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## Report of Faculty and Academic Affairs Staff Responses to IEJ FFPP Survey on Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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# Report of Faculty and Academic Affairs Staff Responses to IEJ FFPP Survey on Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Spring 2022

In November 2021, the Joint Faculty Senate (JFS) Committees on Inclusion, Equity, and Justice (IEJ) and Family Friendly Policies and Practices (FFPP) administered a survey to assess faculty and Academic Affairs staff members' experiences during the pandemic and to inform future recommendations for policy responses to crisis that are both family friendly and advance inclusion, equity, and justice for faculty and staff. IEJ and FFPP worked to collect a large sample of respondents. The Joint Faculty Assembly (JFA) Chair and Vice Chair sent the survey to the Official Announcements - CSB/SJU Faculty list three times. The survey was also sent to the [AcademicAffairs@CSB/SJU.edu](mailto:AcademicAffairs@CSB/SJU.edu) list. The survey was posted on the Teams for all librarians and shared twice in the Buzz. Members of the IEJ and FFPP shared it with Academic Affairs staff and asked them to share it with their colleagues. 143 people responded to the survey—41 staff and 102 faculty. This sample includes 41% of tenure/tenure track faculty, 10.5% of term/adjunct faculty, 41% of Academic Affairs administrative staff and 27% of Academic Affairs support staff. The survey results reflect the perspectives of respondents who chose to complete the survey.

The IEJ committee divided up the analysis of survey results into quantitative and qualitative components, with two committee members engaging in quantitative analysis and three in qualitative analysis. The qualitative analysts each focused on summarizing 4-5 long answer questions, according to commonly raised themes. FFPP provided feedback on this report.

This summary of the survey data is intended to inform future policy making by administrators and to spur reevaluation of workloads and enhanced support for mental, physical, and emotional health of employees. Change and transparency in policymaking is urgently needed. Based on the survey results, the current workloads of survey respondents is unsustainable—many respondents feel low levels of satisfaction with their jobs and high levels of stress. The IEJ received communications from faculty colleagues who were too overwhelmed to complete the survey, indicating that the results would have been even more negative had more colleagues had the capacity, mentally and emotionally, to share their experiences. The negative impacts of feeling overworked, undervalued, and disregarded, particularly in an institution that claims to value community, is reducing our ability to meet the needs of students and remain a viable institution. While survey responses often reference the 2020-2021 academic year, many of the concerns are ongoing or unresolved in 2021-2022 and likely to continue if no changes are made. Therefore, we wish to stress that the findings of this survey are not in the past tense, but represent ongoing challenges for all members of our community.

We begin with a very brief overview of quantitative and qualitative data and recommendations that IEJ and FFPP have developed through analysis of the survey data. We feel that brevity is critical when so many readers are overburdened in their workloads. For readers who wish to dive into the data, we follow our recommendations with a 38 page detailed presentation of data from each question of the survey, including summaries, charts, and examples of quotations from respondents.

## BRIEF SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Qualitative Summary**

While a number of respondents understood that the administration was put in a difficult position of trying to weather a pandemic, the overwhelming sense of the last few years of work across the board was one of increased work and stress, often leading to burnout, and a growing awareness of workplace inequities (notably between faculty and staff and between employees without dependents and those tasked with child and eldercare). In addition, many noted extremely low morale, particularly when faced with continued staffing and budget shortages, looming program prioritization and further cuts, the awareness of leadership prioritizing students and their parents' desires above employees' safety and needs, and the disconnect between administration's language ("community always") and its decisions. Some of these concerns are not new or caused by the pandemic. For example, in 2019, the JFS identified low faculty morale as a problem.

This quote sums up the sentiments of most respondents:

"Thank you for asking these questions. Even if no one ever reads any of this, it is very valuable to be able to write it down. I rarely take time to stop and think about what we've all been through because there is still so much to do. To realize just how profoundly tired I am, and how burned out I've become, is a little shocking. I didn't realize until I sat here crying while I answered these questions no one has asked me before. Thank you for asking."

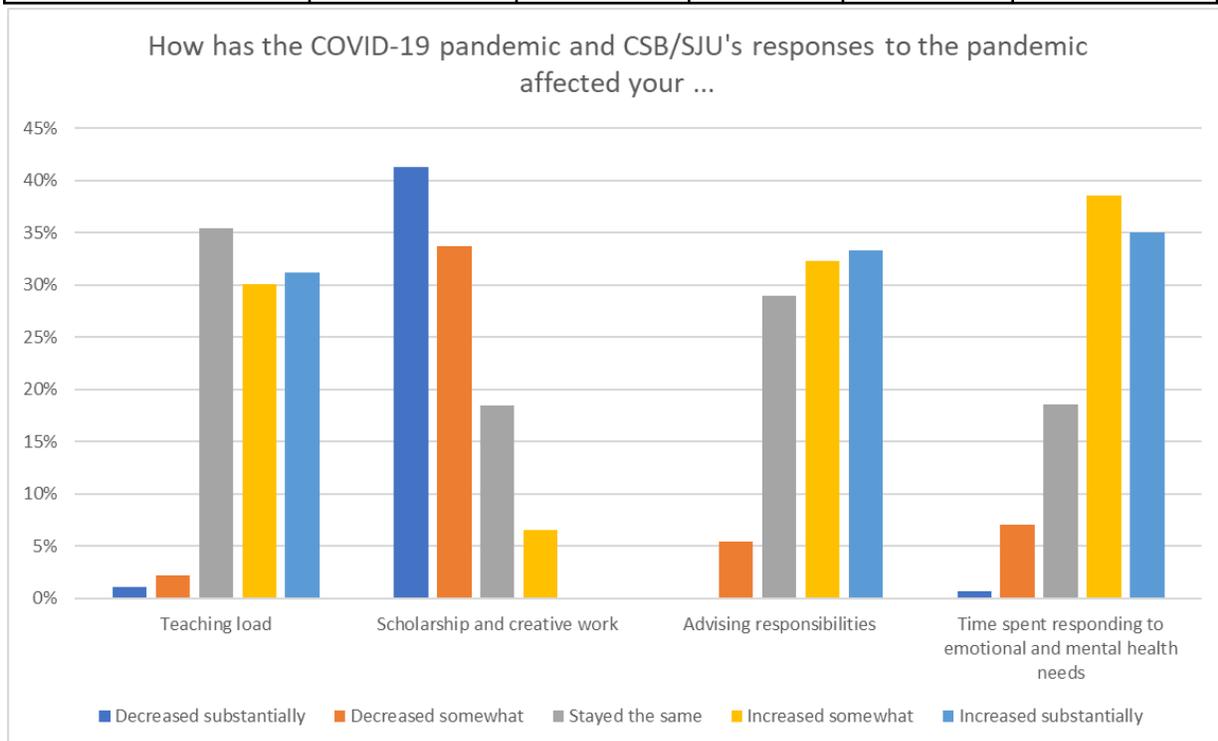
### **Quantitative Summary**

Most faculty reported that their teaching responsibilities increased as a result of the pandemic and CSB/SJU responses to the pandemic. Approximately one third reported that their teaching loads increased substantially, one third reported that loads increased somewhat, and one third reported that loads stayed the same. These percentages are roughly the same for pandemic and pandemic response effects on advising responsibilities. The conditions since 2020 seem to have taken the largest toll on scholarship and creative work. A large majority of the respondents reported that their productivity decreased substantially (41.3%) or decreased somewhat (33.7%). 18.5% of respondents reported that their productivity remained the same. Time spent responding to the emotional and mental health needs of students and colleagues increased somewhat or substantially for 72.6% of respondents (faculty and staff). Although the majority of respondents felt increased demands during the pandemic, some did not. This variation increases the importance of documenting these burdens and providing some relief to impacted faculty and staff members. We may have all been stuck in the sea of COVID, but we were not all in the same boat.

A majority of respondents had found it easy to access information on COVID-accommodations, work adjustments, and employee resources and most were satisfied or or neither dissatisfied or satisfied with accommodations and work adjustments. Despite this, about half of respondents reported that their feelings about CSB/SJU had been somewhat or substantially negatively impacted by CSB/SJU's responses to the pandemic. Work-life balance impacts were overwhelmingly negative. Among groups surveyed, faculty members and women were most

stressed, least satisfied with their jobs, and had seen the largest increase in their workloads. Half of respondents experienced increases in caregiving responsibilities in 2020, with women experiencing the most increase in caregiving responsibilities. Survey results demonstrate that the overwhelming experience for respondents is one of suffering, but there is variation. To address inequity, formal processes are required.

<b>How has the COVID-19 pandemic and CSB/SJU's responses to the pandemic affected your...</b>					
	<b>Decreased substantially</b>	<b>Decreased somewhat</b>	<b>Stayed the same</b>	<b>Increased somewhat</b>	<b>Increased substantially</b>
<b>Teaching load</b>	1.1%	2.2%	35.4%	30.1%	31.2%
<b>Scholarship and creative work</b>	41.3%	33.7%	18.5%	6.5%	0%
<b>Advising responsibilities</b>	0%	5.4%	29%	32.3%	33.3%
<b>Time spent responding to emotional and mental health needs</b>	0.7%	7.1%	18.6%	38.6%	35%



## Recommendations

1. **Flex work:** The IEJ and FFPP Committees recommend that CSB/SJU adopt an equitable remote and flexible work (“flexwork”) policy that enables employees to work remotely as job duties and operational needs allow.

In AY 2020-2021, many CSB/SJU employees with jobs that can happen remotely demonstrated they could successfully conduct work from home during the pandemic. Many survey respondents pointed out various benefits to moving forward with a flexwork policy: flexwork remains a safer way to work during a still-ongoing pandemic; flexwork could promote wellbeing, staff engagement, and retention among current employees; and flexwork might enable CSB/SJU to both recruit more talent and be more attractive to diverse applicants who look for this type of flexibility in the positions they consider. Flexwork is beneficial for mental health and caregiving (with gendered dimensions) in non-pandemic times. Respondents argued that remaining attractive to potential employees is an especially important consideration during the “Great Resignation”: problems with staff retention at CSB/SJU have increased workloads and contributed to low morale and stress for remaining employees, while reducing services for students. One respondent offered a list of links to sample flexwork policies at other institutions (see below), and several respondents proposed allowing faculty members whose families required their assistance due to illness, K12 school closures, etc., to teach remotely as necessary when issues of family health and safety arise.

The FFPP Committee plans to send a letter sharing more specific recommendations to CSB/SJU’s CFOs, Human Resources, and the JFS Chair and Vice Chair. They will also present this letter to the new single president at the beginning of their tenure (anticipated start date in July 2022).

List of links to institutions instituting flexible at home policies:

- [UMN](#)
  - [Best practices](#)
  - [Sample plans](#)
  - [Operational Guidelines for Work. With Flexibility.](#)
- [St. Olaf](#)
- [Carleton](#)
- [Oakland University](#)
- [University of Arizona](#)
- [Iowa State](#)
- [Ohio University](#)
- [University of Missouri](#)

2. **Rank and Tenure Guidance:** We recommend that the JFS provide guidance to the Rank and Tenure committee and other relevant faculty governance committees (e.g. FDRC) about how to handle the review process for faculty who are under review during or after

the pandemic (Spring 2020 through AY 2021-2022). Formal guidance and consistent training for new committee members will ensure the most equitable treatment of all faculty. JFS might also consider recommending that departments and programs review (and revise, if necessary) their departmental scholarship guidelines.

3. **Proactive Policies:** We recommend that CSB/SJU decision-makers create proactive and precautionary public health policies, rather than reactive policies, around the following issues. We also encourage as much transparency as possible around the decision-making process:
  - **Masking:** Develop a consistent masking policy that more closely aligns with faculty and staff preferences. At the time of the survey, many survey respondents expressed concern about the changes that had recently been made to the CSB/SJU masking policy (masks were “strongly encouraged, but not required” in classrooms on October 30<sup>th</sup>). This is an equity issue; unlike faculty, staff cannot retreat to their offices where they have control over masking. Departments who wish to be more stringent than the campus policy should have the ability to do so.
  - **Accountability:** Increased accountability measures for unvaccinated individuals, such as regular testing and more strictly enforced masking requirements.
  - **Testing:** Random testing for 5% of all community members at the beginning of each semester and after breaks.
4. **Mental Health Services:** We recommend that CSB/SJU explore options for improved access to mental health services and counseling both on and off campus for students and employees. The mental health impacts of the pandemic will remain a pressing issue that needs to be addressed for years after the pandemic.
5. **Reduce Workloads, Avoid Burnout:** Decrease employee workloads and stress by relaxing expectations around committee and service work, hiring new staff to replace Great Resignation employee attrition, and revise or pause timelines on major institutional initiatives. Since major initiatives like Integrations Curriculum implementation/revision and Academic Program Prioritization are already underway, ensure that CSB/SJU does not take on other monumental challenges until the pandemic is much more manageable.
6. **Demonstrate That Employees are Valued:** Address low morale, anger, and burnout by equitably increasing compensation, expressing the value of employees more, and reducing workloads. Term and adjunct faculty and staff who engage in service should be compensated or rewarded for their service work.
7. **Onsite Childcare:** In the local context of a shortage of childcare providers, onsite child care would make managing caregiving much easier for families, creating employment and educational opportunities for students. It would allow more flexible or emergency childcare options for faculty and staff, which would make it easier for faculty and staff to be on campus more.

8. **Produce Fast and Transparent Actions to Respond to Injustice:** The administration should proactively create systems to prevent oppressive actions from occurring. When oppression does occur, the administration should create clear timelines for evidence-based action and communicate progress with the community often. Recommendations for action include bystander training, a no-tolerance policy with a transparent investigation process, and required training for community members. DEIJ violations contribute to the overall increase in stress levels and low morale experienced by members of the campus community.

## IN-DEPTH SUMMARY OF DATA

This section presents data for each question of the survey. Letters in headings refer to different questions in the survey.

### **Respondent Characteristics**

A majority (65%) of survey respondents were faculty of whom 80% were tenured or tenure track and the rest were adjunct faculty, 19% were administrative staff and 10% were support staff. More than 55% of respondents are those employed for 11 years or more, 24% between 6 to 10 years and 4% worked less than 1 to up to 5 years. In keeping with these percentages 1.4% had annual income below \$19,999, 3.5% had income \$20,000 to \$39,999, 16% had annual income \$40,000-59,000, 46% had annual income \$60,000 to \$99,000 and 10.5% had annual income more than \$100,000.

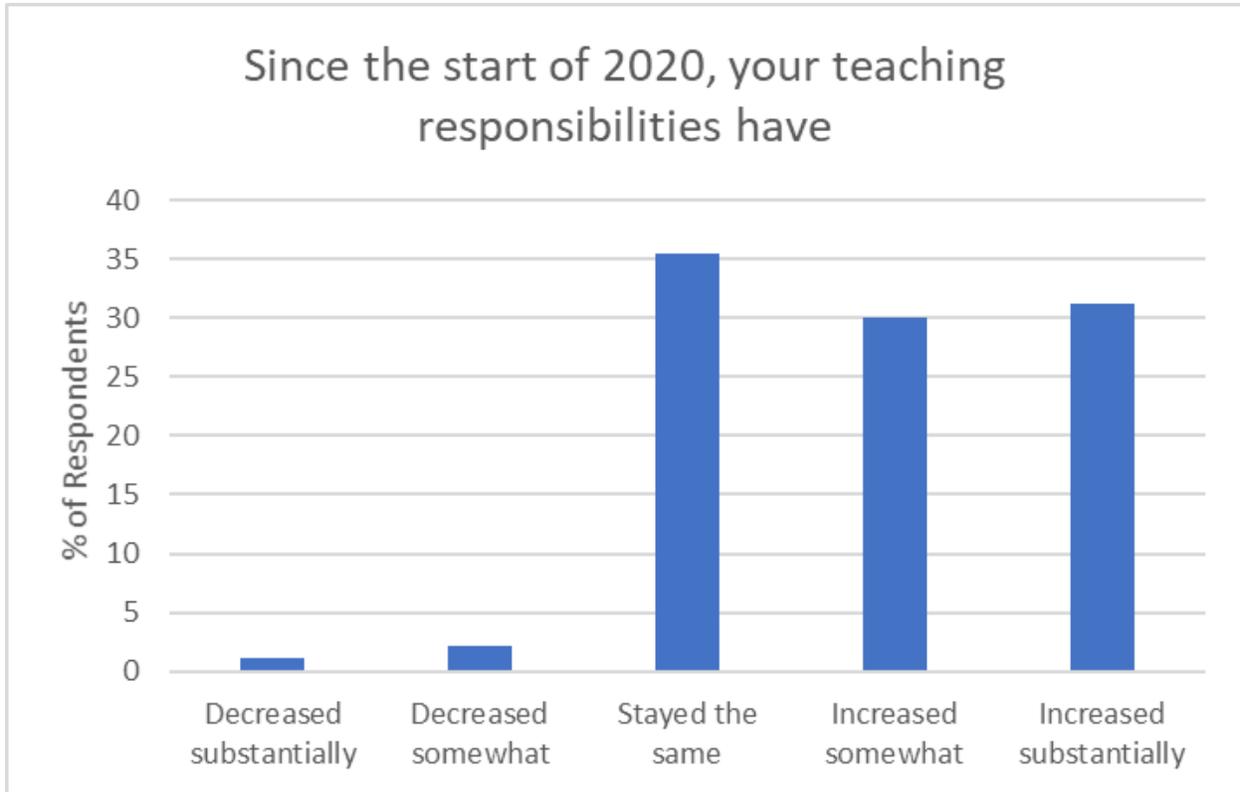
In terms of gender composition, 34% of survey respondents were men, 61% women, and 4.2% preferred not to say their gender identity. 4.9% of survey respondents identified as BIPOC, 90% were not BIPOC, and 4.9% preferred not to say their race or ethnicity. In terms of age composition, 62% of respondents were between 40 and 60 years of age, 18% were between 25 and 39 years, and 15% were above 60 years.

### **Caregiver Responsibilities**

Approximately 51% of respondents were caregivers of children and 20% were caregivers for adults. Approximately 61% of respondents were one of two employed caregivers in a household and approximately 8% of respondents were sole caregivers of adults (over the age of 17) or children (age 17 and under).

## Teaching

### M. Teaching Responsibilities: Since the start of 2020, your teaching responsibilities have ...(faculty only)<sup>1</sup>



Most faculty reported that their teaching responsibilities increased. 31.2% (29) and 30.1% (28) reported that their teaching loads increased substantially or somewhat. Only small percentages, 1.1% (1) and 2.2% (2) reported that their teaching loads decreased substantially or somewhat. This data suggests that while about half the faculty were not significantly impacted (incorporating those that responded that their teaching loads remained the same or decreased) by the pandemic, a significant number were. The qualitative data below offer explanations for these reported increases in responsibility.

### N. How has the COVID-19 pandemic and CSB/SJU's response to the pandemic affected your teaching? (open-ended, faculty only)

Most reactions to the pedagogical changes due to CSB/SJU's COVID response were negative.

The shifting course modalities and designs, as well as the work overload, struggling students, and Block schedule itself meant that faculty are extremely burned out:

<sup>1</sup> Questions 1-6 of the survey were for faculty respondents only.

“Redesigning and then redesigning courses over and over again is a lot of work. Having mods that are not parallel meant one course taught twice is actually two different courses. Preparing for on-line, in-person, hybrid and switching was a lot of work. Having courses postponed requires extra work as replacements must be retooled. Not having much time to grade at the end of a mod or even week to week made assessment of student learning very difficult. On top of all that, the new integrations curriculum required course changes. It was a nightmare. And I haven't woken up from it yet.”

“The hybrid transition was a MASSIVE increase in workload, more than anything I've experienced in 15 years of teaching. Actually teaching hybrid was also the most draining experience I've had as a teacher. I would not want to repeat that.”

“The movement from in-person to remote teaching and from teaching on the semester system, then a block system, and now back to the semester system has been very stressful for me. It has affected my students' ability to retain what they learn in courses and, therefore, caused me to revamp my courses to account for this problem.”

“Block schedule was awful in the amount of work needed to prepare for it and the intensity of it. All of this without compensation.”

“The block system was a disaster. It wasn't good for students and made content heavy lab courses quite different than a normal year. Which was what people teaching in these areas told academic leadership. It was also quite a disaster to introduce the IC curriculum during the last academic year. Students have suffered educationally and with respect to the challenges of working through the IC curriculum (many of which were predicted to happen and shared with leadership individuals but either ignored or not responded to).

“It has made it harder to connect with students. It has added a lot of time learning new technology to accommodate COVID absences.”

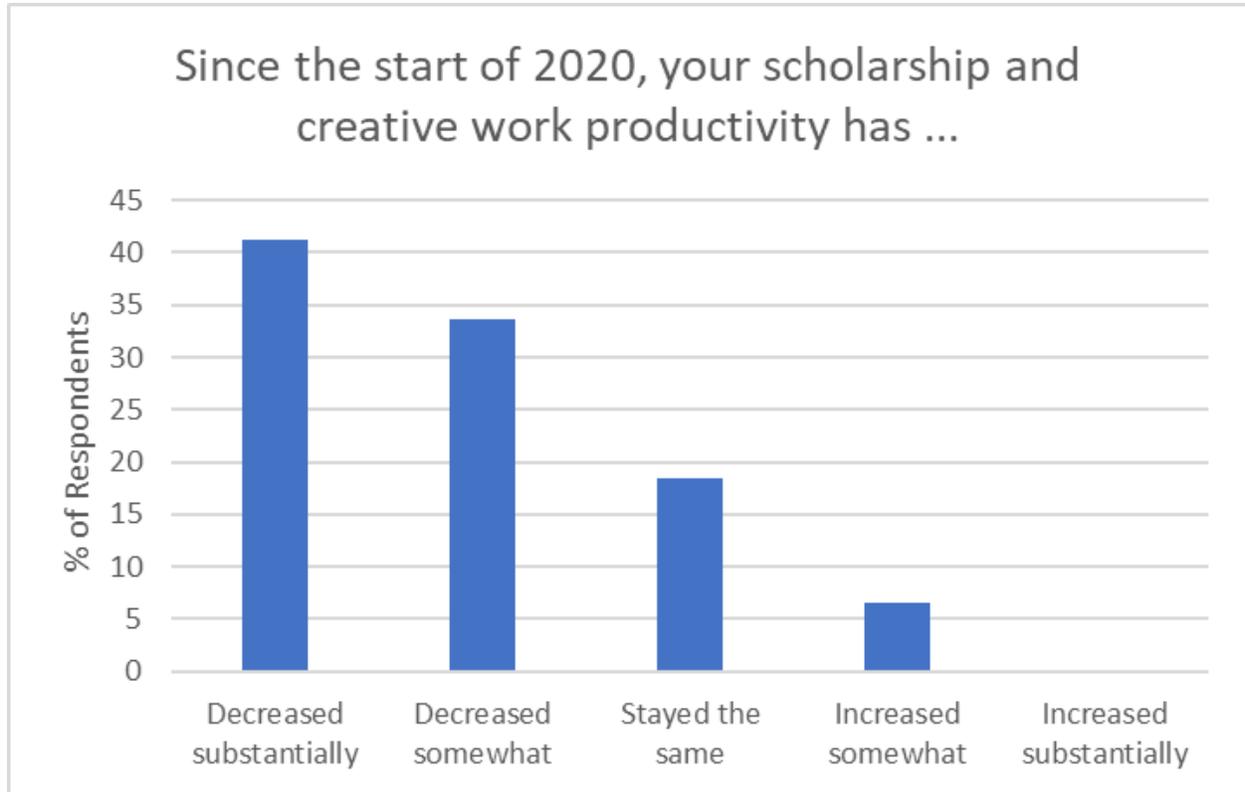
Nevertheless, a small number of faculty appreciated the opportunity to introduce new techniques and utilize new modalities:

“(The pandemic) pushed me to upgrade Canvas pages for my courses”

“If anything good came out of the pandemic for my teachings, it's that I use Canvas much more and do 100% paperless grading, which means that I'm getting feedback to my students much quicker.”

## Scholarship and Creative Work

### O. Scholarship and Creative Work: Since the start of 2020, your scholarship and creative work productivity has ... (faculty only)



The pandemic appears to have taken the largest toll on scholarship and creative work. A large majority of the respondents reported that their productivity decreased substantially (41.3%, 38) or decreased somewhat (33.7%, 31). 18.5% of respondents reported that their productivity remained the same, while only 6.5% reported that their productivity increased somewhat. No respondents reported a substantial increase in productivity. Faculty, adjusting to emergency remote teaching, the block system, and hybrid learning, likely spent the majority of Spring 2020 and AY 2020-2021 focused on teaching and working with students on their emotional and mental health. This reported impact on scholarship will likely affect probationary faculty the most. Qualitative responses summarized in P note the various challenges faculty faced trying to maintain their scholarship.

### P. How has the COVID-19 pandemic and CSB/SJU's responses to the pandemic affected your scholarship and creative work? (faculty only)

Most of the responses (88) reported that they had less time, energy, or ambition to maintain a research program or keep up with creative work. Many responses specifically indicate they had not been able to prioritize it due to teaching, the switching to block schedule and back, advising

for the new curriculum, more meetings, dealing with students, family obligations, service, and other leadership responsibilities.

“I have had projects that I have had to turn down, conferences canceled, and deadlines that I have had to miss. The transition to the new curriculum and to the block and back required quite a bit of time to prepare. While I was able to complete some projects, it does feel like a lost two years.”

“Summer months much less available for scholarship due to the need to learn tech and reorganize courses for block, and then to organize back to regular semester “

One response mentions they are trying to focus on small projects, while another response mentions abandoning scholarship entirely.

Additionally, 17 responses indicate opportunities have decreased as well, including public speaking events, conferences and invited conferences presentations. Three mention how it is more difficult to do cooperative science work. In addition, libraries and other research venues have closed. A few respondents mention just having to turn down projects, taking on fewer projects to begin with, or simply ending their research program or taking time off from research. With the semester cut short, a sabbatical couldn't be finished. Furthermore, scholarship support seemed more restricted and a few mentioned not having any travel support.

Creative work has been particularly impacted as some activities are considered high risk and restrictions surrounding COVID make their activities more challenging.

“Creative work is much less creative due to the many new rules that affect time and ability to work closely with others. “

“My recital was cancelled in March 2020. I have not rescheduled yet because of the difficulty of singing with a mask, although I intend to. “

Nine responses indicate their productivity has decreased because of their diminished energy for the process, citing mental and emotional fatigue from CSB/SJU, feeling burned out, and physical strain from so much screen time.

“It wasn't a lack of time, especially during the summer, but I had very little ambition and regret the time I could have used to good account on things that I find absorbing. The past few years have been stressful and depressing socially, politically, financially, and personally. I'm disappointed in my lack of resilience in coping during the last couple years.”

“It's basically nonexistent now. Having my kids at home for much of the last year and a half has greatly decreased my bandwidth for anything beyond day-to-day work. I also

chose not to do any scholarly work last summer (2021) because I needed time to spend for actual FUN with my kids, and to recover from last year, particularly since I didn't get much of a summer in 2020 because of retooling for the block schedule. But some of this is the result of rethinking priorities in light of everything the pandemic caused us to review: at the end of my life, I'm not going to regret having published less, but I might regret spending less time with my kids. “

Still, a couple mention using more of their personal time to keep up.

“I'm still pre-tenure, don't want to delay tenure process, and committed to many obligations before COVID. Completing those scholarly obligations took a toll on me and had to be completed around/in addition to the increased time needed for teaching.”

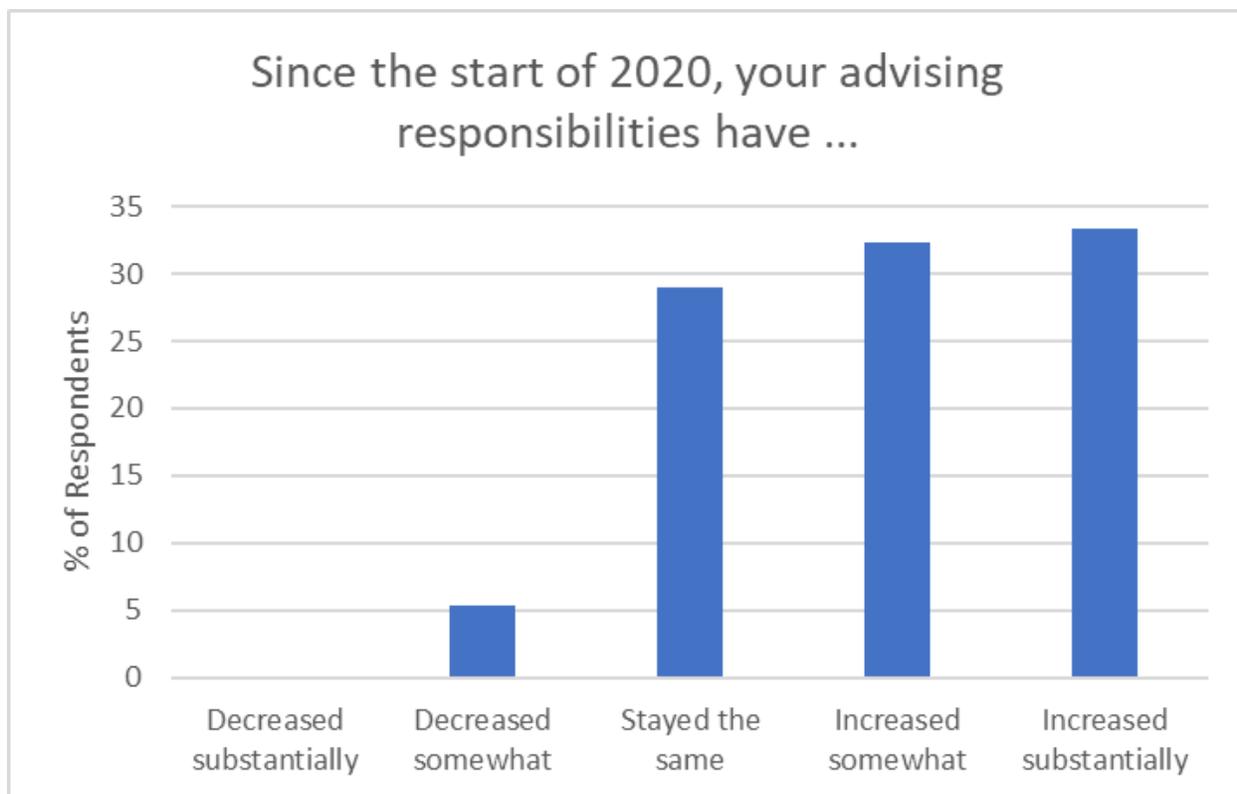
Nevertheless, there is a concern for how sustainable the increased workloads are.

“My scholarship has been completely paused to manage the teaching and advising demands. I feel like I am continuously responding to the needs of others. I care deeply for my students and advisees, and I am committed to their success, but this unbalance approached to work and life is not sustainable.”

However, twelve responses mention their scholarship has stayed the same or increased. The teaching-free blocks provided time, some were more productive working from home or alone in their office, and another mentions gaining some time because they were no longer commuting or traveling. One mentioned they are taking advantage of the pandemic and doing scholarship on the increased anxiety in relation to their discipline. Still one mentioned they were able to attend some conferences after all and another was able to keep their sabbatical, though they didn't get as much done. Another mentioned they were presenting more at conferences and giving more talks because everything was online.

## Advising

### Q. Advising: Since the start of 2020, your advising responsibilities have ... (faculty only)



A significant majority of faculty reported that their advising responsibilities increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. 33.3% (31) reported that their responsibilities increased substantially and 32.3% (30) reported that they increased somewhat. Less than one-third of the faculty reported that their advising responsibilities remained the same (29%, 27) and a few reported that their advising responsibilities decreased somewhat (5.4%, 5). Faculty worked with students who lost internships or other opportunities in spring 2020, and had to go through two rounds of advising (one based on a regular semester schedule and one based on the block schedule). Faculty also worked with students whose study abroad programs were canceled in AY 2020-2021. While some of this data also reflects the change to randomly assign first year advisees, the qualitative data in R illustrate the increased demands that the COVID-19 pandemic created.

### R.6 Advising: How has the COVID-19 pandemic and CSB/SJU's responses to the pandemic affected your advising? (open-ended, faculty only)

"The focus of advising has been more surviving rather than thriving."

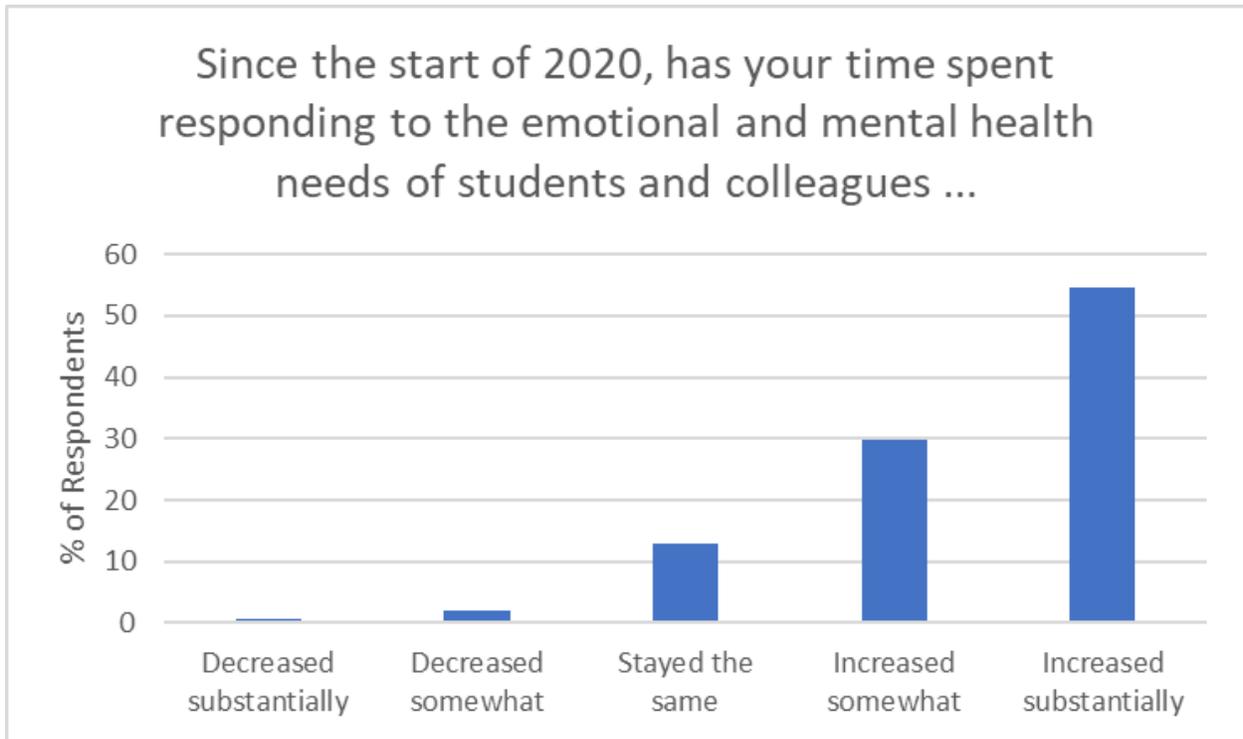
Respondents highlight that increased stress among students related to illness, trauma, mental health, and the heightened uncertainty about their futures contributes to more time in advising. Most faculty perceived increased student need for advising for this reason, because students are less prepared for

college and its “hidden curriculum,” and because of the difficulties of navigating the Integrations Curriculum. The most common themes in responses highlight how the complexity of the Integrations Curriculum takes more time to advise and how the new advising structure is detrimental for building relationships with new advisees. The new advising structure also creates more work for faculty who must advise students outside their area of expertise. It is difficult to build a sense of trust and connection with new advisees since advisees do not have a class with faculty advisors. Faculty have found it difficult to get students to reply to emails or Zoom invitations. Most respondents felt that the former method of FYS advising was better for faculty and students. There was general agreement that Zoom has been beneficial for enhancing flexibility of meeting scheduling. For some faculty, more students drop in on Zoom. For others, the pandemic and Zoom has meant they have fewer drop ins, with students less inclined to engage in expansive conversations. Respondents agreed that the roll out of the Integrations Curriculum has been unfortunately timed in coinciding with the pandemic.

## Emotional and Mental Health

**S. Emotional and Mental Health Needs of Students and Colleagues: Since the start of 2020, has your time spent responding to the emotional and mental health needs of students and colleagues ...**

...



A majority of respondents noted that the time spent responding to emotional and mental health needs increased substantially. Approximately 15% of respondents said that their time spent on these issues stayed the same or decreased. Faculty are bearing a heavy burden of addressing mental health concerns, which surely impacts their own mental health. The toll of this burden is conveyed in the qualitative responses below.

**T. How has the COVID-19 pandemic and CSB/SJU's responses to the pandemic affected your time spent responding to the emotional and mental health needs of students and colleagues?**

The vast majority of respondents focused on the *increased* emotional and mental health needs of students and colleagues. There seemed to be a consensus that students are having more issues due to the pandemic itself, the block schedule, and switching to and from the block schedule, and are therefore needing more accommodations, needing to turn in coursework late, missing class, and overall needing classes to be more flexible.

“The pandemic has put a larger strain on an already strained demographic -- students. Other issues that have arisen in the past two years have compounded the effects of the pandemic on students (and most others as well). In our efforts to support students, I feel that there is an expectation to respond to emotional and mental health crises that I don't always feel qualified in responding to. The actual interactions with students takes time but the weight of these experiences goes on much longer. I have found myself looking for advice and educational opportunities related to student support so I can feel better prepared in responding to students. However, this is time I should be spending on my program and course preparation and evaluations. I have had less time for these traditional pieces of my job.”

One respondent wondered if COVID was being used as an excuse, however, many mentioned trying to adjust their classes and providing more attention and time to students, with some feeling as though they are almost individualizing classes for students, which adds more work because of grading assignments at different times and not being able to get into a groove with an assignment. A couple mentioned how there aren't enough resources for students, and so they make sure to talk about self-care in class. One also mentioned that wearing masks makes it more difficult to connect with students who might feel more isolated. As a result, many also mentioned how they are feeling strained, feeling as though they need to be available all the time, not always feeling successful helping students, and how this adds to their own emotional and mental health issues. Four respondents specifically mentioned struggling with burnout and morale on campus.

“Faculty colleagues are struggling with burnout. We are all worn thin. Some are dealing with major family issues due to COVID (death, illness, childcare, etc.). Morale on campus is terrible, the worst it's been in my 20+ years here by far. Lots of people are worried that they will not have jobs in five years, especially younger faculty. Leadership has been lacking on all of these fronts IMO...this is a time when we need a president who knows the people who work here, can comfort them, and can provide some sense of stability. We have had none of that.”

Additional stressors include fighting between colleagues, decisions about the pandemic response, mentoring junior colleagues, major family issues due to COVID, and concerns about the stability of their jobs.

A few talk about patience and the need to be more sensitive to others, noticing how everyone's patience has decreased, even if it was better during the pandemic.

“During the height of pandemic and when services/classes were mostly distant/online students were patient and understanding that everyone was trying their best to do what they could for the most part, even fall 2020 they could see that we were all trying to help them and give them positive experiences, this year that understanding has waned. They are tired too. They want things to be normal. They are not yet. Staff/Faculty feel

undervalued and unsupported at the highest levels and so we turn to each other cautiously.”

Just eight respondents felt that their time hasn't changed and has maybe even decreased as perhaps they are doing the same amount just dealing with different needs or doing it on Zoom instead of in person. A few mention not spending their time responding to emotional and mental health needs because students don't come to them or because they are more isolated and see colleagues and students less. On the bright side, one did mention that they felt the block schedule helped them deal with their students better as they were dealing with 25 versus the 75 students they usually had in class.

In terms of CSB/SJU's response and how this related to mental and emotional health, seven responses showed agreement with the decisions on campus. One mentioned,

“As it pertains to the Pandemic Response Team, I feel as though a significant amount of conscientious thought has been given to the decisions that have been made. I feel safer on campus than I do in the community/region.”

One respondent felt that the response should have been more aggressive and quicker, but they still felt supported. Another respondent felt that faculty complaints were overblown and irritating. The following quotes indicate that the response was institutional and fact-based, and that CSB/SJU didn't provide support for the emotional and mental health needs of students and colleagues.

“CSB/SJU's response was very institutional and fact-based. It does not at all feel like CSB/SJU gave any support for staff regarding how we could respond to the emotional and mental health needs of students and colleagues. And ourselves as leaders. Many of us had to make difficult decisions regarding who to furlough and how long, with absolutely no support in figuring that out or how to break that news. Many departments saw staff departures, and in many cases, it took months to get replacements if any were approved. Students and colleagues were navigating family and friend illnesses and death tied to COVID-19. Yet we were expected to just keep going. And it was on our own to figure out how to do that and how to keep colleagues going.”

“Students did not universally feel supported by CSB/SJU policies. For example, the block system created a lot of challenges for students that worked off campus. It was hard for them to adjust their hours and they did not have the time for the intensive homework demand of the block. Much of this frustration came out of faculty who were still trying to provide the student a meaningful experience. Students were also isolated by the restrictions on campus, which hurt their mental health. Many worried about the future and what the world would look like upon graduation. They also worried about friends, family, and others in the world. Perhaps the most frustrating burden was coping with students who refused to take the situation seriously and engaged in risky behavior,

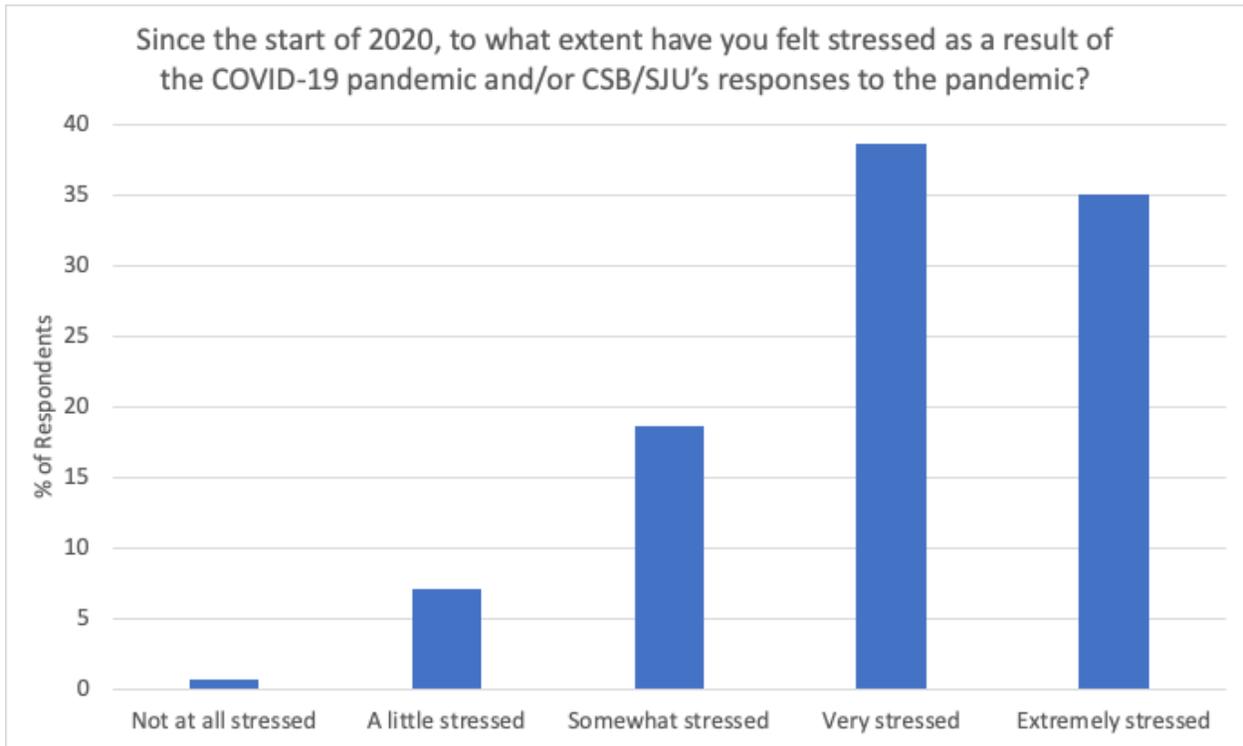
endangering all their friends and roommates. The pandemic really showed people who their true friends were, and that was a shock to many students.”

Looking to the future, one respondent communicated the need to move forward despite COVID, while another mentioned that while we are trying to get back to what used to be, there seems to be a lack of institutional acknowledgement about what has happened. Two comments focused on how the faculty and student development had not been properly thanked for their work during this time.

Other issues that were mentioned focused on the administration being unwilling to allow flexible work from home policies, the inadequate pastoral care around COVID, issues with the COVID dashboard, testing, and contact tracing, students struggling to adjust to college, concerns about furloughs, staff having to stay on campus while faculty were able to teach from home, the urgency for racial justice, and the inequitable distribution of labor in departments. One comment pointed out the significant emotional and financial damage for students who had to step away from jobs because they lived out of state.

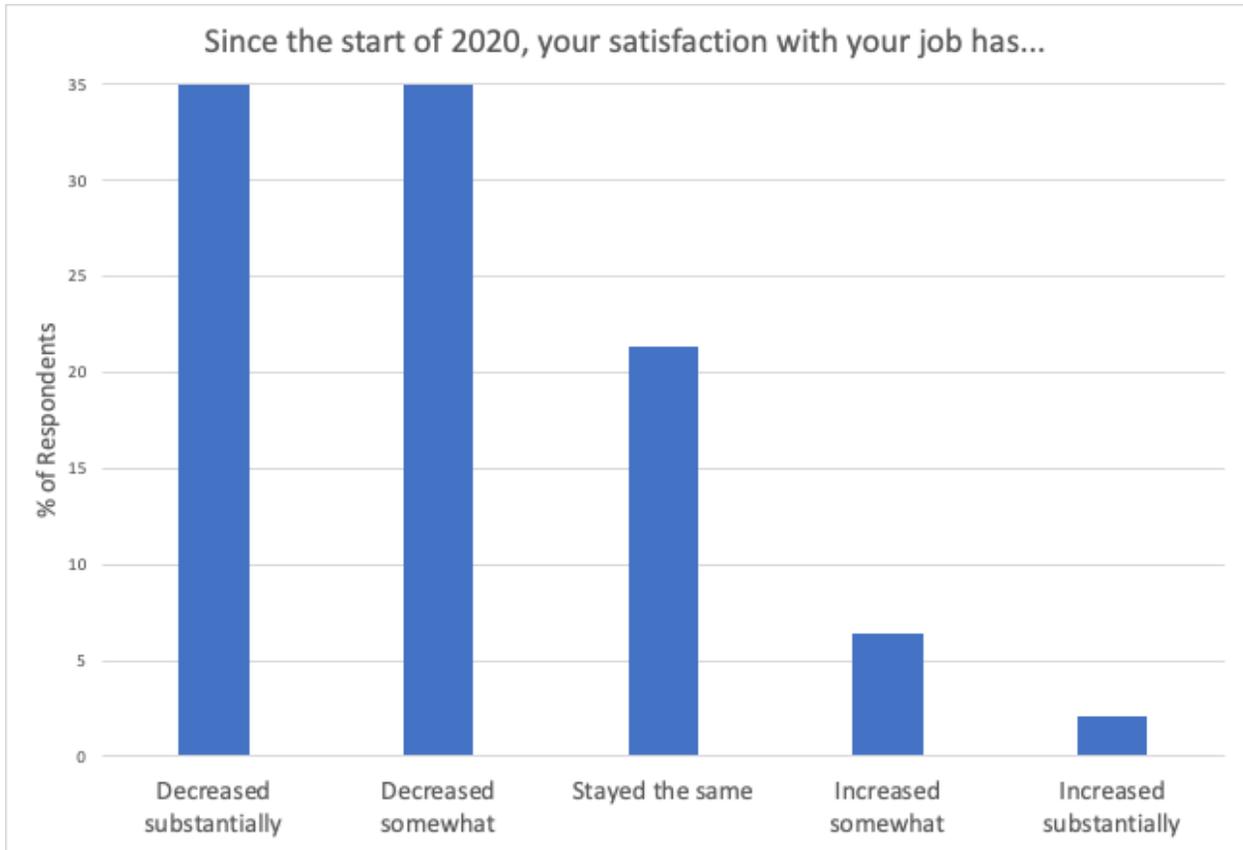
## Stress, Job Satisfaction, and Work-Life Balance Impact of the Pandemic and/or CSB/SJU's Response to it

Among groups surveyed, faculty members and women were most stressed, least satisfied with their jobs, and had seen the largest increase in their workloads. Women experienced the most increase in caregiving responsibilities.



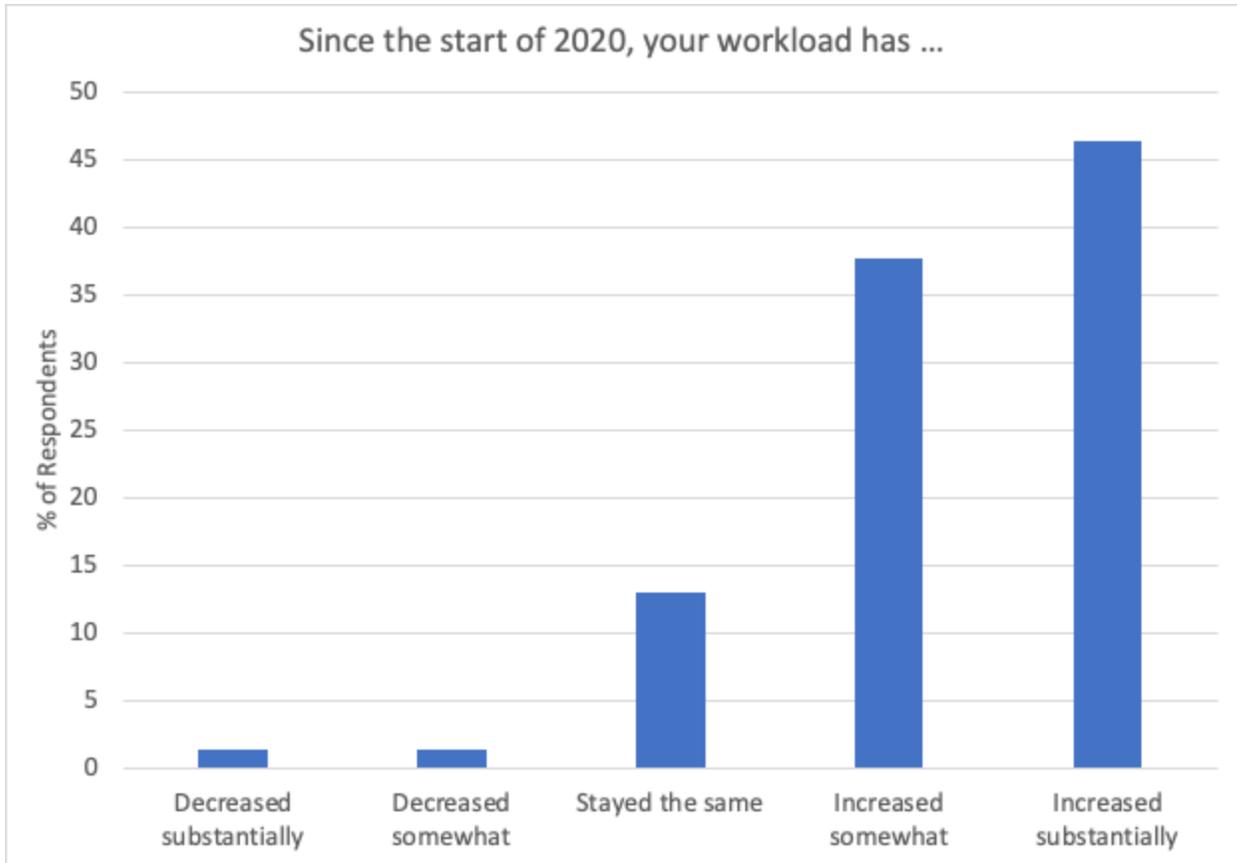
73.6% (104) of the survey respondents were extremely or very stressed at the start of 2020 either as a result of the pandemic or CSB/SJU's response to the pandemic. Faculty were approximately 61% of those who reported being very stressed. 12.9% of those very stressed were support staff and 18.5% were administrative staff. Approximately 20.4% of those extremely stressed were administrative staff, 6.1% were support staff and 67.3% were faculty (tenured, tenure-track, term or adjunct).

Among those respondents who identified their gender, about 29.5% of those reporting they were very or extremely stressed were men and 70% identified as women.



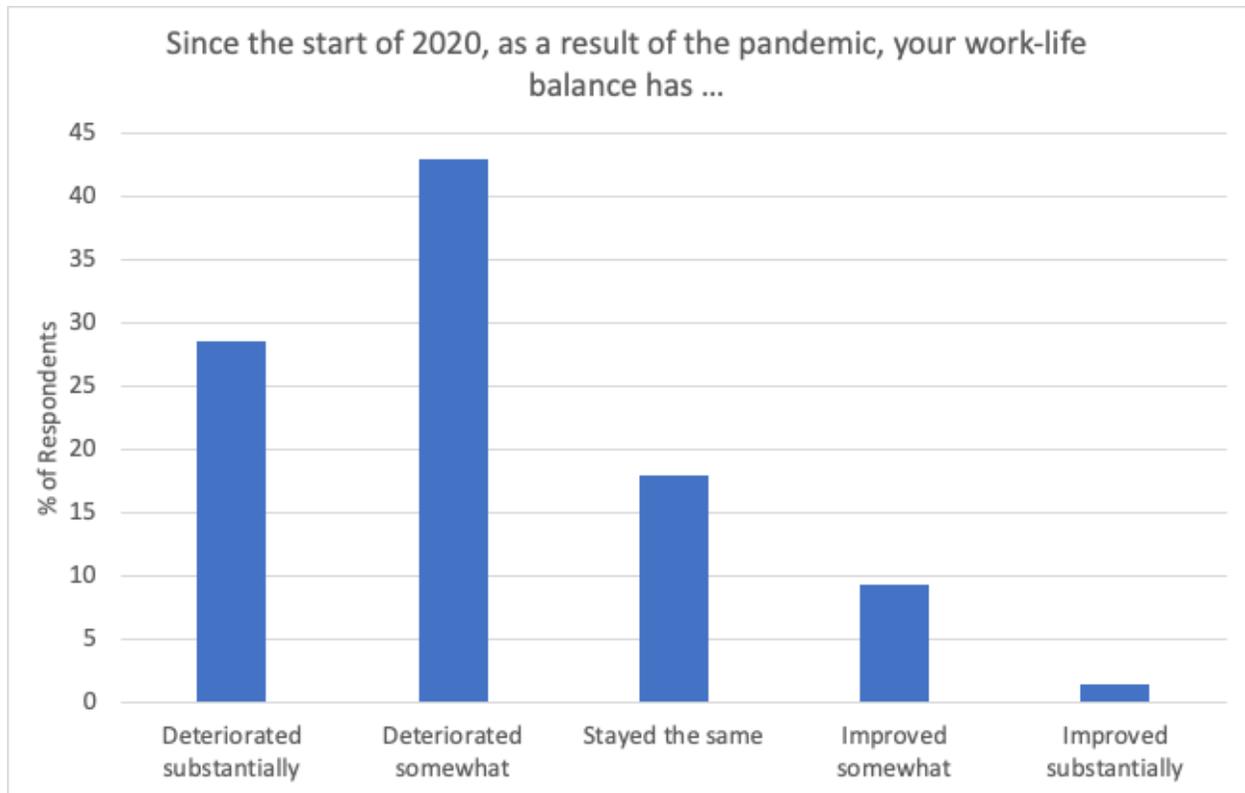
70% (98) of the survey respondents reported that their job satisfaction had either decreased somewhat or substantially since the start of 2020 compared to 8.5% who noted an increase in job satisfaction either somewhat or substantially. Among those who responded that their job satisfaction decreased somewhat 20.4% were administrative staff, 8.2% were support staff and 63% were faculty (tenured, tenure-track, term or adjunct). Among those who responded that their job satisfaction had decreased substantially 12.24% were administrative staff, 8.16% were support staff and 71.4% were faculty (tenured, tenure-track, term or adjunct). Among respondents who reported their job satisfaction had increased somewhat or substantially 41.6% were faculty, 33.3% were support staff and 25% were administrative staff.

Among respondents who noted their job satisfaction decreased somewhat or substantially around 33% identified as men and around 67% identified as women.

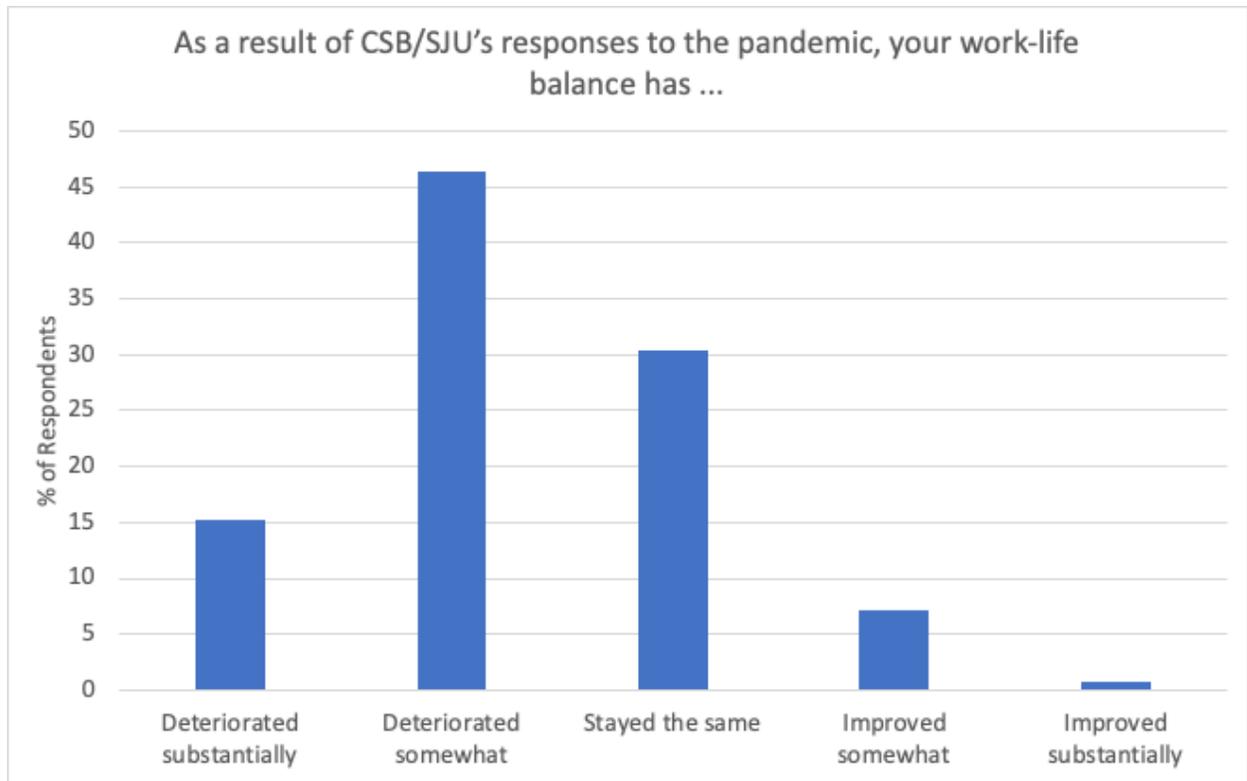


Approximately 84% (116) of the survey respondents reported an increase in workload since the start of 2020. 25% of those who reported that their workload had somewhat increased were administrative staff, approximately 6% were support staff and more than 65% were faculty (tenured, tenure-track, term or adjunct). Approximately 17% of those who reported their workload had increased substantially were administrative staff, about 9% were support staff and 68.7% were faculty (tenured, tenure-track, term or adjunct).

Of respondents who noted that their workload had increased somewhat or substantially since the start of 2020 34% identified as men and 65.7% as women.



71.5% (100) of respondents reported that since the start of 2020, as a result of the pandemic their work-life balance had deteriorated somewhat or substantially. 10.7% reported work-life balance had improved somewhat or improved substantially. 20% of those who reported their work-life balance had deteriorated somewhat were administrative staff, 11.6% were support staff and 66.7% were faculty (tenured, tenure-track, term or adjunct). Of those who reported their work-life balance had deteriorated substantially 67.5% were faculty (tenured, tenure-track, term or adjunct), 7.5% were support staff and 10% were administrative staff.



61.6% (85) of survey respondents reported that their work-life balance deteriorated somewhat or substantially as a result of CSB/SJU’s responses to the pandemic. 70% of those who reported their work-life balance had deteriorated somewhat due to CSB/SJU policies were faculty, 7.01% were support staff and 26.3% were administrative staff. Of those who reported that their work-life deteriorated substantially 76% were faculty. Approximately 8% reported their work-life balance improved somewhat or substantially and 30.4% reported it remained the same.

For a group of respondents the CSB/SJU responses to the pandemic were worse for their work-life balance than the pandemic itself. 23.8% of respondents who reported that their work-life balance had deteriorated substantially due to the CSB/SJU responses to the pandemic reported their work-life balance had deteriorated somewhat due to the pandemic. 4.6% of respondents who reported that their work-life balance had deteriorated somewhat due to the CSB/SJU responses to the pandemic reported their work-life balance had stayed the same due to the pandemic. However, for a large percentage of respondents, the pandemic effect on work-life balance was mirrored in their experiences of CSB/SJU responses to the pandemic. 87.5% of those who reported that their work-life balance had deteriorated somewhat due to CSB/SJU responses to the pandemic reported that their work-life balance had deteriorated substantially or somewhat due to the pandemic in 2020. 100% of those who reported that their work-life balance had deteriorated substantially due to CSB/SJU responses to the pandemic reported that their work-life balance had deteriorated substantially or somewhat due to the pandemic in 2020.

**AC17. Work Life Balance: How has the COVID-19 pandemic and CSB/SJU’s responses to the pandemic impacted your work-life balance?**

The most common themes in response to this question relate to workload. Respondents felt that there is too much work expected and required of them—that their work is unsustainable. They overwhelmingly felt undervalued for this work. These sentiments match anecdotes received by the IEJ in venues beyond this survey. The IEJ is aware that some faculty are questioning whether to stay in their careers in higher education.

“Workloads increased massively last year. Things are somewhat better this year, post-hybrid, but we are still "doing more with less" on every level. It's not sustainable.”

In some cases, this work is uncompensated and above and beyond working hours, displacing time with family and self-care. In particular, respondents highlight how meetings (particularly on Zoom) go beyond work hours into the evening, conflicting with childcare pick up times. One expressed frustration at being expected to work from home while quarantining—that constant work from home harmed their children who were always being told that their parent must work. Some respondents also highlighted how quickly they are expected to make decisions and the assumption that they are “on” and available all the time.

In other cases, for faculty, extra work displaces other core expectations of scholarship and creative work and service. This situation, likely in combination with other factors, can mean that some people are doing much more service than others. One respondent said they had “retired in place” — they had become so burnt out that they had to stop doing everything except teaching. Junior faculty do not have this option. This respondent’s sentiment, however, was shared by most respondents:

“I refuse to work the insane number of hours that I have been doing for years. There has always been a problem, but the BLOCK and the pandemic response broke the camel's back.”

This quote reflects a trend evident in other responses that workloads have increased significantly, and that work-life balance has been difficult to achieve, even before the pandemic.

A couple of respondents voiced losing sleep at night because of the stress of their work. One noted how much emotional baggage they bring home from their work. Understaffing and fear of insufficient sick time or sick pay were also concerns. One respondent felt unable to go to part time work — even though they need to for family reasons — because their team is understaffed.

“i’m struggling to balance the needs of my family and my full-time job. [...] i would love to be part time, but as soon as i leave this position, there is a risk it won't be refilled at all which makes me feel guilty, i don't want to put my team in an even worse position since we are already

understaffed. i'm constantly feeling pulled in competing directions. i feel like i'm running out of options and will need to quit. it's unsustainable currently. Frankly, i'm miserable.”

On the positive side, respondents agreed that it was good to have the option to work at home. Those who experienced positive effects from working at home wished that this was still an option. Respondents felt Zoom was generally beneficial, allowing people to be more available and flexible for at-home needs. A few people experienced better work-life balance during the fully online beginning of the pandemic or if they were fully remote after that point. This was attributed to less time spent commuting and fewer meetings or extracurricular obligations.

Recommendations for COVID policies included consistent masking in all areas and for entire semesters and better access to mental health for faculty, staff, and students. For the most part, faculty found hybrid teaching and the block to be incredibly time intensive and stressful. A few respondents wrote that they recognized that these measures were necessary and likely the best option.

## Caregiving

55.1% of survey respondents reported an increase somewhat or substantially in their caregiving responsibilities in 2020, 42% reported these stayed the same and 2.9% reported that they decreased somewhat or substantially. 68% of those who reported their caregiving responsibilities increased somewhat or substantially in 2020 reported that their work-life balance due to CSB/SJU responses to the pandemic deteriorated somewhat or substantially.

Among respondents who identified their gender, 71.2% of those who reported their caregiving responsibilities had increased somewhat or substantially since the start of 2020 identified as women and 28.7% identified as men.

### **AE19. How has the COVID-19 pandemic and CSB/SJU's responses to the pandemic impacted your caregiving responsibilities? (open-ended)**

Trying to work during a pandemic unsurprisingly proved difficult to employees with families for which to care. Parents of young children especially have been hit hard by the multiple demands on their time:

“I was unable to support my children during their distance learning phases last year. Things are improving as the kids have returned to in person learning this year. I fear they have lost steady progress and their own mental/emotional health has suffered as my workload increased throughout the pandemic to support students on campus.”

“Kids were home more, both due to needing to isolate while awaiting COVID test results, schools closed, keeping them home for more mild illnesses. My job is more flexible than my husband's, so when the kids need to be home or have appointments, it falls on me. The poor community policies for K-12 schools in so many of our communities has exacerbated this during fall 2021. I've been out sick or with sick kids more than any other time except when on parental leave. It's a lot to manage on the fly.”

“I am very fortunate that my partner's employer (not academia) is very family-friendly and he has been able to step in with caregiving when I am not able to due to work demands. His job cannot be done remotely, and yet his employer demonstrated a great deal of flexibility and support for our family. He has done more caregiving during the pandemic than I have due to our respective employers' responses to the pandemic.”

“I need to be home more regularly, as we are avoiding out-of-school child care. But my husband has a much more family-friendly work environment and is able to bring our children to his office when he works or work easily from home. I do find it ironic that I have been told I cannot bring my children to work at a Catholic institution, yet when I worked at a public institution I was encouraged to bring them. I am incredibly thankful to have an active partner in caregiving, that can balance responsibilities.”

Some individuals noted that departmental policies were increasingly unfair and inequitable to those with families for which to care:

“There is absolutely no support for families & most departments are downright mean to those with kids. This varies by department.”

“i feel like i can't take care of my family and home needs. my department is so grossly understaffed and i need an adjustment, but feel like i can't ask for it. I need help and my family needs help but feel trapped in my job.”

In addition to dealing with young children, often requiring distance learning, many employees had to deal with eldercare:

“My parents are elderly and needed a lot of emotional, and informational support during the pandemic. I was the only one in their "pod" to help them.”

“The flexibility of CSB/SJU has allowed me to be there for my elderly parents for doctor's appointments and errands so they could shelter in place and limit their exposure.”

Moreover, a number of respondents noted the increased burdens on other family members, including older and adult children and spouses:

“My children need me more. They are older but they are struggling socially and mentally with all this.”

“We also had one of our kids move back in with us for several months when forced to work remotely.”

“Spouse very reluctant to go out which adds more to my plate.”

## **Feelings About CSB/SJU**

Forty-nine percent of respondents reported that their feelings about CSB/SJU had been somewhat or substantially negatively impacted by CSB/SJU's responses to the pandemic. Just 15% said their feelings were positively affected, with 35% reporting that their feelings stayed the same.

### **Y13. Why have your feelings about CSB/SJU have been impacted in this way (open-ended)**

Several respondents maintained that the administration is doing the best it can, given the circumstances:

“I believe the responses have been sober and thoughtful. From a COVID-perspective I feel the institution is doing its best to meet the needs of the largest number of people in our community. The adaptations we have all had to make have not been ideal. I have a lot of trust in our leadership to make choices that place community first.”

Some held that, while the administration's response to the pandemic was adequate in academic year 2020-21, it is no longer as concerned with community safety as it is with customer service for students and their parents:

“At first, I was positive about the response, but CSB/SJU are not isolated from Stearns County (which has a strong anti-mask, anti-vaccine population) and I feel that dropping the mask mandate was a very bad idea. I feel like we are pandering to the population that has been disinformed by right wing media.”

In addition to questioning aspects of the administration's priorities, respondents noted the toxicity of the environment, wrought by the perception of increased demands with no compensation, the infighting between faculty and staff members, the lack of accountability for student misdeeds, and the disconnect between messaging seen as performative and self-serving and the reality of the institutions:

“The pandemic and restructuring/downsizing (euphemistically called "reprioritization") has been a one-two punch that had made working for CSB/SJU a toxic environment. I had never considered changing careers before the pandemic as teaching is truly a passion of mine. However, I believe my colleagues and I are undervalued, underappreciated, and are now pit against each other in the ugliest of ways.”

“There is a lack of common sense in our administration and in our faculty leadership.

We should have put off the integrations roll-in for a year. Switching to a new curriculum, shrinking enrollments, completely redoing all our classes to fit the 3 hour, 4-week block---ALL AT ONCE showed a severe lack of judgment. To top it off we come back and hear the same words from the administration that we hear every year--times are hard; we appreciate you but everyone needs to work harder. We have

faculty who don't work hard, but nothing ever happens to them. They still only teach 4 days a week. They still only teach times that fit their schedule so they can also teach somewhere else during the same semester. And yes, I know who these REAL folks are but nothing is ever done about them.

Look--the same faculty serve on the committees, serve in multiple ways--- but it seems like we are all 'Sisyphus'. The boulder is getting too big for the few who are trying so hard."

"My decreased job satisfaction has to do with the increasing rigidity and intolerance I experience among my students. Fewer and fewer of them are really interested in exploring or learning from points of view different from their own. More and more of them are convinced that they already have the right answers and that anybody who disagrees is simply wrong, deluded, misguided, and immoral. I find it harder to work with this population than I did 5 or 10 years ago."

"This year students and administration seem to think all is normal. The presidents and cabinet seemingly do not see value in our appreciate the skills we have gained at being flexible, doing our work in new and creative ways while still being present for students."

Staff in particular feel slighted by the emphasis on faculty and students, such that they feel themselves bearing the brunt of the increased workload with less flexibility or safety. Many find themselves ready to leave:

"It consistently felt like the institutions made decisions and communicated to save their tails and keep us afloat. There is a place for that, but we have sacrificed the care of staff to do that. It should not be either/or. It feels like many decisions focused on faculty and disregarded staff."

"I didn't feel that staff were given the same levels of consideration as other members of campus. We were often the last to receive information but still expected to have response plans together to address student and faculty concerns often without being informed that policy decisions were being made. I also think a blanket return to work requirement for staff over the summer was incredibly insensitive and impractical since we were given only a weeks notice."

"I came to work every day. Faculty took accommodations and worked from home.

CSB/SJU failed to enforce the masking, then removed the masking. I was forced to work with FACULTY who would bartend on the weekends UNMASKED. I work with

vulnerable adults and continually worried I was going to kill them because of CSB/SJU policies.”

Finally, many faculty and staff noted how hypocritical the institution seemed when it came to being accommodating for employees with families:

“As a parent of young children, I feel CSB/SJU is not a family friendly workplace. Young children and their families have been left behind in this pandemic as a whole, and I feel that here at work as well.”

“I also believe that I had limited resources to deal with children being home from school or daycare and having to help teach my children online while also teaching my courses. If I didn't have a spouse that could stay home and also pitch in, I would have had to quit.”

“My colleagues are terrible to people who have children. They have no empathy for those with children & make it very difficult to work here if you have children. COVID was the same.”

## **Future at CSB/SJU**

### **Z. How do you think the COVID-19 pandemic and/or CSB/SJU's responses to the pandemic will affect your future at these institutions?**

In regards to CSB/SJU's response to the pandemic, many respondents (30) mentioned it did not affect their future here and were not planning to quit. 15 respondents indicated they weren't sure how it affected them. 9 respondents were questioning the future of the institution, the longevity of 4-year residential liberal arts colleges, and how this would impact how CSB/SJU would continue emphasizing the liberal arts.

19 respondents indicated they were looking for a way to leave, with 4 indicating they were leaving soon regardless, and 13 were looking for another job and were considering switching careers for potentially better benefits and pay and less emotional baggage. 7 were thinking about retiring sooner, some moving it up by several years.

“It's already leading me to plan for an earlier retirement and eroded any remaining sense of "loyalty" I may have once felt. CSB/SJU used to feel special, different, like places that really cared about those who worked here. It feels much less like than now than it did two years ago, and of course much less two years ago than ten. The feeling that we are institutions in decline with no plan to stop that fall has not been helped by COVID.”

Twenty five respondents mentioned the response to the pandemic by CSB/SJU had not affected their future plans.

Sixteen respondents focused on other issues they found more pressing including the effectiveness of the academic administration and human resources. Other challenges highlighted include program prioritization, strain caused by shrinking staff, and declining enrollment. A few mentioned morale on campus, not being able to talk to colleagues about issues, and how people are nervous about other people as well as the vaccine. A variety of other issues were mentioned including the uninviting culture on campus, Pat Hall, student evaluations, support for students of color, working in a toxic work environment with bullying, sexism, and favoritism, the new curriculum, and in general how the school is run.

“The pandemic and its magnitude become an occasion to reveal existing stress points in our institutions. I don't think the pandemic and the schools' responses revealed anything that wasn't already there; it only put DEIJ concerns, lack of responsiveness to faculty concerns, and more into sharper relief.

One mentioned that they felt more supported in 2020 but in 2021 the support, communication, and Zoom information sessions were gone and replaced with just wearing a mask. Similarly, one mentioned feeling as though the health of everyone is not prioritized.

Nevertheless, a couple felt CSB/SJU did well.

“In the end, CSB/SJU did a great job providing support and science-driven policies. I can quibble with personal preferences and details, but also know that the institutions and my bosses/colleagues fully support me, even in stressful and changing times.”

Seven mentioned an increased workload and how unsustainable it is, while a few felt they had been treated poorly and are resentful as they have been dealing with long commutes or just feel like a budget item instead of a person.

A few suggestions to address some of these issues focus on increased flexibility in terms of a hybrid work schedule and providing more work/life balance.

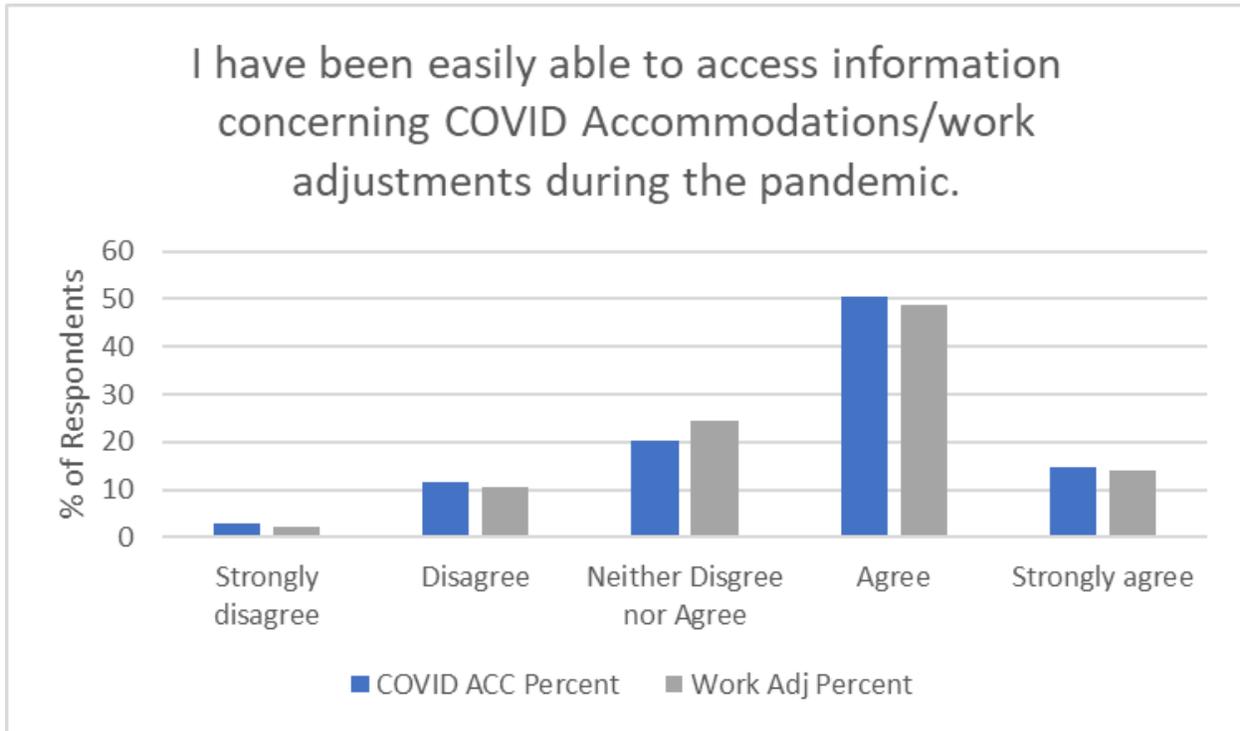
“Ongoing flexibility, including a hybrid work schedule are NECESSARY and we know we can successfully do so in many areas following the pandemic. There are times when in-person is necessary, but many things are now easily adaptable to an online experience that is effective for students and may provide more work/life balance for over-tapped, understaffed employees.”

Others simply want CSB/SJU to be more family friendly and want to feel that their voices matter. As COVID continues to be an issue, one mentioned that they would like COVID pay for when someone has to miss work. Another acknowledged that it will take time to get to a new normal and that it will require trust.

## COVID Accommodations/Work Adjustments

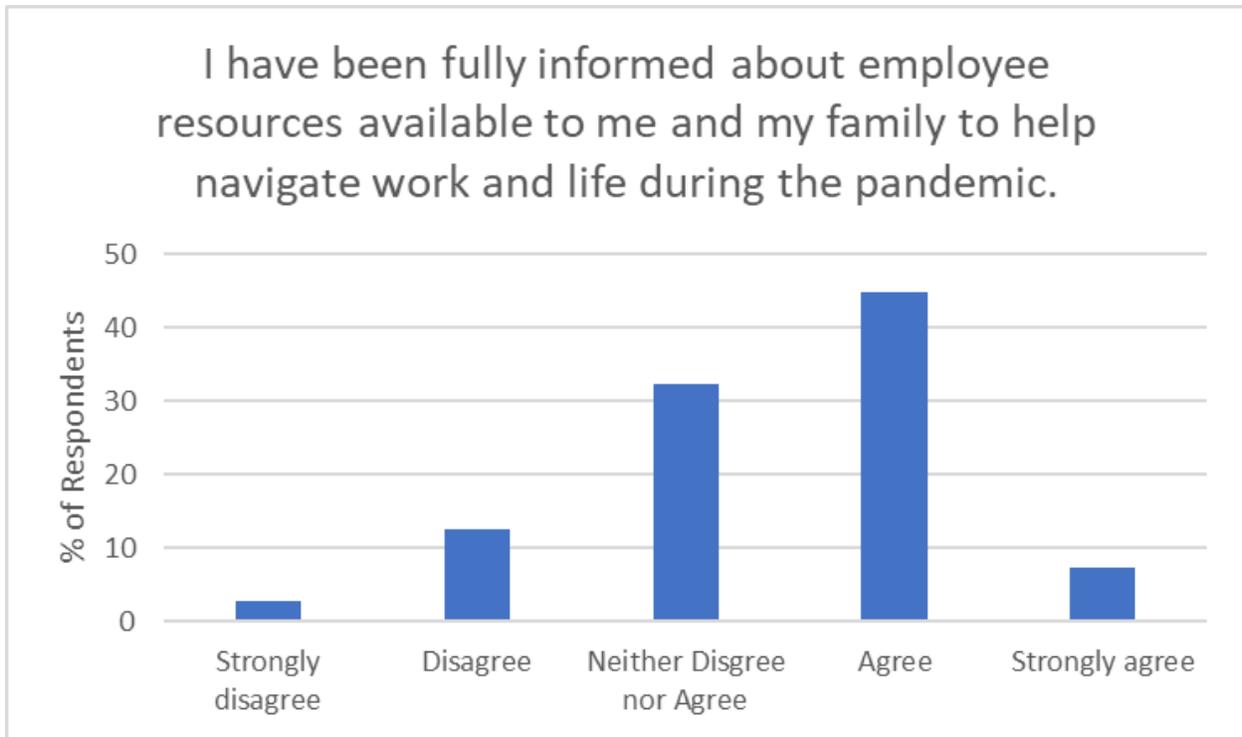
### *Access to Information*

**AF and AG. I have been easily able to access information concerning COVID Accommodations/work adjustments during the pandemic...**



A majority of respondents (including faculty and staff) agreed that they have been easily able to access information concerning COVID Accommodations and work adjustments. This issue is a place where CSB/SJU performed well, although approximately a third of respondents (COVID Accommodations 35%, 48; Work adjustments 37%, 50) disagreed or did not take a position. This pattern was consistent even when looking only at faculty (including tenure-track, tenured, term, and adjunct) and only at staff (including administrative and support).

**AH. Employee Resources: I have been fully informed about employee resources available to me and my family to help navigate work and life during the pandemic (e.g. employee assistance program --EAP).**



This data is similar to the COVID and work accommodations, with a slight majority responding either agree (44.9%) or strongly agree (7.4%). While it is good that the majority felt fully informed about employee resources, a significant amount of respondents felt ambivalent (32.4%) or disagreed (including disagree and strongly disagree 15.4%).

*Improving Access to Information*

**AH 22. What could be done to make the information about COVID Accommodations and work adjustments more accessible to you? (open-ended)**

**Accommodation and Info Availability:**

The majority of respondents noted that information about and access to accommodations were fine in the first academic year of the pandemic. A few noted that they found communication complicated or preferred a certain format for information:

“After being forced to return to in-person work, we were told we could contact HR if we wanted to pursue an accommodation, but not given any information about what types of accommodations they might make and for what circumstances, which has made me not pursue and accommodation, even though I'm very uncomfortable working in person.”

A number felt that faculty and staff should be trusted to make their own decisions about their health and well-being:

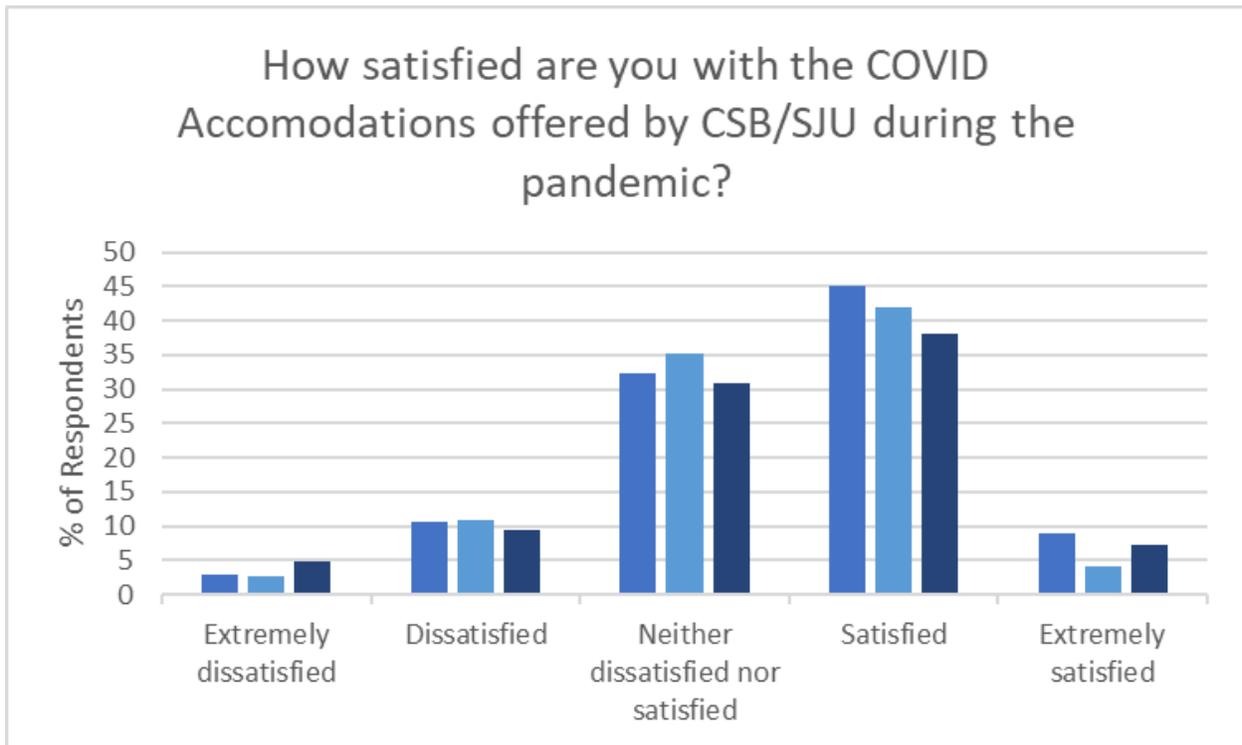
“Discussions should have been much broader at the start of the pandemic. Faculty members have been ignored on a number of major issues facing CSB/SJU.”

“Empower employees to make decisions rather than creating one-size-fits-all directives that all must follow.”

“I can find the information just fine, but the policies for flex work currently seem limited and close minded to the times.”

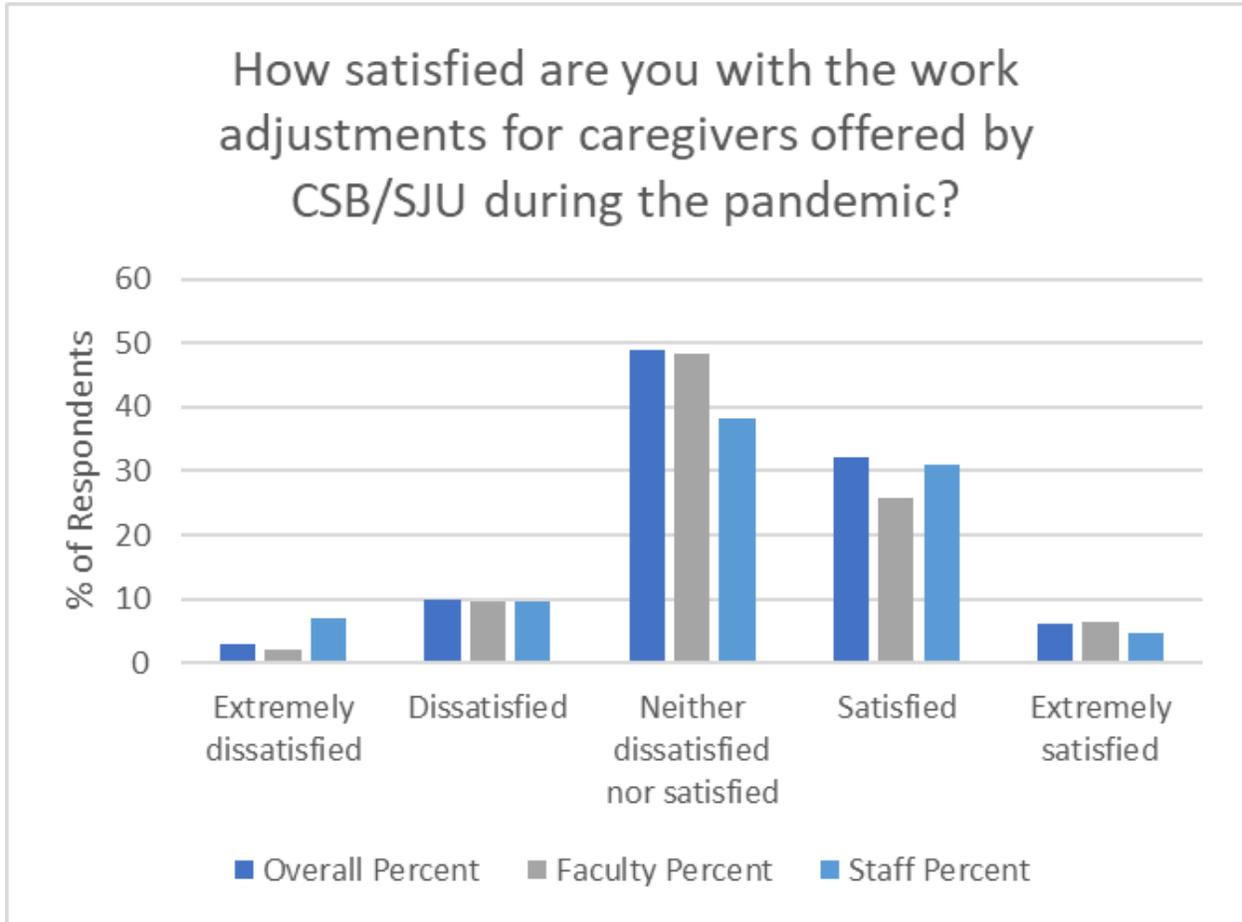
*Satisfaction*

**AQ. Satisfaction with COVID Accommodations: How satisfied are you with the COVID Accommodations offered by CSB/SJU during the pandemic?**



While the majority of respondents were satisfied (45.1%) or extremely satisfied (9%), there are slight variations between the staff (including administrative and support staff) and the faculty (including tenured/tenure track and term/adjunct faculty). Faculty appeared to be more satisfied than staff, which may be a reflection of greater flexibility for the ability to work remotely.

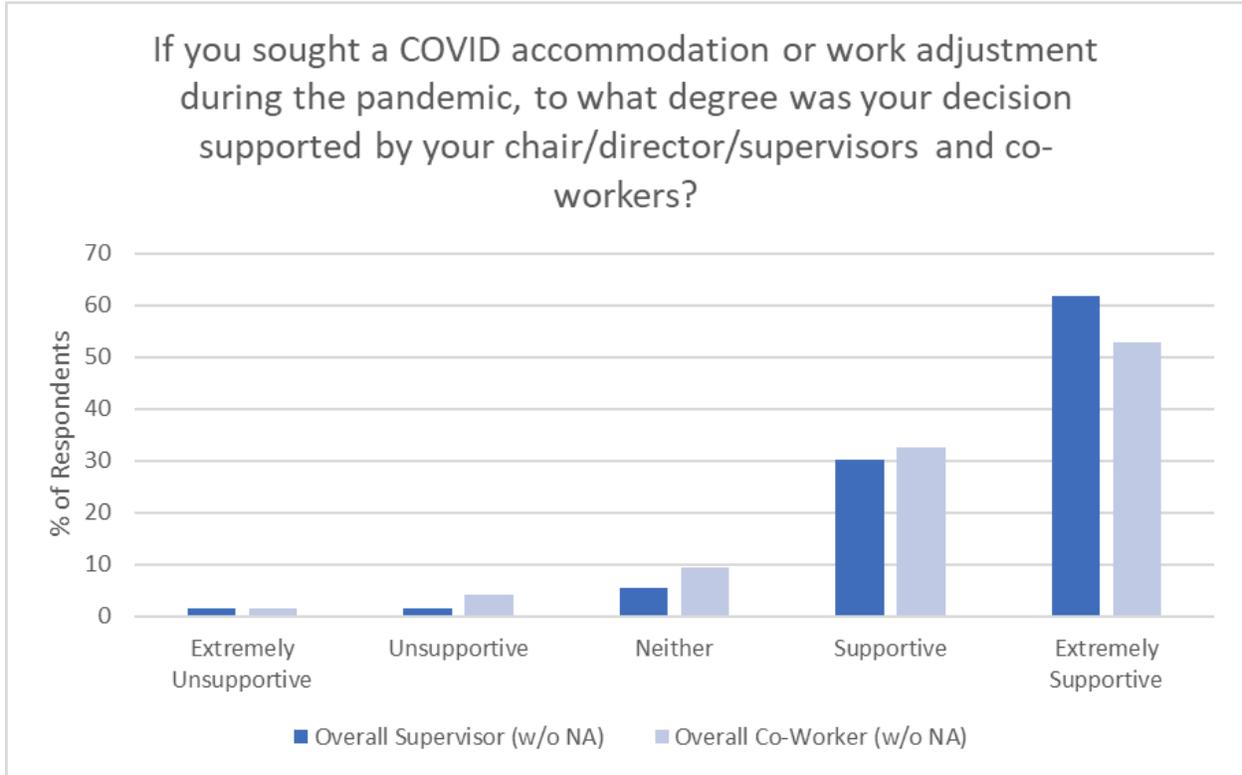
**AR. Satisfaction with work adjustments: How satisfied are you with the work adjustments for caregivers offered by CSB/SJU during the pandemic?**



Almost half of the respondents were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied with the work adjustments offered during the pandemic. When differentiated between faculty (including tenured/tenure track and term/adjunct) and staff (administrative and support), it appears that staff were marginally more satisfied than faculty, with a larger number that were extremely dissatisfied. The spread in terms of views on this question may merit some follow up in better understanding the range of different views.

*Support from Colleagues and Supervisors*

**AS and AT. If you sought a COVID Accommodation or work adjustment during the pandemic, to what degree was your decision supported at the department level by your chair/director/supervisor or your co-workers?**



For the respondents who sought a COVID accommodation or work adjustment, an overwhelming majority felt supported by their supervisors and co-workers. Over 90% felt supported by their supervisors; 62% reported felt their supervisors were extremely supportive and 30% felt their supervisors were supportive. Approximately 85% felt supported by their co-workers; 53% felt their co-workers were extremely supportive and 32% felt their co-workers were supportive. This support was likely crucial to help people continue to be productive through the pandemic.

When broken down into staff and faculty respondents, the results are quite similar. No staff and less than 5% of faculty reported that their supervisors were unsupportive or extremely unsupportive. Since this sample is only of staff and faculty that sought either accommodations or work adjustments, the actual numbers are small (73 total respondents indicated they sought an accommodation or work adjustment, only two noted that their supervisor was extremely unsupportive or unsupportive).

A similar pattern exists with support from co-workers. Amongst both staff and faculty a large majority (86% of staff, 83% of faculty) reported that their co-workers were supportive or

extremely supportive. Less than 5% of staff and approximately 6% of faculty reported that they felt co-workers were unsupportive or extremely unsupportive. Approximately 10% of both staff and faculty felt neither supported or unsupported, so it is worthwhile to look more at the qualitative responses below to see what challenges they encountered and their suggestions for the future.

### *What Worked Well*

#### **AU29. Since 2020, what has worked well with the COVID Accommodations and/or work adjustments offered by CSB/SJU? (open-ended)**

Most respondents highlighted how flexibility to work remotely, including remote teaching, contributes to a sense of safety, work-life balance, and productivity. They were grateful for this accommodation; one noted that not having this option would have necessitated that they leave their position.

“The ability for parents of young children to work from home when needed has been a god-send for my team. Many have young kids and with daycare closures happening each time there is an exposure I couldn't handle having staff off of work completely. My ability to tell them they can work at home and care for their kids is the only reason we've been able to keep working through all of this.”

Respondents wished that this option continued to be available to all for whom it is possible to work remotely during AY 2021-2022. One staff member felt it was unacceptable to ask people for underlying conditions to receive an accommodation, prompting them to take on more work to build solutions with their team so that staff did not have to disclose information to HR.

A couple of respondents felt that information about accommodations at the beginning was “not transparent or welcoming but individual interactions were,” pointing to a need to consider how general information about accommodations is communicated and how it can be more welcoming. Respondents who did access accommodations reported that the process was simple.

Other things that worked well for accommodations included the improvements in information technology and platforms, IT staff support, the use of Zoom, faculty training for block teaching, and online teaching during the height of the pandemic. One respondent highlighted the value of having the Dean of Faculty review accommodations.

Some respondents, alongside gratitude for flexibility, still highlighted the unsustainable nature of their workloads. Several respondents also reiterated their disappointment about the cancellation of the mask mandate. One respondent explained that they have inadequate leave to care for their child who is too young to be vaccinated.

## *How to Improve*

### **AV. What could be done to improve the medical accommodations and/or work adjustments offered by CSB/SJU during the pandemic?**

Twelve respondents mentioned that there wasn't anything they would change to improve COVID accommodations or they were unsure or did not have suggestions.

Of those that did have suggestions, 20 respondents focused on working from home and an additional 6 focused on the idea of accommodations and the process itself. Several wanted more flexible work from home opportunities for all as an ongoing possibility, as people had shown that they could do it successfully.

“There was a visceral push to be in person because the institutions wanted to have an image that we had things under control. That was in opposition to what many of us were feeling and experiencing as we were working longer hours, trying to keep staff employed as much as possible, helping kids who were learning from home - all or part of the year - and all of the other stresses.”

A couple mentioned having mental health days or personal holidays each semester as well. A couple of respondents also asked that some courses be allowed to be remote on an ongoing basis.

Those commenting on the accommodations process itself mentioned that they would have appreciated hearing about accommodations sooner and with more assurance that those in charge were supportive.

“CSB/SJU could have saved a lot of stress by skipping some of the feet dragging at the beginning and going straight to the accommodations with an immediate assurance that they had people's backs. Lots of folks worried that they were going to be screwed. They weren't in the end, but why not establish trust on the front end, instead of eventually doing the right thing, but in ways that caused unnecessary stress in an already stressful time? “

Another mentioned that the process was intrusive and triggering as they had to share information about themselves and their family. One person asked that mental health be considered in addition to physical health. One mentioned that their accommodations were ignored this year (2021-2022), even with a doctor's note as they were expected to work in-person at least once per week. A couple asked to continue accommodations this year and to return to last year's policies, while a couple wanted the work adjustments for this year to be more clearly advertised.

Five respondents focused on the requirements, asking for on-site testing, higher rate of vaccinations on campus, testing all students when they return, and requiring masks. There were a few complaints about the BAC that it wasn't fully renovated, some of the classrooms were too small for the number of students, and that some rooms didn't have the appropriate ventilation or cameras. One asked for additional training and enforcement by chairs as they observed their own chair openly working against the school policies and finding ways around the policies, even praising those who ignored them.

Five responses focused on communication, asking for emails to be answered, never hearing back from the Employment Assistance Program, making sure that changes were communicated to everyone on campus, requesting better explanations be provided for students and faculty to avoid difficult situations, and that there be more transparency. One response mentioned how lagging communication on accommodations, working remotely, whether campus would be online, and masking made them stress more as they are a parent and needed to figure out how they were going to handle their kids.

Four responses focused on the workload, stating that some tasks should have been delayed, departments needed to be filled to function properly, committee work should have been reduced, and that they wanted someone to clean their office.

Six comments focused on the human side of the pandemic as they wanted their colleagues to be more understanding. They focused on how we had lost the ability to see all the situations people were navigating, and wanted to remind others that wait times would be longer for requests since some people were working from home. They also asked for more trust from the administration.

“I’m not sure how to say it, but basically trust. I feel like I need to justify my choices instead of just being able to do what is best for me or my classroom.”

Another wanted faculty concerns to be taken more seriously or more humanely as the pandemic is still going on. One also mentioned probationary faculty needing more protection based on their work schedule.

Finally, there was a comment wanting faculty to be thanked.

“Thanking the faculty would have been really nice last year; instead, there were scary messages about program closures and visible impatience with faculty at the same time we sacrificed so much to make the situation work.”

### *What Else To Know*

#### **AW31. What else should the IEJ and the FFPP know about your experiences with a COVID Accommodations or work adjustment during the pandemic? (open-ended)**

When it comes to providing further information, the majority of respondents elaborated on previous responses, noting that the struggles of the pandemic compounded issues already prominent in the institutions, including work overload and inequities, low morale, fear, distrust, and policies that go against family friendly practices:

“It has been a really challenging year. I love my job. I love our community. I am tired and struggling. I know the institution is doing the best it can. I believe we need some additional changes to boost morale, in particular, as we know we are facing more institutional changes.”

“CSB/SJU is a terrible place for working parents. It varies by department and that's the problem. With my first child, I never ever received course release because no one in my department was aware it. My chair openly complained about faculty with kids &

throughout this whole experience, no one in my department even bothered to ask how I was doing. Some departments are better but that's the problem. Our administration sets policies from a tower but has no idea what is happening in departments or is ignoring it. Asking us to switch to a block schedule amidst a pandemic, while working for free, and taking on childcare shows how little the administration values its employees. I do not feel valued at all by this organization.”

“I pray that if there is another HUGE emergency that WISER decisions are made.”

“I just don't understand our administration --maybe it is the lack of a President--maybe we have people with limited foresight (too many years at CSB/SJU without outside experience of the world) but where is wisdom? Where is PRACTICAL decision-making?

“Too many people on the defensive--administrators and faculty. If the admin would let faculty committees do more work and instead spent more time on the bigger picture..... I don't know. All I can say is that the last year and a half have been hell and having the admin yell at faculty won't help.”

Many commented again that they would have valued more trust placed in them to make decisions regarding how best to do their jobs:

“We can also trust our staff and Faculty to follow the expectations for reaching goals and producing our work, answering calls and attending meetings (via Zoom) while allowing for flexible scheduling that also has room for some regular or occasional tele commuting, this could help with recruitment and retention of faculty/staff who do not want to live in rural MN and provide balance and flexibility to those who do live here.”

“If someone's doctor recommends remote work, I have genuine concerns about HR disagreeing with that.”

Nevertheless, particularly in AY 2020-2021, a number of respondents were pleased with the accommodations to work remotely that were arranged and available, both institutionally and within departments:

“I did appreciate that I could teach fully remotely last year, especially as a person with underlying health conditions, that helped me feel much safer. For some classes, some students still opted to be in the classroom so using the Hyflex model just with me as remote as well.”

“I appreciate that some of the decisions have been left up to departments to navigate, and am thankful I am in a department that offers flexibility.”

## Concerns

**AX.32 Concerns Suggestions for 2021-22: As you think about the 2021-2022 school year, what concerns about the pandemic and/or CSB/SJU responses to the pandemic have you had? As you answer this question, be sure to note if there are policies (especially concrete policies at other institutions) that could be implemented that would alleviate those concerns. (open-ended)**

Most respondents were concerned and disappointed by inconsistent masking policies (30 highlighted this in a question asking for concerns or suggestions for 2021-2022). There was a sense of low morale resulting from the administration not heeding the desires of the faculty senate to mask throughout fall 2021 and not aligning with CDC guidance. As one respondent wrote: “Since the mask mandate is lifted campus wide, [students] clearly do not feel it is as important now and routinely enter the room without the mask, sometimes asking me for one, which I provide. I do not feel safe in the classroom.” Respondents overwhelmingly thought that masks should be required in all indoor spaces. A few respondents highlighted that at the least, floors and departments should have been able to maintain autonomy over masking. Respondents characterized institutional policies as reactive and not taking the pandemic seriously enough, pointing to our higher student case counts than peer institutions and to a perception “that institutional survival, not the needs of the people who make up the community, are paramount.” As this respondent put it, “The phrase “community always” is truly Orwellian.”

Three respondents to this question highlighted the opposite view on masks. They felt that lifting the masking requirement following science, was “fair,” or that masks and vaccinations should be at the discretion of individuals.

Some highlighted concerns about the financial viability of the institutions, enrollment, and how meeting the needs of the new students who we are accepting to respond to enrollment challenges, is not sustainable. Respondents appreciated the vaccination requirement and hoped for a booster requirement, which was enacted in spring 2022, while also highlighting that they wished the vaccination policy had been announced earlier and that it did not allow for exemptions.

One respondent shared troubling examples of a lack of consequences, clear policies, and valuing of staff, all leading to low morale:

“I was exposed to a co-worker who tested positive for COVID. They did not disclose they were having symptoms. The policy was fuzzy, hard to find, and unenforced. There were no consequences. I had to attend meetings off-campus which were moved there ONLY to avoid the mask mandate, which was inconvenient and unfair, but I am only "support staff" so no one really cares. I feel I have been an unseen and unappreciated 'essential' worker never classified as such but operating as such. The pay cuts have been insulting.”

Another respondent wondered what accountability measures were in place for unvaccinated staff. Respondents urged the institutions “to think in terms of crisis and trauma, especially for students, but also for faculty and staff.” There was a sense that stress, trauma, and missed opportunities, amidst the ongoing pandemic, should prompt a reevaluation of adding more onto people’s

shoulders. As one explained, “delay the curriculum, ease up on committee expectations, offer ways to allow balance.”

Suggestions for changes included allowing staff to work from home, which they demonstrated they were able to do successfully during the pandemic. A few specifically recommended a policy like that of the UMN where staff work two days a week from home. This policy, respondents noted, is not only a safer way to work during the ongoing pandemic, but would also enable us to recruit more talent, be more attractive to diverse applicants, and retain more employees. Problems with staff retention have increased workloads and contribute to low morale. One respondent offered a list of links to institutions instituting flexible at home policies that we include in this report’s recommendations.

Other suggestions included: methods to hold unvaccinated individuals accountable to the community: “Anyone who is not vaccinated should be required to submit weekly testing results.”; testing around holidays: “There should be random (drawn by lottery) testing of 5% of faculty, staff and students at the beginning of each semester and after breaks (i.e. Thanksgiving, spring break)”;

and access to mental health services and counseling on campus for employees. Better advertising of the EAP program’s mental health services, and evaluation of whether this program is effective since respondents noted that they sometimes do not hear back from EAP (something we corroborated when one of us tried to schedule services through EAP, were told we would get a call to schedule an appointment with a counselor, and never heard back), could improve access to mental health services for employees.

## Recommendations

### **AY.33 What Else to Know - Work During Pandemic: What else should the Inclusion, Equity, and Justice or Family Friendly Policies and Practices committees know about your experience working during the COVID-19 pandemic? (open-ended)**

In this final question, respondents advocated for greater flexibility and care given to employees, who feel undervalued and undercompensated.

“I know there are difficult decisions to be made and that a lot of people are scared. Perhaps if CSB/SJU encouraged people to do their work but to take precautions as they felt necessary, everyone would feel freedom and less fear, thereby increasing the morale on campus (which is low at the moment in my opinion.)”

The following quote expresses low morale of a faculty member due to feeling undervalued undercompensated:

“I'm used to uncompensated work. 12 months of work on a 9-month contract. What I don't appreciate is the excess expectations that are not being recognized. We need more than lip-service "thank you". We need leadership that honestly recognizes how hard this has been and talks honestly about it rather than fake cheer-leading. Worse, we have morale- busting talk of downsizing without any sense of how much we all have already sacrificed. Or any promise of compensation increases to keep pace with inflation. Everyone has work-life balance issues, not just those with children or parents to care for.”

A couple of staff respondents described a gulf between faculty and staff accommodations and intensely low morale among staff. In one's words:

“The divide between faculty and staff became even more significant. The process to move to block was a strategically good decision. But faculty were consistently given kudos for all of the work they did. Many offices saw staff leave, additional duties added, and it was just expected everyone would happily be able to do the additional work - with almost no thank you. Even items like Community Engagement Days. Staff don't get release time. We just get more added to our plates. I was in a meeting where several faculty commented how much they loved those days. I reminded everyone (I'm staff) that it was on the backs of staff with already overflowing plates with no release time; the silence was deafening. Yes, faculty play a key role in our institutions. Staff kept many things functioning. And we have no way to ask for a 1/6th release or recognition for the additional duties.

The announcement by the presidents that everything was back to normal, and we all needed to return on July 8 was one of the most offensive messages and showed the vast disconnect to staff's experiences. July 8 return meant faculty were already off contract, so it really only applied to staff. Many of us had no access to childcare in the middle of summer. Many of us still have children who couldn't (and still can't) be vaccinated. The whole message was myopic and disrespectful of what people are navigating. We talk

about Benedictine values, but we haven't shown how we're caring for staff in any kind of Benedictine way.

That continues today. Decisions are made assuming we live in a bubble, don't have underlying conditions, don't have kids without ability to get vaccinated, have kids in school districts with masking requirements, etc.

Most of the last year and a half is how you DON'T treat people if you care about them.”

Low morale is tied with emotional trauma and burnout that many are experiencing. Burdens of caregiving, lack of access to mental health care, and disconnect between being told that things are back to normal while we continue to live within the pandemic are issues raised by respondents that likely contribute to these feelings:

“Thank you for asking these questions. Even if no one ever reads any of this, it is very valuable to be able to write it down. I rarely take time to stop and think about what we've all been through because there is still so much to do. To realize just how profoundly tired I am, and how burned out I've become, is a little shocking. I didn't realize until I sat here crying while I answered these questions no one has asked me before. Thank you for asking.”

The preceding quotes illustrate the intense stress and anger felt by some members of our communities.

Two respondents raised the issue of sexism and racism occurring on campus as highly troubling and in need of a much stronger and more rapid response from administration:

“The lack of a response to other on-campus issues is exacerbating frustration at a time when we are at empathy fatigue. I really believe we need to observe decisions that are swift and more significant than those we have observed in the past. The stress of Pat Hall situation, as well as others, are pretty significant given all that we are carrying. We need a firm and timely response.”

Other concrete recommendations included affordable and accessible mental health care and onsite childcare.