

**Near a year:  
Reflecting on experiences  
during the pandemic**

Patti McDougall, Vice Provost TLSE  
USRA Gathering – February 24, 2021

## **Alternative Title??**

**Near a year: It's a good time to be retired!!!**




# Safe Spaces

The University of Saskatchewan is committed to fairness, inclusiveness, integrity, and honesty. These values remain true no matter whether we are meeting in person or remotely. Each one of us has a responsibility to create safe spaces where all participants feel supported and respected, where we honour our differences, and we recognize the value of our diverse experiences, perspectives and contributions. Together, we will hold ourselves and others accountable to create a rich, productive and welcoming teaching and learning environment for all.

# Agenda

1. The unthinkable – March, 2020
2. The “awe” to the “shock” – Spring and Summer, 2020
3. Academic programming in a pandemic – Fall, 2020, Winter, 2021
4. Looking ahead to Fall, 2021 (and beyond)
5. Questions and Discussion

## March 2020

- It's determined in mid-March that we need to shut everything down for the safety and security of the university and the wider community
- Within three days (and a weekend) everything was moved into a “remote” environment
- The remainder of the term (3 weeks) was delivered remotely – and all exams were done remotely
  - Big challenge – academic misconduct 
  - Huge challenge – crisis aid (housing, travel, food, health)



# Our Repository of all things Pandemic

<https://covid19.usask.ca/>

# Spring and Summer, 2020

- The Crisis Management Team shifts to being the Pandemic Response and Recovery Team (PRT)
  - Framework for Increasing Activity
  - Safety protocols (community standards, COVID training, PAWS screening)
  - Response planning (positive and suspected positive)
- Academic Programming – fully remote (increased enrolment)
- University activities start to get added back (e.g., Research)
- Sector-wide coordinated announcements (call = HYBRID)
  - Advanced Education Pandemic Planning Guidelines

# Primary Focus

***Anything that can be done remotely must be done remotely.***



# Guiding Principles

- Value, protect, and support our people
- Deliver the academic and research mission of USask
- Support student success
- Ensure the University of Saskatchewan's long-term excellence and financial sustainability
- Engage and contribute
- Acknowledge impact
- Communicate and consult with our community

**Embedded in Planning Documents**



# Spring and Summer, 2020

- Phenomenal amount of effort expended to plan for Fall
  - Remote teaching
  - Remote learning
  - Canvas – new Learning Management System (LMS)
  - Graduate student employment – supporting the academic program
  - High school students – prep --- math, biology, chemistry, physics

**Confidence in what we can delivery ➡ HIGH**

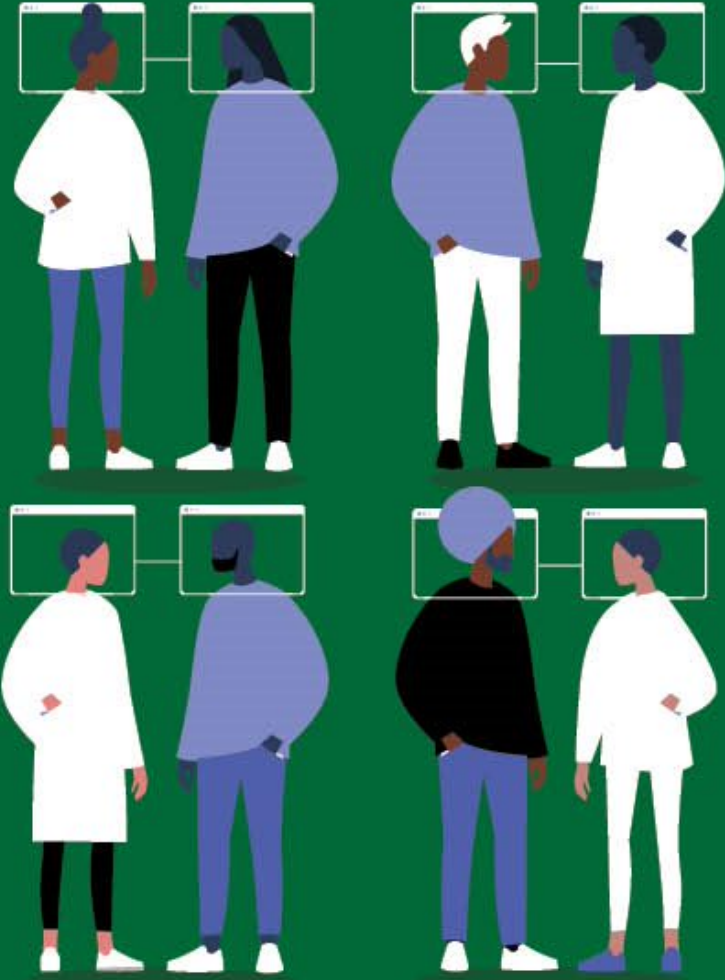


Remote teaching content on  
**teaching.usask.ca** was visited

**43,000**

times from March to September.





Between March and August

**1,387**

people participated in 138 remote  
teaching sessions available  
to all faculty and TAs.



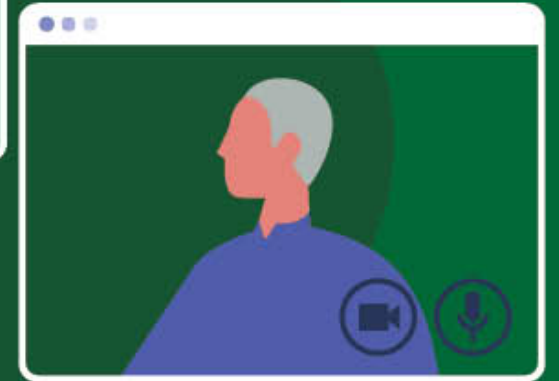
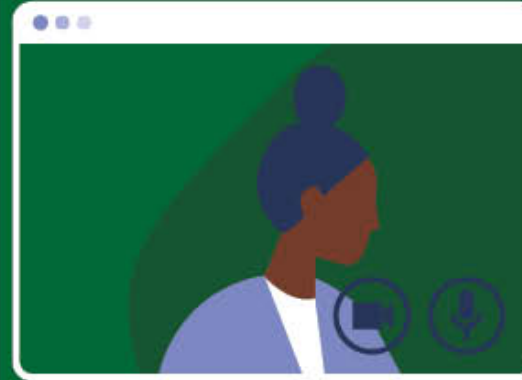
Since going remote

**61** college  
specific  
sessions

were offered on topics  
the college suggested.

# 1-on-1

consultation is available.  
Faculty from 11 colleges,  
14 departments and 2 schools have  
already accessed support  
from March to August.



# Fall and Winter Terms

**Using learning outcomes to help make decisions about what **MUST** be offered in-person:**

- ✓ hands on use of equipment/artefacts
- ✓ experiences to take place in purpose-dedicated space
- ✓ direct interaction with people/animals
- ✓ experiences in the field
- ✓ use of specialist software not available off site

**Fall – 11.5% - some in-person**  
**Winter – 14% - some in-person**



## How's it going for our students?

### Key Themes – Delivery Model

- Facilitated sessions
  - students expressed a preference for synchronous sessions that enabled interaction (but where attendance was not required)
- Pulse survey
  - more students preferred asynchronous delivery overall and were stronger in their preference
  - more students had a strong or very strong preference for synchronous delivery for asking questions of their instructor/TA



# Key Themes – Fatigue & Motivation

- Facilitated sessions
  - Most students expressed significant screen fatigue and feelings of isolation, distraction and procrastination
- Pulse survey
  - Over half of students reported motivation to learn remotely was a significant or very significant challenge


**Workload**

# Key Themes – Challenges

## **Pulse survey - very significant or significant challenge**

- working remotely with peers

## **Pulse survey - minimal challenge or not a challenge**

- familiarity/comfort with remote tools
  - instructor or TA availability/responsiveness
  - access to materials and resources remotely
  - having a quiet place to learn
- 

# Key Themes – Positive Experiences

- **Pulse survey**

- Flexibility of remote learning was noted by most as a positive by a significant majority
- Approximately 1/3 of students reported:
  - finding ways to connect remotely to peers about course work was a positive
  - courses were more accessible
  - they had better access to faculty members

# How's it going for our faculty and staff?

- Two administrations of an Employee Pandemic Survey
  - Type in “Employee Pandemic Survey” on website

# Looking ahead to Fall, 2021

## ■ Planning assumptions: (examples)

- Adherence to Public Health (and Advanced Education)
- Our situation can change
- We need clarity around expectations
- Not everyone will be vaccinated
- We will still need to be masking and social distancing
- Likely - still face some potential risk of spread and outbreak on campus
- A good proportion of students are eager to return to campus; many others will continue to want access to remote learning opportunities and will not want to return to campus



# Post-Pandemic Shift Commission

- The goals of the project are simple:
  - To engage with and listen to internal and external stakeholders to learn how the pandemic will change their lives in the future; and
  - To reflect those voices in a concise written report that can be used as a resource to guide USask community members in post-pandemic planning.
  
- *“How can we as a community be the university the post-pandemic world needs?”*

<https://leadership.usask.ca/initiatives/post-pandemic-shift-project.php>



# What are some things we might see in the “after”?

**More remote delivery to meet needs (but not at the expense of in-person)**

**Adding to credentials – micro credentials (moving from out to in as a change)**



**Some staff members wanting to continue to work remotely in part or in full**

**Some changes in our use of space (+ whether we have a space crisis)**



# Questions and Discussion



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