

Returning to Fall Semester Survey Results

Key Findings



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Caveat: None of us are professional data analysts. All of this was done in addition to our regular jobs because we want a better MICA.

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who was able to complete this survey and share with the MICA community the challenges, fears, and growth that you have experienced over the last few months amidst this global pandemic. We know that time is a precious commodity, and that our request for your feedback was, in some cases, beyond the scope of your capacity.

Introduction

The Great Colleges Steering Committee (GCSC) was a group created to make MICA a better place to work. With the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically affecting everyone personally and professionally, the Communications Subcommittee of the GCSC realized that we needed to proactively ask staff and faculty what happened for them this spring and summer as well as what people were thinking about in regards to Fall semester 2020.

When we first sat down as a subcommittee to discuss the need for this survey there were 3 key factors that we felt were pivotal to address.

- 1) The need for faculty and staff to share their thoughts, concerns, experiences and questions in a format that provided anonymity and attempted to remove systemic and organizational barriers that often inhibit open feedback with administrators and managers.
- 2) A desire to model transparency and accountability by not only gathering feedback, but also providing access to the results to the MICA community in a clear, digestible and timely manner.
- 3) A commitment to not only provide the results of the survey, but also to provide a tangible and actionable list of recommendations to President's Council, based on the needs and concerns of the MICA community.

The Staff Empowerment Council (SEC) and the Faculty Executive Council (FEC) were both given opportunities to add questions that they felt were relevant.

We are acutely aware that the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact upon the MICA community is not happening within a bubble, and that there are equally pressing issues surrounding racial justice, Title IX, equity, and political uncertainty that deserve attention too. While this survey was intended to focus solely on Covid-19 we also want to consciously acknowledge the additional fears and concerns that our community and our nation have been facing.

This document is intended to serve as an Executive Summary of the analysis of your voices as shared through the survey and our analysis and recommendations to President's Council.

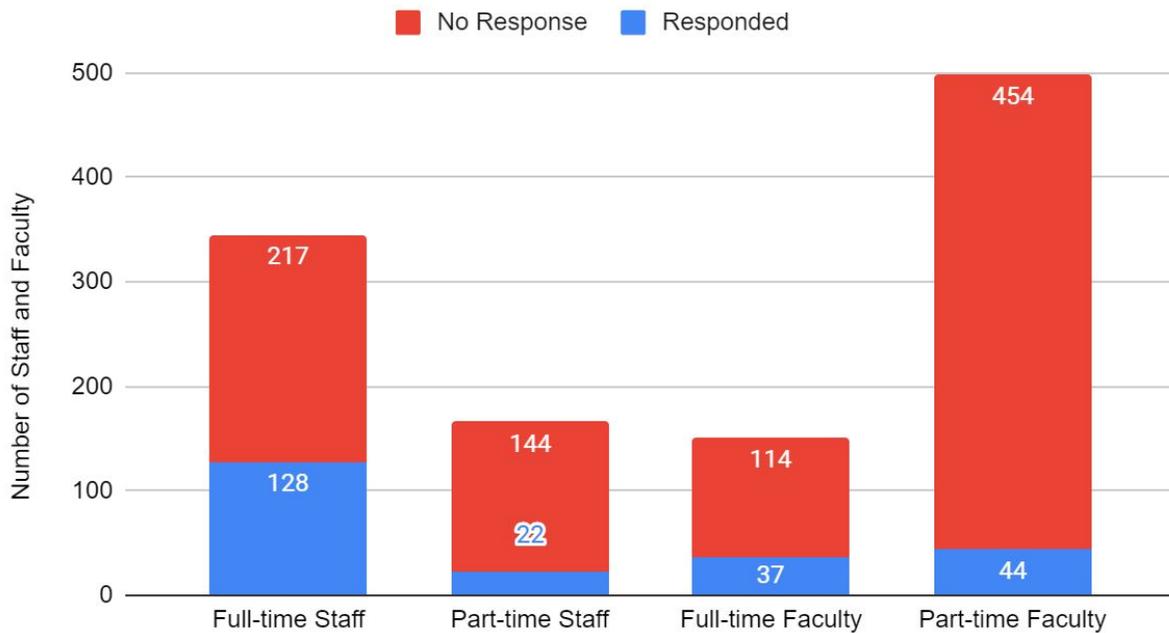
Our website has several slide decks that feature the data in graph format, broken down by each section of the survey. These include:

- [Demographics](#)
- [Spring/Summer Work Reflections](#)
- [Working from Home This Summer](#)
- [Working on Campus This Summer](#)
- [Furlough Experiences](#)
- [Returning for Fall Semester](#)
- [Teaching in Fall](#)

Responses Summary

There were 220 total respondents to the survey with an overall response rate of 20%.

Response by Role



The current breakdown of MICA staff and faculty (not including student workers) had the greatest response rate by full-time staff followed by full-time faculty:

- Full-time staff: 345 (37% Response Rate)
- Full-time faculty: 151 (24% Response Rate)
- Part-time staff: 166 (13% Response Rate)
- Adjunct faculty: 498 (9% Response Rate)

The number of employees furloughed this summer was 115 (this includes full furlough, partial furlough, and schedule modifications). Furloughed employees showed a response rate at 22%.

While our response rates are lower than hoped, we surmised that this is due to two factors:

- Length of survey
- Past surveys without followthrough, updates, or actions

We believe that this is a start to gathering data about MICA for MICA and that an increase in short surveys, with quickly turned around results and follow-up actions, will lead to a better response rate and more accurate data in the future.

Overall Themes

While there is a known negative bias for individuals who comment on a survey, the following themes were clear and seem representative of the current zeitgeist.

Burnout

Overall respondents suggest that they are at or near burnout. Burnout has been identified as a serious issue affecting all workplaces currently, including in [Higher Education](#).

Fear

Overall respondents felt some measure of fear, whether that is getting COVID-19, losing money or their jobs, or even just their ability to perform their jobs remotely.

Call for Inclusive Decision Making and People-centered Communication

Throughout the survey many called for greater involvement in decision making as a great deal of knowledge is held outside of administration. When decisions were announced, they were not clear and the language did not have a great deal of humanity infused in it. This area has a great deal of cross-over with the findings of the Great Colleges Survey.

Confusion and Lack of Clarity

Overall, but specifically in areas such as teaching online, keeping safe, policies, and furloughs, respondents felt the communications surrounding these was confusing. Besides a desire for people-centered communications, clearer communication to staff and faculty is needed to support their work and well being. This area also has a great deal of cross-over with the findings of the Great Colleges Survey.

Section Highlights

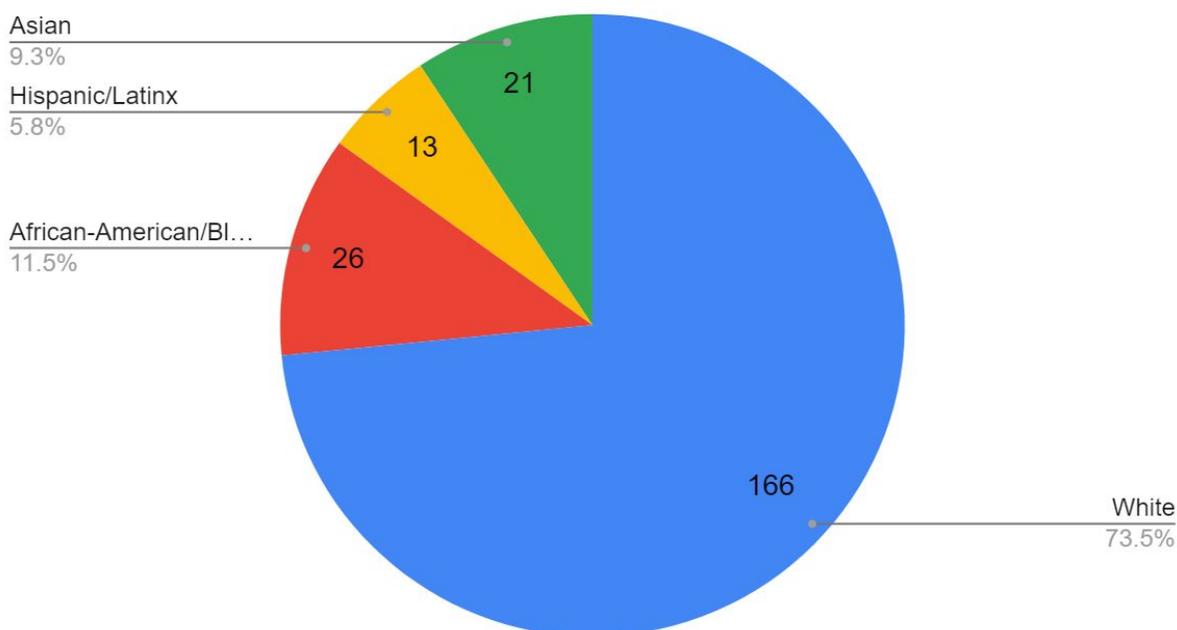
The following overviews represent summaries of the data found in the accompanying graphs and lists based on the different subsections of the survey. This does not contain a complete data set for each question, which can be found in the graph presentations, broken down into the same section headings.

Demographics

When making the decision as to which demographic information to collect for this survey we wanted to maintain as much anonymity as possible so that participants did not fear that any of their responses would be tied directly back to them, should they not want to be identified. We also felt that it was important to gather key demographic information in order to analyze whether there were patterns in the responses based on identity. It is an important equity practice to ask for data that could illustrate systemic barriers due to marginalized identities. Below is a snapshot of some of the demographic responses, and the full list of demographics can be found in the Demographics slide deck.

When collecting information around race and ethnicity we strived to provide as many inclusive options as possible as well as allowing participants to select multiple options. We have collapsed categories when needed to prevent identifiable information.

Respondents by Race



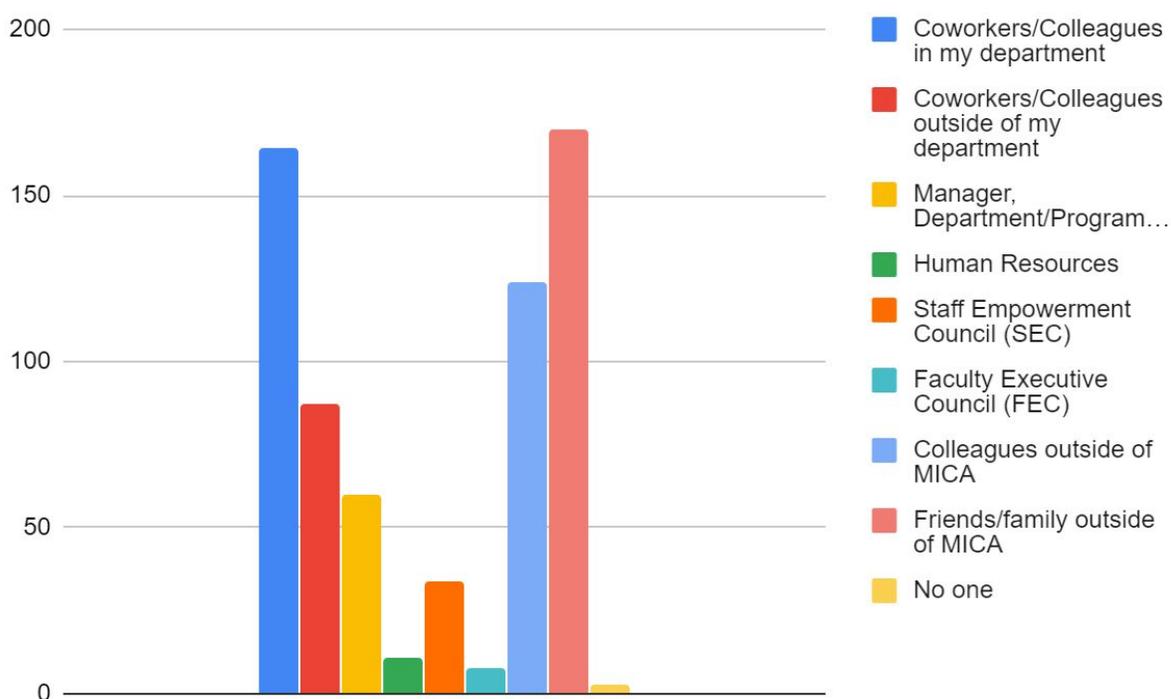
For detailed demographics information, please see our [Demographics Slide Deck](#).

Spring/Summer Work Reflections

One of the most important questions we wanted to address were the challenges that were faced by faculty and staff from the time campus closed in March up until now. It was important to us to understand the impact of institutional changes and challenges on individuals in order to assess steps that could be implemented to make equitable improvements.

177 responses were received regarding the toughest challenges, with the themes of personal wellness (52 responses), communication (28 responses) and caregiving and time (23 responses) occurring most frequently. Survey participants have been struggling with taking care of their own mental health, maintaining a work/life balance, confusing or nonexistent communication, caring for dependents, and working more hours than their job usually requires, often without additional compensation.

Where our community members can find support and trust is important, especially as we strive to live up to the promise of “OneMICA”. People are less likely to turn to their managers, administration, and Human Resources than they are with colleagues in their departments as well as people outside of MICA.



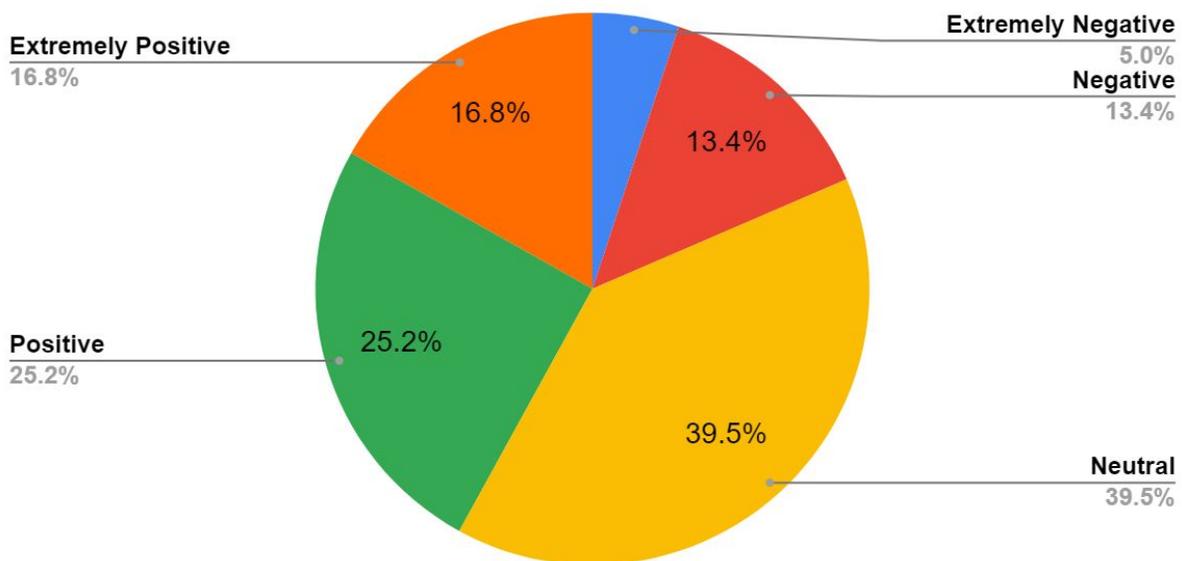
Respondents also generously commented with what has helped them in the spring and summer for work. For a complete list of all resources, please view the [Work Reflections slide deck](#).

Working from Home This Spring/Summer

Of the 220 respondents 202 indicated that they worked from home during the summer.

When asked about expectations set in working on campus, 120 respondents shared their experiences. In the responses a leading theme was supervisors' support during work from home (36 responses). Of those 36 responses there was a clear divide between individuals who felt their supervisors were understanding and those who felt pressure from higher expectations. Other responses emphasized that flexibility (28 responses) to make it work was a priority. The inconsistency in how expectations for employees have been set should be assessed in order to provide a more equitable work experience.

What expectations did your manager or supervisor have for you in handling work from home while juggling external responsibilities such as childcare?



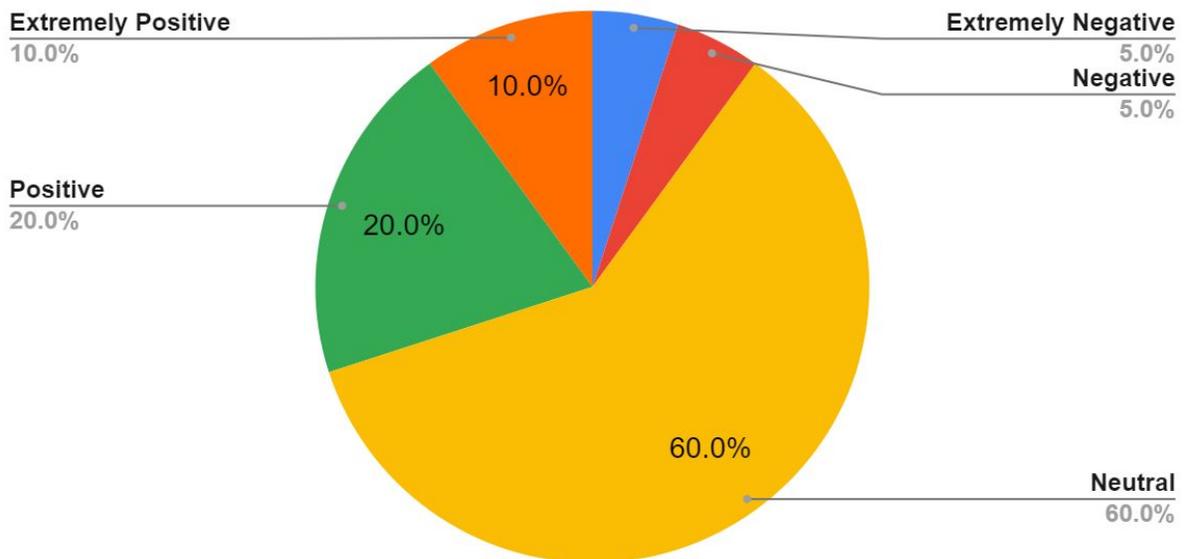
When asked what they did in order to make working on campus easier for themselves this summer 153 respondents shared an extensive list of resources, tools and practices. Frequently mentioned were creating a dedicated work space, regular exercise, and taking breaks throughout the day. A complete list of these tools and resources can be found via the [Working from Home This Summer](#) slide deck.

Working on Campus This Spring/Summer

Of the 220 respondents 54 indicated that they worked on campus after MICA went remote in March.

When asked about expectations set in working on campus, 20 respondents shared their experiences. In the responses a leading theme was supervisors' support during work from home (7 responses). Of those 7 responses there was a clear divide between individuals who felt their supervisors were understanding and those who felt pressure from higher expectations. Others shared that their job performance (5 responses) was either reasonable or faced the expectation for work to be the priority.

What expectations did your manager or supervisor have for you in handling in person work while juggling external responsibilities such as childcare?



When asked what they did in order to make working on campus easier for themselves this summer 27 respondents shared that they were being careful about safety (13 responses), setting their own schedule and communicating with people off campus (3 responses each).

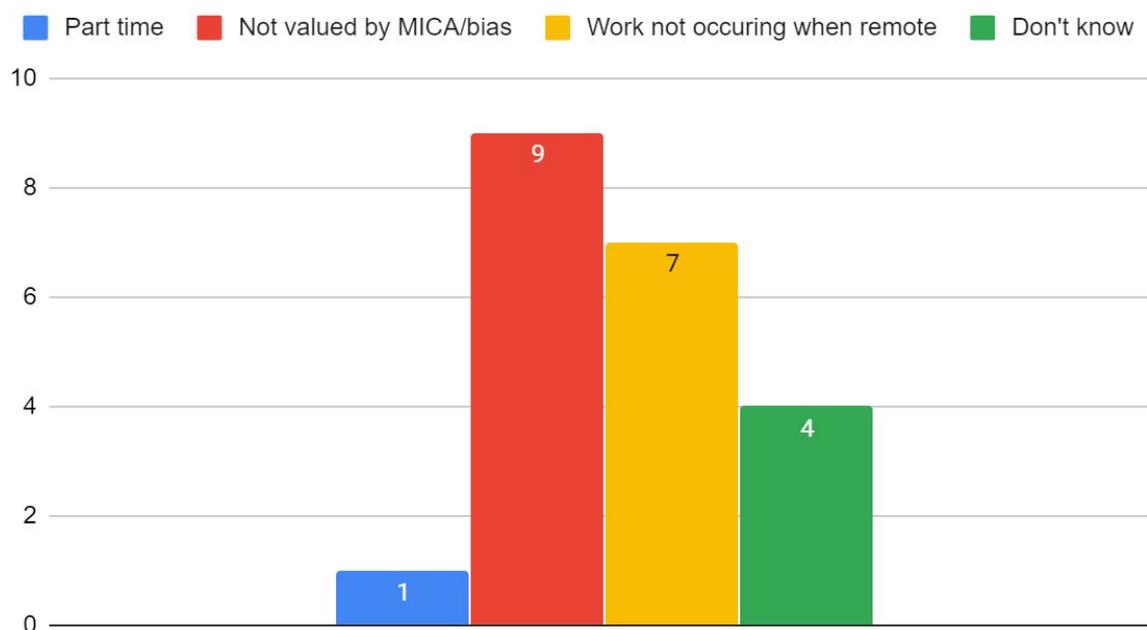
For more, see the [Working On Campus](#) slide deck.

Furlough Experiences

Of the 220 respondents to the survey 26 indicated that they had been either fully (16 responses) or partially (10 responses) during the summer. Full-time staff were furloughed partially (10 responses) and fully (8 responses). Part-time staff were furloughed partially (0 responses) and fully (4 responses). For a breakdown of furloughs based on key demographics, please see the [Furlough Experiences](#) slide deck.

When furloughs were announced during May, the MICA community was told that they would be based on whether or not individuals had work to do during the summer and/or were capable of performing their job duties from home. However, when asked, only 7 indicated that they had the inability to work remotely, meaning that the stated rationale was not what was used in furloughs.

Why do you think you were chosen for furlough?



Additionally, those who selected they had worked on campus were more likely to have experienced furlough than those who did not select that option. Of those that responded, there was a clear desire for more guidance from HR about the process about claiming unemployment.

Many of the questions and concerns raised centered around job security after returning from furlough, the lack of information and communication regarding changes at MICA, and issues filing for unemployment.

For a complete list of all submitted questions both during and after furlough, please [review the Furlough Experiences slide deck](#).

Returning for Fall Semester

When the survey was initially launched on August 3rd the plans for Fall still maintained that there would be a combination of working on campus and working remotely available for faculty on staff. After the August 4th memo, the question of how people would prefer to work post-Covid (with a vaccine) becomes more pressing as administrators work to put together the plans for the new landscape of MICA.

126 people responded to the survey before the August 4th memo that announced that MICA would be online for the fall. 94 people responded after. There is not much difference in the overall results, but one open ended question illustrated the changing fears of the MICA community. It is not surprising that the challenges regarding pay cuts, furloughs, and layoffs skyrocketed after the announcement. Fears about COVID exposure were lessened by the announcement, but is still a sizable amount of the response. See the charts on the next page.

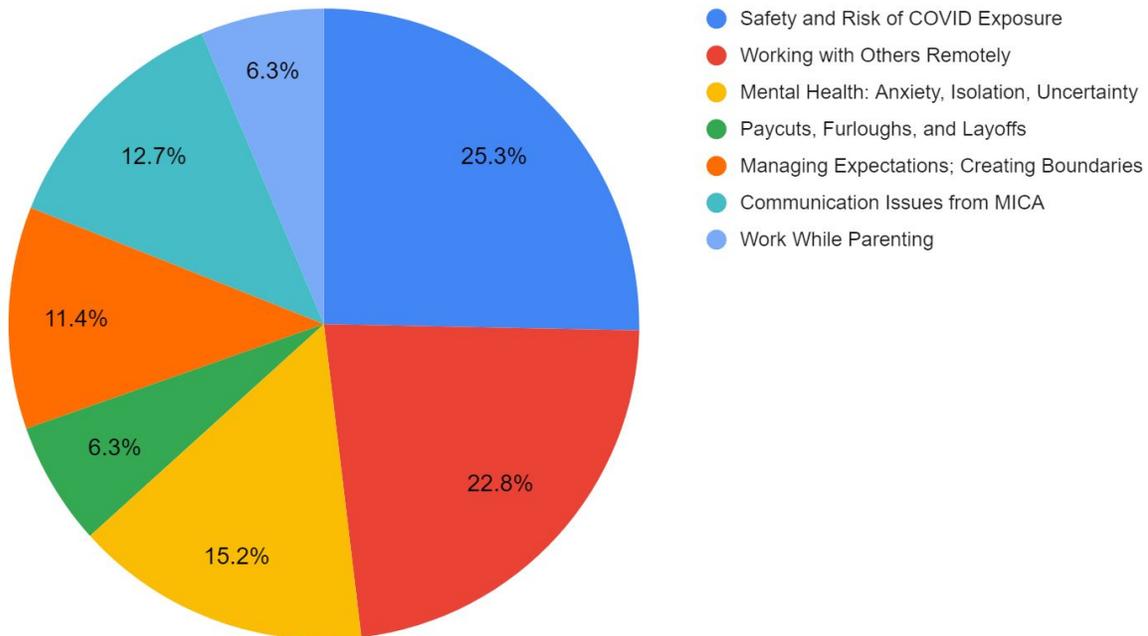
While less of an issue with the fall semester being remote, MICA can look to two categories of responses in the future to make the process better. When asked what would make participants feel comfortable returning to campus the most frequently occurring responses fell into the categories of policy (51 responses), infrastructure (39 responses) and people (36 responses). Many concerns center on individual protection such as enforcement of masks, testing; the availability of a vaccine and physical changes to campus such as plexiglass shields; a reduction in the capacity of people on campus, and a need for an emphasis on individual responsibility.

In an effort to promote transparency and a “OneMICA” approach to planning for reopening, we asked individuals how they wish they could have been involved in the plans, R5 groups etc. While 14 of the responses indicated that they did have some level of involvement, 59 responses indicated that individuals wished that they and/or their departments had been given the opportunity to participate in the reopening process.

To review more about people’s thoughts, please review the [Returning to Fall](#) slide deck.

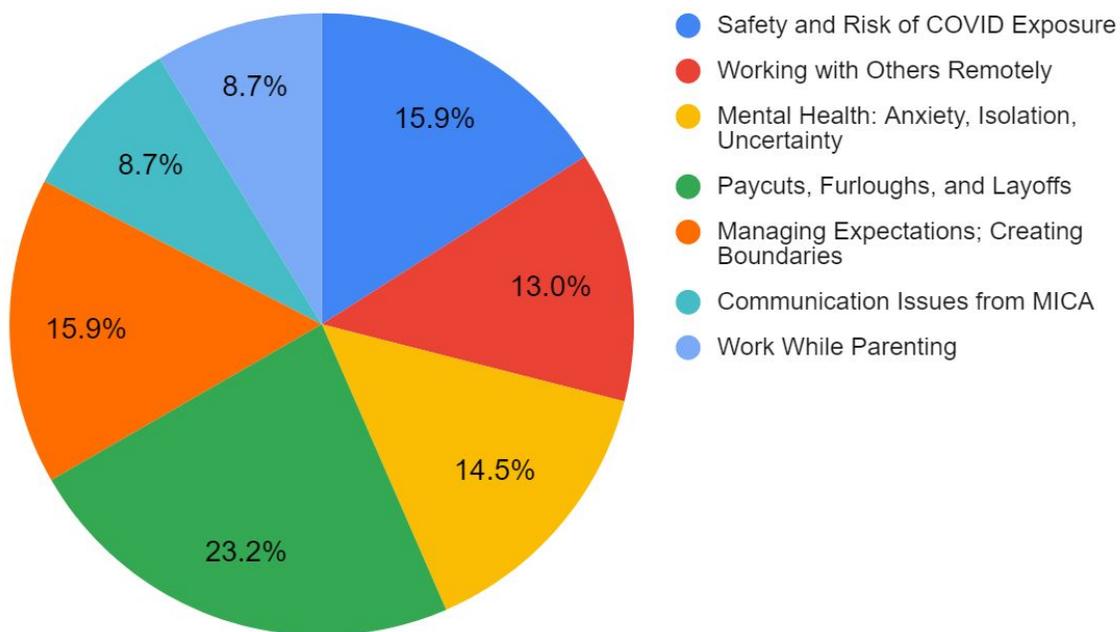
Respondents: 102/126

Concerns from Respondents before August 4th email



Respondents: 80/94

Concerns for Respondents After August 4th Email



Teaching in Fall

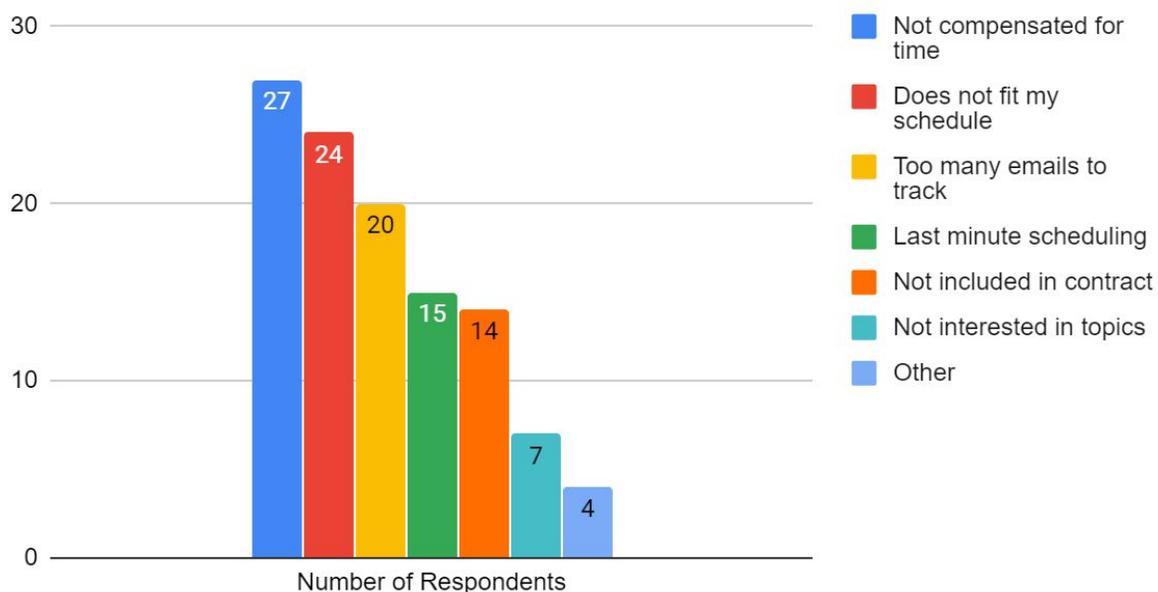
When the survey was initially launched on August 3rd the plans for Fall still maintained that there would be a combination of in-person, hybrid, and online courses, which changed after the August 4th memo.

As part of the planning process for teaching in Fall 2020 MICA offered multiple workshops and training in order to assist faculty in reimaging and reorganizing their classes based on the new modes of delivery.

Additionally faculty participated in outside training and learning opportunities on a variety of topics and delivered in multiple methods. The 53 faculty respondents shared they had been focusing on teaching prep (22 responses) and anti-racism/DEIG (16 responses) through reading and workshops, as well as additional self-learning (17 responses) and information sharing with colleagues, both internally and externally, and professional organizations (20 responses).

Despite workshops and training being available, and widely appreciated, many faculty did not attend them for a variety of reasons.

If you have not been able to attend MICA online training for course planning and adaptations for the fall, why?



For more information, please see the [Fall Teaching](#) slide deck.

Recommendations to President's Council

Our goal in submitting these recommendations to President's Council is to provide a tangible and actionable list of changes that we believe MICA should implement in order to provide additional support, transparency, and clarity for faculty and staff as we move not only through the 2020-2021 academic year but strive to make institutional changes that move us closer to a actualized experience of "OneMICA".

Our hope is that upon careful review and consideration of these recommendations, President's Council will work with the appropriate campus constituencies to address these concerns, and enact meaningful change.

Each section includes quotes that clearly illustrate the needs of the recommendations. In all cases there were multiple expressions of the same thought.

Furlough Related Support

“The most helpful information I received was what I researched myself or information my supervisor researched for us. I've never had to file for unemployment before, so understanding that process was extremely important.”

With furloughs and unemployment being unfamiliar processes to many at MICA it is not surprising that there were questions and concerns expressed throughout the survey. These questions and concerns are increasingly important as MICA heads toward additional furloughs and unpaid leave days for at least the Fall 2020 semester due to Covid 2 & 3 budget concerns.

- **Clearly articulated process for communication to and from furloughed staff.** It is imperative that the communication process for people on furlough/unpaid leave is reviewed and enhanced. Individuals were concerned about the lack of information regarding institutional policies and changes that happened at MICA during their time away, and were unaware as to whether or not they were able to access town halls without violating their unemployment. A regular system of communication via email and/or letter mail (based on individual preference) should be sent to all staff who are furloughed either fully or partially. It should also be made clear to those individuals how they can safely communicate questions and concerns to MICA around events happening on campus without violating the terms of their unemployment. All of the information regarding these processes should be communicated campus-wide prior to the start of any furloughs.
- **Townhall for those that will be furloughed.** In addition to regular communication, it is also strongly recommended to host a town hall specifically for those who are being furloughed, prior to the start of furloughs in order to address any specific questions and concerns, rather than making those questions part of a larger town hall where not everyone's needs may be addressed. If it is possible to hold additional town hall meetings for individuals on furlough throughout the semester that would not jeopardize their unemployment benefits, this should also be explored.

“The process of returning and the lack of information about the current state of MICA upon our return. It feels like returning to chaos or returning to leave again. I felt very blindsided and betrayed.”

Technology Support

“MICA is providing the necessary training, but isn't funding our home technology needs besides providing laptops and a Zoom account. For example, MICA is not helping to cover our home wifi costs.”

Even prior to the announcement on August 4th to move fully remote for the Fall semester, questions and concerns around technology, training, and equitable access to it, were raised throughout responses from both faculty and staff. Many people have been placed into a position where they either do not have access to the technology they need in order to successfully fulfill their job requirements, they have had to spend their own money in order to obtain that technology, or they do not have sufficient training to use the technology they do have.

While we are aware that financial concerns are of the utmost importance, we recommend that MICA:

- **Create a system to provide work from home cost reimbursement.** Establish a request system where faculty and staff can petition for reimbursement of personal funds spent on technology that is mission critical to their job performance. This would require the understanding that any technology paid for by MICA would become MICA property and not remain with the individual once we return to on-campus work. Make a clear determination of what kinds of requests should be fulfilled and which ones shouldn't.
- **Provide training on software and hardware.** Increase the frequency and availability of training and workshops on specific software and hardware. This could be accomplished via Professional Development opportunities for faculty and staff to skill-share with their colleagues and provide personal insight into how they have been utilizing the technology to enhance their work.

Implementation of Equitable Work Flexibility

“Workloads have not been evenly distributed across staff. Some staff members have had to work nights and weekends, while others have worked half days, while not taking salary cuts. Additionally, because we have been working from home, it has gotten increasingly harder to set boundaries between work/life hours, with expectations to do work/respond after hours and on weekends.”

When asked about their experiences in working from home and on campus since March, many of the responses received were positive in their feedback. However, that was not true in all cases and steps need to be taken to ensure that there is equity around expectations for working during the time of Covid-19.

- **Institutional Work from Home Policy.** Given the new opportunities that working remotely has highlighted throughout the past several months, it is recommended that MICA create an institutional policy regarding opportunities for individuals to work from home as part of the campus culture. By allowing more flexibility with hybrid workstyles regardless of a pandemic that is supported institutionally, not just departmentally, MICA will be enhancing the experiences of their employees and take into consideration their needs outside of the workplace.

Support for Caretaking Needs

“MICA needs a public statement supporting families/caregivers. I am astonished that we have gone this far and it is just now beginning to be part of the conversation among staff while it is a national conversation. People were afraid to bring it up. There needs to be a formal policy before classes begin.”

In addition to an increased need for flexibility regarding work schedules and expectations, there was a clear need from the survey to address the additional stresses and concerns of those faculty and staff members who are all responsible for taking care of children or other family members.

- **Clear message of support for caretaking.** A public message of institutional support should come from upper level administrators addressing awareness of staff/faculty need to balance work and caregiving responsibilities. This message should also be sent to students so that they are aware that classes and meetings may be interrupted due to the nature of working from home. Faculty and staff should not be shamed or penalized for interruptions related to caregiving needs.

Consistency in Manager Support

“On the surface my manager claims to support our needs for a work/life balance but then contradicts that by giving us last minute tasks that have to be completed immediately. My manager is also the source of toxic positivity without giving any reason to trust their rationale/outlook.”

- **Clear process for staff who do not have supportive managers.** While it has been announced that there is the Work Adjustment Form which can be turned into HR, managers may approve an alternative work schedule in theory, but they may not actually be supportive. There should be a clear process for reporting concerns that workplace accommodations are not being met, or are being met with hostility. This could be created as an addendum to the recently created grievance policy to address work from home specifically.

“In terms of support, I'd appreciate some sense of stability. I have literally no idea if I will teach all of my classes, how many students I will teach, or if they will transition to online. The administration modified our contracts in an unprecedented way to allow them to pull our work and our pay, and haven't been at all clear about when they will commit to us.”

Compensation

“The most challenging thing for me this fall will be the emotional and mental stress of wondering if I will still have a job, and if not, being a person with no financial assistance how will I pay my rent and bills? The stress of being furloughed over the summer was bad enough, but the stress that this is already creating is something that all of us are having to deal with no matter who we are. We all have various sets of problems, we all need our jobs, no one can afford to be let go. My stress is not only for myself, but for my colleagues as well.”

As a campus community we are acutely aware of the budgetary concerns facing us, not only in the fall semester but moving forward. Layoffs and furloughs are keenly in everyone’s minds and there is undoubtedly fear for what the future holds. However, a significant amount of work has been accomplished during summer that amounts to unpaid labor as faculty and staff have pulled together to prepare for the ever changing landscape of the academic year.

Given that inequitable compensation is a concern that has been raised in the past, resulting in compensation studies over the past few years for both faculty and staff, there needs to be clear communication as to how this will be addressed.

- **Support adjunct faculty’s additional workload.** Many adjunct faculty are not contracted to work during the summer, but due to the need to prepare for online, hybrid, and/or in-person classes (and then pivot to fully online) they have been working solidly since the end of the spring semester. With fear around job loss due to budget cuts and a reduction in enrollment the pressure to work without compensation has been keenly felt.
- **Emphasize humanity in communications regarding finances.** Budget cuts, salary reductions, furloughs, and unpaid days have all been explained in a clinical, budget focused way. More emphasis should be placed on the real, human impact of these changes in both written communication and during town halls.
- **Additional pan-MICA rest days.** Many staff and faculty have been working more since the move to online. This is especially true when they work with others who have been furloughed. Additional pan-MICA rest days throughout the year will help ease the weight of work.

“Significant uncompensated labor (as adjunct faculty with no certainty about future employment, but a need to attempt to prepare for the fall semester). Anxiety and uncertainty about the state of the world in general, and specifically about MICA's honesty and ability to cope with all of the concerns and challenges heading into the fall.”

General Communication

“Being in an external-facing role, my greatest challenge has been representing MICA to external stakeholders while not always having answers on the latest decision or the why/how. I strive to be a helpful resource, but sometimes have felt I didn’t really have the tools or information to be effective.”

“A greater diversity of voices in the R5 Planning groups, options for campus wide review of policies/procedures for input, weekly open format town halls to provide feedback and questions rather than just having them around big announcements, I would have liked to have been on an R5 group around supporting students as that is my daily work.”

The realities of Covid-19 have required us to reevaluate what effective communication looks like, due to the pivot to a virtual world. While there have been many positive changes made, such an increase in the frequency of communication and the ability to question administrative decisions in town halls, there are still areas that need to be further addressed.

- **Increase either the length or frequency of town halls.** It is appreciated that town halls are being recorded and posted to the MICA website in order to provide access to updates for those unable to attend. However, they continually run over on time and individuals who have to leave to attend their next meeting, but may wish to ask live questions are unable to do so. The length of the town halls should be increased in order to plan ahead for running beyond what has been the standard hour. Considering the uncertainty, planning more frequent townhalls so everyone is on the same page is a strategy other colleges and universities have used.
- **Develop a visualized internal communication strategy.** Understandably there has been a constant stream of information being sent to the MICA community since the decision to go remote was made back in March. While some participants appreciated the thoroughness of information provided via emails and the R5 website, many others found it overwhelming and difficult to digest. A communication strategy needs to be created and implemented that takes into account the fatigue that comes from frequent, long and complicated emails and looks at ways to provide the same information in a more digestible format. Essentially a “Too Long Didn’t Read” (TL/DR) version that simply conveys the information. This could be accomplished through graphic representations, pre-recorded videos, and other creative methods.
- **Send out shorter, but more frequent updates.** The lack of transparency with communication was another factor referenced frequently throughout the survey. Faculty and staff cited finding out information at different times, receiving contradictory

information, or no information at all resulting in feelings of uncertainty, confusion, and being unable to answer persistent questions from students.

- **Post-Recovery, create an Institutional Data and Visualization department.** Note that this recommendation comes directly from those of us who have been working on this survey, rather than the survey results. It is clear that once we are able to rebuild staffing at MICA we need at least one person who knows how to do qualitative and quantitative research who can serve as an expert in data gathering, analysis, and visualization as well as holding important institutional information to do proper response rates for surveys. The emphasis on assessment of student learning outcomes has increased steadily over the past few years, but there is currently no in-house mechanism for assessing the needs of faculty and staff nor the campus climate. While outside assessment tools like the Great Colleges to Work For Survey can provide useful information, an internal department would allow for more MICA specific questions and remove the burden of data analysis and visualization from areas that are ill equipped to do this successfully. As an Art and Design school we have an opportunity to create and share data in a dynamic, accessible, and comprehensive way. In furthering institutional alignment with our DEIG principles, having robust data analysis was also a recommendation to combat white supremacy from the Whiteness at Work workshops and Building a Race Equity Culture Workshop.

“EARLY, CLEAR, and CONCISE language about decisions and changing processes along with a clear roadmap for timelines for everything and a breakdown of where various questions should be directed/ which person or department would be responsible for handling questions.”

Online Teaching Support

“It's too late. There are a handful of things that should have been firmed up early on in the summer such as remote desktop access so students would have reliable access to software, a plan on remote learning vs in person learning, tuition reduction, a plan for how fabrication studios could support student work. When students don't turn in work on time, they fail. MICA already failed. They missed the deadline and even worse they changed the plan after tuition deposits were due, and after many students had already signed leases for housing. They are putting faculty as the face of the institution to answer for the absolutely deplorable job that administration did in planning and decision making this summer.”

Prior to the August 4th memo moving MICA to fully online teaching, many faculty were already concerned about teaching online, despite having the summer to prepare. For those faculty who had spent the summer preparing for in-person and hybrid courses, the timeline to flip their curriculum fully online has been considerably shorter.

- **On-going support for teaching practices.** There is a loud call for more workshops, information sharing, on-going support and brush up opportunities throughout the semester. While some of these requests are related to technology, best practices for engaging students online, and a focus on anti-racism and DEIG in the classroom were also mentioned. Many faculty did not participate in training over the summer as they were not contractually obligated to, nor compensated for their time.
- **Team teaching and instructional support.** Multiple faculty brought up the options of either team-teaching or having additional instructional support in the classroom. The feasibility of this should be assessed for possible implementation when planning for an as yet uncertain Spring semester.
- **Support for teaching safely in person.** Faculty need additional training and support if courses are to go in-person and/or hybrid in the Spring. Many faculty cited fear and uncertainty in the survey prior to the August 4th decision to go online. They need to feel safe in order to be as effective as possible in the classroom. Decisions need to be made early, and logistics need to be taken into consideration - example: how do you demo a process to a class of 10+ students when you have to maintain 6ft distance?

Health and Safety

“All of the safety and support I feel is from within my own department, and the little acknowledgement we get outside of it comes from demanding that they remember us and the services we provide. I would feel much safer and supported if I was seeing more acknowledgement of the safety of campus safety and facilities staff, who MICA seems to mention as people we can rely on without ever making it clear that they can rely on MICA's support and care in return.”

Above and beyond any other question or concern, the health and safety of students, staff, and faculty should be the driving force behind all decisions made regarding the reopening and operations of MICA. While many plans were put in place such as providing masks to all of campus and the installation of temperature checks in many of the campus buildings there are still concerns that need to be addressed.

- **Mandated safety training before a return to campus.** Training should involve Covid-19 facts, safety protocols (masks, cleaning etc.), and MICA specific policies. When appropriate the training should be delivered by public health experts, and/or epidemiologists. This could be implemented like the Safe Colleges training for faculty and staff with consequences for non-compliance. Students should be required to complete the training prior to being released to schedule for their spring semester courses. Training videos were “encouraged” as part of the R5 plan, but were never shared or communicated to the campus, and should not only be encouraged but mandated.
- **Training videos.** Additional videos should be created that provide training for navigating campus while Covid-19 policies and procedures are in place. They should include: examples and explanations of signage, demonstration of the temperature check and wristbanding process, and the one-way entrance systems.
- **Clear process for reporting policy violations.** One of the health and safety concerns most frequently raised in the survey was a lack of clarity and transparency around how MICA would be implementing enforcement of mask wearing and social distancing policies. Before students, faculty and staff return to any version of on-campus learning and working, there must be a clear and easily accessible process for not only reporting policy violations, but how they will be investigated and the consequences for violating policy. While a social contract can provide information to the campus community and establish grounds for investigating a violation, it leaves too much in the hands of individual responsibility. Just calling Campus Safety is not enough information or support for the concerns of the community, and puts a tremendous burden on the Campus Safety officers if they are called every time an individual is not wearing a mask.

Commitment to “OneMICA”

“I want to say that there are a ton of really great instructors, staff members and students in this institution. Despite the care and hard work that they put in, we are compromised by the backwards logic of a dysfunctional institution. Our organizational structure needs to be addressed. It is ineffective and creates a mess of extra work and red tape to accomplish any goal. In my experience directors often don't have the agency to affect any decisions without approval from the "higher ups". We have administrators that have never taught, and directors who don't know the technology that their departments are responsible for.”

The vision of an equitable, united “OneMICA” is both admirable and attainable, however the feelings of much of the MICA community is that we are not there yet. While much has been done to move us in the right direction, there are additional changes that need to be put in place to move us close to that reality.

- **De-Siloing of faculty and staff.** It is not uncommon for silo’s to exist between faculty and staff in the world of higher education, but the MICA community is calling for a breaking down of those silos. Faculty and staff need to be given more opportunities to work together in cross-divisional committees, and participate in workshops and training together. Utilizing randomized small discussion groups, such as was created during the Whiteness at Work series, we are given the opportunity to speak with and learn from others we would not interact with in the normal course of our work. We cannot build a OneMICA when half of the employees know very little about the other half, who they are as humans, and what it is they contribute to MICA.
- **Opportunities for all MICA participation in committees and work groups.** One of the best decisions made in planning for reopening was to invite students to sit as fully participating members on many of the R5 groups in order to give voice to the concerns of the student body. This same level of representation, however, was not afforded to all faculty and staff. According to the R5 website there are only two groups that included one part-time faculty member each, and the vast majority of staff members are Assistant Director level or above. Many of the decisions being made at the institutional level have had, and will continue to have a disproportionate impact on people who are not in those spaces, and this is not just true in the reopening work, but when it comes to many institutional committees and work groups. A clear policy and procedure must be established that outlines how ANY employee at MICA can request participation in committees or groups that will provide support from their supervisor and the flexibility with their hours to be able to attend with skipping lunch, taking unpaid time, or being left out of the conversation entirely.

“I wish that MICA had worked from the ground up and we could have done design thinking, scenario planning, charettes, and filled out surveys. I wish we had brought groups together like faculty and students to discuss each position so they could approach the other with empathy. The R5 work has been very closed and would ideally be shared out on a public channel, whether that's the website, slack, or more. It would have been good to nominate oneself to be on an R5 rather than a closed door process of choosing who is on it. This also could have started much earlier, perhaps with those who were on top of how this worked in their department.”

In Conclusion

To say that things have not been easy since March 2020 would be a great understatement. The enormity of the workload, stress, and fear that have been placed upon the entire MICA community by this pandemic should not be devalued nor underestimated. There has been confusion, and missteps along the way, but as the conversations during town halls, and the survey results show, there has also been a shout from the community of a desire to make MICA the institution that we know it is capable of being.

We understand that change is often a long and arduous process, and do not expect immediate agreement with all of our recommendations or changes implemented over night. However, we are at a crossroads and the decisions we make now, as an institution, will directly impact the MICA of the future. Failure to utilize the challenges of past months to our advantage would be a wasted opportunity. Much of what is said here is not new, but this is a request for the implementation of changes that align with what MICA tells the world through our mission, vision, and tenets.