Insights from Survey of Spring 2020 Instructors of Record:

Preparedness for the Transition to Online Instruction

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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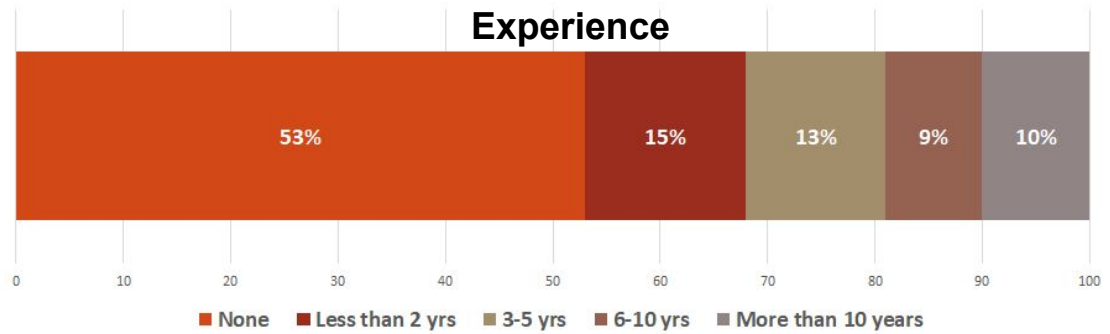
Survey Overview

- **Purpose:** Learn from instructors about their experiences providing academic continuity to students during the Spring 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, particularly
  - Areas in which they felt prepared or less prepared
  - Resources, tools, and strategies that were helpful or missing

- **Population:** 2,857 Instructors of Record from R&R files. About a week into the survey, a filter question was added to screen out those who had started the semester with their courses online. The open-ended analyses include comments from the small number of those instructors who completed the survey prior to the screening question.

- **Design:** Closed-ended questions followed by 3 open-ended questions and an invitation to learn more about focus group opportunity

- **Timeline:** In field April 16, 2020 through April 27, 2020

- **Response:** 876 usable responses (31% response rate*); 278 indicated interest in focus groups.

  Response rates by college ranged from 24% (CVM) to 41% (WCOT). HSS instructors comprised 25% of survey responses overall, followed by COS and COE (14% each) and CALS (13%).
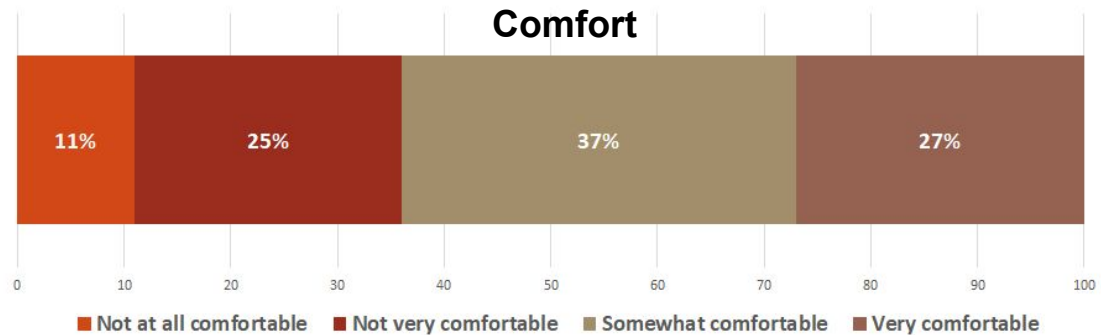
  The population file and Instructor of Record field used included individuals beyond those delivering the instruction; based on later insights gained in conversation with EMAS, we believe the response rate is actually nearer 40%.

Pre-Transition: Experience, comfort and preps

68% of instructors reported **less than 2 years experience with online instruction** prior to the mid-semester transition, the majority of all respondents having no experience.

Experience

53%	15%	13%	9%	10%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

■ None ■ Less than 2 yrs ■ 3-5 yrs ■ 6-10 yrs ■ More than 10 years

Even with high percentages of instructors with limited online teaching experience, **64%** of instructors reported being **somewhat or very comfortable with online instruction** prior to the mid-semester transition.

Comfort

11%	25%	37%	27%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

■ Not at all comfortable ■ Not very comfortable ■ Somewhat comfortable ■ Very comfortable

81% of instructors had **1 or 2 unique course preps** to transition to online instruction.

Unique Course Preps

50%	31%	11%	8%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

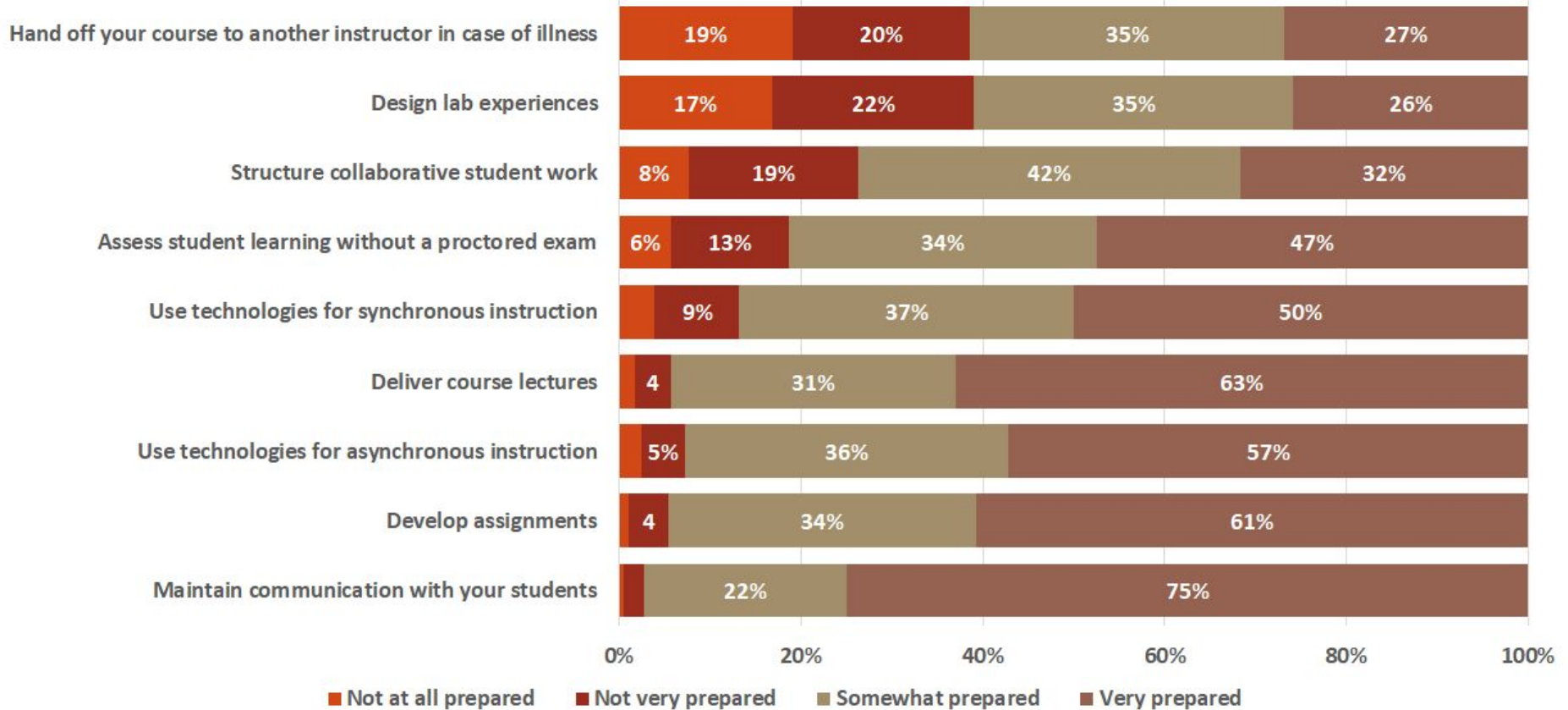■ 1 prep ■ 2 preps ■ 3 preps ■ 4+ preps
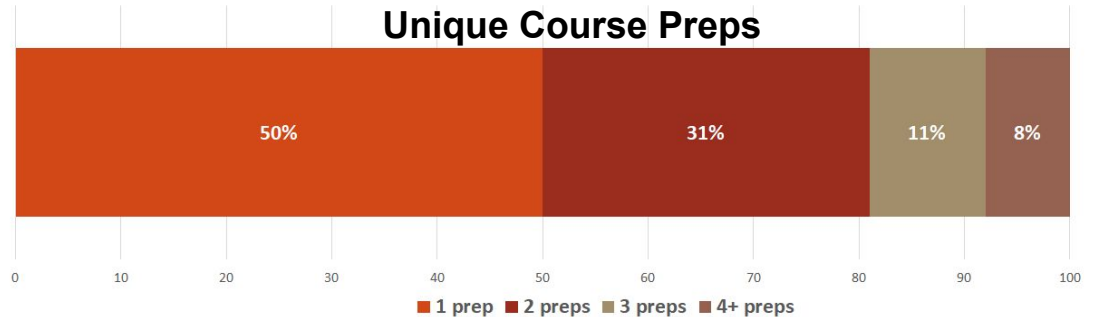
Pre-Transition: Overall

Prior to the transition to online delivery, more than 50% of instructors reported feeling "not at all prepared" or "not very prepared" to *design lab experiences*, *structure collaborative student work*, and *hand off your course to another instructor in case of illness*. Nearly half felt relatively unprepared to *use synchronous technologies for instruction.*
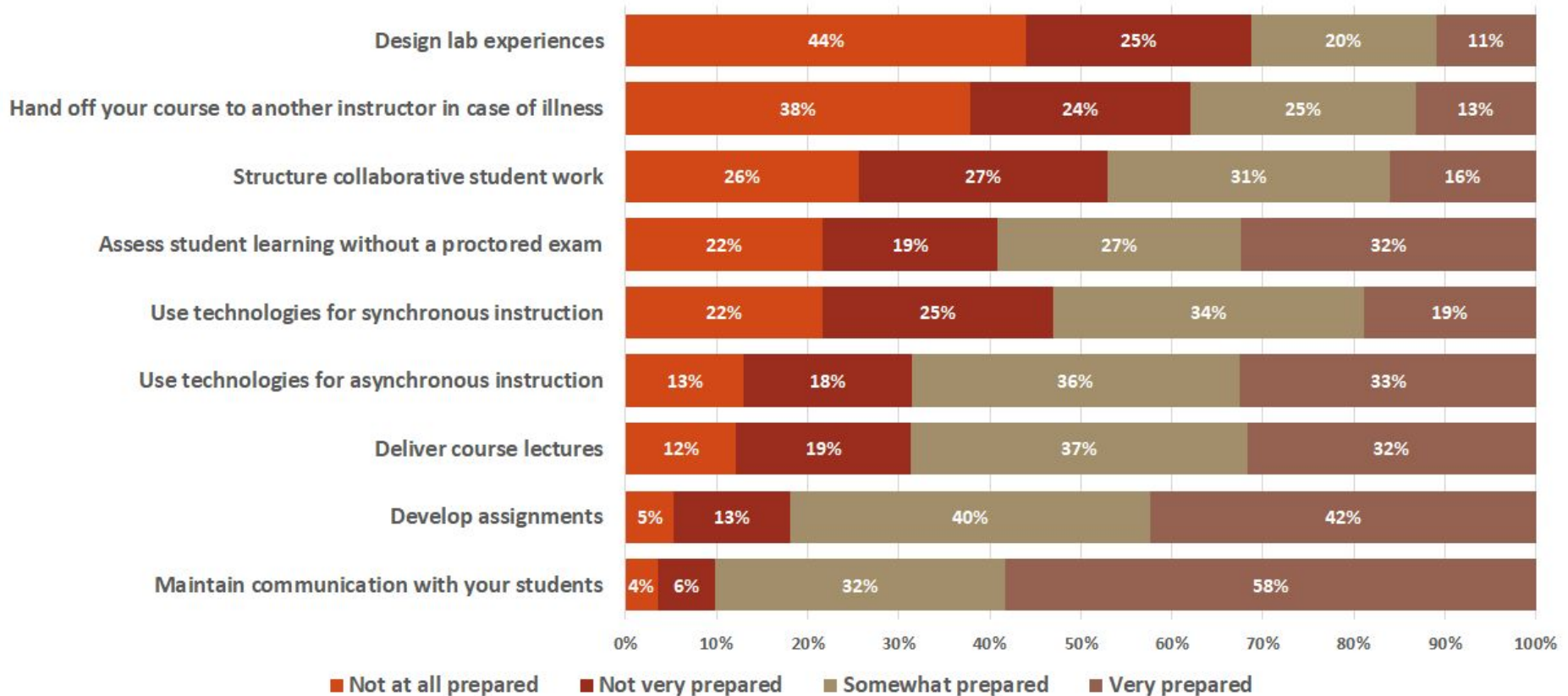
Post-Transition: Overall

A few weeks after the transition to online delivery, half or more of instructors felt "very prepared" in 5 of the 9 categories examined. Still, almost 40% of instructors reported feeling "not at all prepared" or "not very prepared" to *design lab experiences* and *hand off your course to another instructor in case of illness*.

| Category	Not at all prepared	Not very prepared	Somewhat prepared	Very prepared
Hand off your course to another instructor in case of illness	19%	20%	35%	27%
Design lab experiences	17%	22%	35%	26%
Structure collaborative student work	8%	19%	42%	32%
Assess student learning without a proctored exam	6%	13%	34%	47%
Use technologies for synchronous instruction		9%	37%	50%
Deliver course lectures		4	31%	63%
Use technologies for asynchronous instruction		5%	36%	57%
Develop assignments		4	34%	61%
Maintain communication with your students			22%	75%

Changes in preparedness, specific groups

- Instructors who were **least comfortable** with remote instruction prior to the transition reported the largest post-transition percentage point gains in preparedness for *delivering lectures*, *maintaining student communication*, and *using synchronous technologies*.

  - Taken together, these growth areas suggest pre-transition discomfort may have been rooted in concerns about lack of face-to-face engagement.

- Instructors with **no online experience** prior to the transition reported the largest post-transition percentage point gains in preparedness for *using synchronous technologies*, *delivering lectures*, and *designing lab experiences*.

  - The degree of gain related to lab experiences, which remains a significant challenge for many instructors overall, suggests that even limited experience with challenging tasks may be powerfully transformative.

- Instructors with the **highest numbers of unique course preps** reported the largest post-transition percentage point gains in preparedness for *using asynchronous technologies*.

  - This growth area suggests that asynchronous methods may have been favored over synchronous technologies for those managing numerous course preps.

Challenges from Student Preparedness and Access

Over half of instructors experienced some or a great deal of challenge for remote instruction in their course(s) due to students' preparedness and access.

In their open-ended responses, several instructors described changing content delivery plans and assessments to accommodate students' connectivity and bandwidth challenges. The transition caused some instructors to realize that many of their students had been completely dependent upon access to university computer labs and licensed softwares.

	Not at all	A little	Some	A great deal
Preparedness N=866	14%	31%	43%	12%
Access N=865	16%	29%	42%	13%
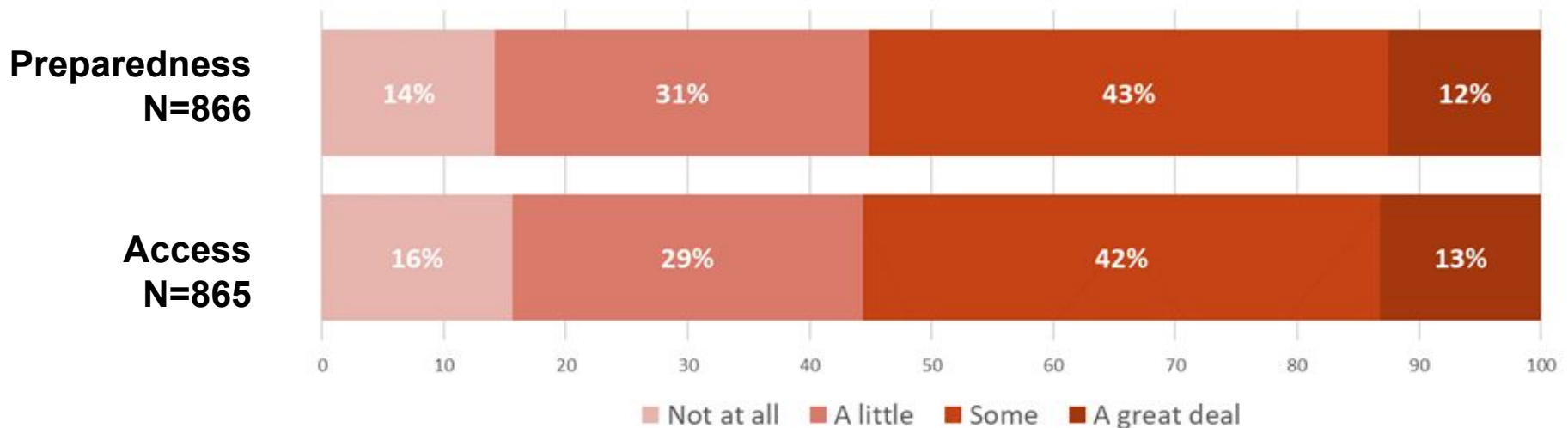
Biggest <u>challenges</u> faced in moving course(s) to remote delivery

- **Course design decisions (21% of comments)**
  - preserving (or not) student community, groupwork, and engagement
  - navigating match (or mismatch) of content and learning objectives with remote delivery
  - maintaining involvement (or not) of external partners (i.e. field experiences, internships, projects)
  - balancing high expectations and integrity with desire to be accommodating

- **Student issues (16%)**
  - lacking access to internet, equipment and materials
  - making and maintaining contact with students
  - observing motivation drop-off
  - students splitting time between studies and other responsibilities
  - addressing student anxieties about assignments, technology, and online instruction in general

- **Selecting / learning instructional technologies (12%)**
  - learning Zoom, followed by learning Moodle, Mediasite, and to a far lesser extent, other tools
  - taking time for independent research and selection of instructional technologies
  - lacking needed equipment or learning to reproduce common tools (e.g. whiteboards) at home

Other frequent mentions included lack of proctored exams and academic integrity concerns (8%), lack of time to do this transition well (6%), and lab/studio-specific challenges due to loss of access to space, materials, equipment and proximity (6%). Some instructors were also challenged by recording lectures in an accessible way; coordinating across sections; persistent university / unit communications, and managing issues exacerbated by large class size (e.g. making student contacts, addressing concerns, developing meaningful and manageable assignments). Less frequent themes included personal challenges (e.g. managing family, childcare, or other health/wellness issues); instructor internet challenges (connectivity or bandwidth); and ethical dilemmas (e.g. trade-offs when choosing between student mental-health and academic integrity.)

Most helpful resources or strategies in <u>transitioning</u> course(s) to remote delivery

- **Instructional technologies (37% of comments)**
  - learning Zoom through workshops, demos, YouTube or other online resources
  - learning Moodle or ramping up existing use of Moodle
  - using Google suite or Mediasite
  - 20+ other tools mentioned by name by 10 or fewer instructors

- **Individuals (24%)**
  - instructors at NC State or via other networks (incl. social media) teaching similar courses provided
    - regular, open discussion about what's working and what's not
    - access to courses in Moodle that had been designed with DELTA
    - Zoom training sessions, how-to documents, instructional videos, etc.
  - dept/college IT staff, dept/college instructional support service staff, department heads and college leaders
  - graduate and undergraduate TAs, and course / program coordinators

- **Pan-university units (12%)**
  - DELTA and LearnTech workshops, consultations, web-based and other resources
  - NC State University Libraries, NCSU HelpDesk, Office of Faculty Development, Engineering Online

Other frequent mentions included professional development or prior experience with online teaching (5%); early, frequent and transparent communication with students (4%); and advantageous course design choices, like already having a flipped or blended class (4%). Less frequent themes included mindset (2%); pre-recorded lectures; professional associations and textbook publishers; and equipment like phones, laptops, and document cameras.

Most helpful resources or strategies in <u>delivering</u> course(s) remotely

- **Zoom (27% of comments)**
  - used for office hours or 1:1 student meetings; breakout rooms; pre-recording lectures or recording synchronous sessions; synchronous sessions at normal class time; weekly Q&A or check-ins after students have engaged material asynchronously. A relative few mentioned whiteboard, chat, polling and transcription functions, or using Zoom to proctor exams
  - considered easy to use by most, although no substitute for face-to-face
  - some raised concerns about privacy issues

- **Moodle (18%)**
  - used for uploading notes, recorded lectures, supplemental videos, sample exercises, practice exams and more; discussion forums; submitting assignments and exams; instructor announcements; quizzes; attendance / participation logs
  - many already using Moodle adopted use of additional features
  - while clearly useful, some don't consider it user-friendly

- **Student engagement strategies (7%)**
  - more regular and personal communications; shorter lectures with intentional and inviting pauses; inviting students to co-host or present on Zoom; regularly requesting student feedback; community-building and care-oriented class openers; inserting some fun.

Other frequent mentions included email and other G-Suite tools (6%), 40+ other technologies mentioned by 10 or fewer instructors (6%); flexibility and other intentional course design choices (4%); tablets, cameras and standard "workhorse" equipment like laptops (4%); and the continued assistance of colleagues and university units (4%). Less frequent mentions include materials; delivery approaches (e.g. slow down); general advice (e.g. keep it simple); and personal qualities (e.g. patience, humor).

Preparedness: Ideas of where to go from here

Institutional

- For various types of potential disruptions, would instructors and students be well-served, or not, by current assumptions, policies, and practices regarding
  - minimum technology requirements for students
  - minimum presence for all courses in our learning management system
  - making student and employee contacts during an emergency (email was not always successful)
  - other….

Pan-university units

- Instructors were most likely to seek transition help from colleagues. How might this insight inform the strategies of pan-university offices with information and skills to share?

- How might we offer instructors faced with a disruption - and with varying skill levels, preferences, and access to technology - simple decision-making tools with multiple options for performing common activities, like
  - fostering groupwork online
  - recording /posting lectures, or
  - replicating whiteboard functionality

Preparedness: Ideas of where to go from here

College / department / program

- How might your unit identify practices that, if introduced, could reduce burdens on instructors of large classes and cross-coordinated sections during future disruptions?

- How might your unit identify practices that, if used occasionally, could help instructors (and future faculty) feel more comfortable and/or prepared to employ those practices during future disruptions?

Individual instructors

- How might your syllabi and preparations each semester look different if you strove to be more "disruption-ready"? Consider how being "disruption-ready" may look different depending on the type of disruption, like hurricanes, loss of building access to flood or fire, and personal injury or illness.

Thanks to...

- Survey respondents

- Nancy Whelchel, Director for Survey Research, for assisting with survey development and administration and presentation of the results.

- Partners providing input on the survey instrument from Division of Academic and Student Affairs (DASA); Distance Education and Learning Technology Applications (DELTA); Enrollment Management and Services (EMAS); Institutional Strategy and Analysis (ISA); Office of Faculty Affairs; Faculty Senate; Graduate School; NC State University Libraries; Office of Faculty Development (OFD); Office of Information Technology (OIT).

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