in conversations now with the AAUP. Please be sure to contact your AAUP rep with that suggestion.

Q. Would sabbatical leave policies change?

A. There are no changes being discussed re: sabbatical policies.

Q. Are the furloughs or budget cuts expected to affect untenured faculty? Especially the faculty whose 2- or 4-year contracts are up?

A. The University is in discussions with the AAUP about faculty issues.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Q. Now that many courses are being taught online, will there be a push by depts/colleges/UD to promote online degrees? Online degrees seem like good revenue-generators.

A. Online degree programs are an excellent way to generate revenue and faculty and departments are absolutely encouraged to consider this option.

Q. Will students be brought back for the winter session?

A. This has not been decided yet.

Q. Apologies if I missed this, but what is the plan for the winter session? Is there a thought that more residential students will be able to come to campus?

A. This has not been decided yet.

Q. Is there a list of Academic Units and Non-Academic Units? Are administrative staff for a Department considered part of the Academic Unit or Non-Academic unit?

A. Administrative staff in academic departments are in academic units.