

AAUP

Ohio State

AAUP-Ohio State Response to Spring 2022 Covid Measures

On Thursday, January 6, 2022, we, Executive Board members of the Ohio State chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), attended President Kristina Johnson's COVID-19 Response Update Town Hall. This event outlined protocols for The Ohio State University's return to in-person instruction.

The COVID-19 pandemic currently continues in full force, and in fact, it is more contagious than ever with the Omicron variant. We found the town hall to be striking in several respects. In our judgment, it did not sufficiently consider how an in-person start to Spring 2022 would disrupt the work of Ohio State's faculty, staff, and students, nor did it sufficiently promise help for handling pandemic burdens. Instead, these burdens were thrown back on faculty, staff, and students themselves. Students were advised, for example, to secure their own hotel rooms if they needed to quarantine. Faculty and staff, too, are being put at risk: many now face challenging family responsibilities or vulnerable health situations at home, but the lack of a general university policy means getting an accommodation from a dean or supervisor is by the luck of the draw. Additionally, the town hall discussed stemming the contagion's spread as an individual responsibility without dwelling on how the re-opening of The Ohio State University, a major presence in central Ohio, would affect rates of transmission and the overall public health.

As an organization of faculty at Ohio State, we are also concerned that, once again, the university's major decisions are being reached with virtually no faculty input. The AAUP endorses the principles of shared governance set forth in our national organization's "[Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#)." But faculty were not consulted about the major issues in the town hall, and this follows the pattern of decision-making during the pandemic generally. Faculty have not been consulted, or consulted in only the most minimal way (as we have gathered from our own prior events and polling), about what they need to do their best work on behalf of students. Additionally, Ohio State has failed to seek out faculty voices about how best to ensure people's ability to weather the personal difficulties of the pandemic.

We are asking that the administration honor our decision-making and the public health by allowing instructional staff to exercise our best judgment in how to teach our courses and keep ourselves and our families safe, through January *and* beyond, based on what we discover in the coming weeks and months about our shared crisis.