



Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness

A Synopsis of the MC Employee Return  
to Campus and Worksite Survey

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## Introduction

The online MC Employee Return to Campus and Worksite survey ran from July 10 to July 29, 2020. It gauged employee sentiments and concerns about the eventual reopening of the College's campuses and worksites. A total of 2,265 employees participated, which is 92% of the College's workforce.

## Key Takeaways

The survey revealed a majority of faculty and staff are apprehensive about the College's eventual reopening if it's done in the absence of a vaccine for COVID-19. Concern about personal, familial and community safety are uppermost in most employees' minds. Yet, all are willing to set aside their concerns and do whatever it takes to deliver high-quality educational experiences to students so long as MC's approach includes these essential components:

- Every collegewide decision must be made with the best interests of students in mind
- Employees want their input to be solicited and considered before impactful decisions are made
- Staff and faculty want more flexible work-scheduling options regarding how, when and where they contribute their talents after the reopening.

## Key Findings

### Single- and Multi-Answer Items

- It should come as no surprise the top employee concern is minimizing exposure to COVID-19 when the College reopens (90%). It outweighs any of the other concerns posed in survey question by a factor of from three to six (see Figure 4 on page 11).
- Ninety-three percent (n = 2119) of respondents feel the College's leadership has kept them well-informed about COVID-related matters (see Table 1 on page 4).

- Respondents can use more help finding resources for emotional support and stress (15%) as these have demonstrably increased since the shift to mandatory remote work (see Table 3 on page 6).
- Three-quarters of the respondents have all the resources they need to work remotely. In the survey comments, the remainder expressed the opposite viewpoint (described in the next section and in Table 4 on page 8).

### Themes in the Written Comments

- Twenty-four percent (n = 542) of participants described snafus in getting the resources they need to work remotely. The number one need is for additional technology, especially to support structured remote teaching (SRT). The highest demand is for PCs, Macs, faster wi-fi connections, software, printers, monitors, scanners and related peripheral devices such as webcams.
- Faculty who lack technology resources are particularly hit hard because the problem is heaped onto the simultaneous pressures of:
  - Having to rework their courses into the SRT format and then having to teach it for the first time,
  - Learning to use new digital tools in real time
  - Keeping their students engaged in the absence of in-person interaction
  - Worrying about some students' ability to absorb the course material as the SRT format is also new to many students, and further, is unsuited for disadvantaged students (e.g. ESOL, students with disabilities, first-gens, etc.)
  - Concerns about the erosion of the academic integrity of their newly recast SRT courses
  - The inability to access course materials and supplies from their offices
- Five hundred and thirty-four respondents indicated they have school-aged children living in the household. The challenge they most often cite is the strain of juggling work while coordinating their children's virtual learning and day care (see Table 5 on page 10).

- Sixty-one percent of participants (n = 1,388) made suggestions regarding the implementation of physical distancing (see Table 7 on page 14). Respondents asserted that physical distancing should be integrated with a no-tolerance policy for mandatory employee, student and visitor PPE (n = 320) and structural modifications to MC's physical spaces.

This includes, at minimum, facial coverings, the plentiful availability of cleaning and handwashing supplies, course and structural changes that realize physical distancing (e.g. class-size reduction, plexiglass partitions, reconfiguration of classroom and office spaces, safety signage and floor markings, etc.), and the periodic, deep-cleaning of all facilities by custodial staff. These should all be done, they believe, in the context of minimizing the number of people on the campuses and at worksites at any given time.

- Even if the techniques above are implemented, a small but vocal group of respondents feel the risks of catching COVID-19 cannot be sufficiently eliminated or minimized (n = 123) and reopening should be delayed until a vaccine is available (n = 62). They, along with others, variously worry about
  - how to deal with people who do not comply with safety protocols,
  - implementing a COVID-19 safety enforcement policy,
  - asymptomatic carriers,
  - the antithetical nature of physical distancing in a communal, teaching environment,
  - aerosolized virus spread,
  - and their or their family members' elevated risk due to underlying health conditions.

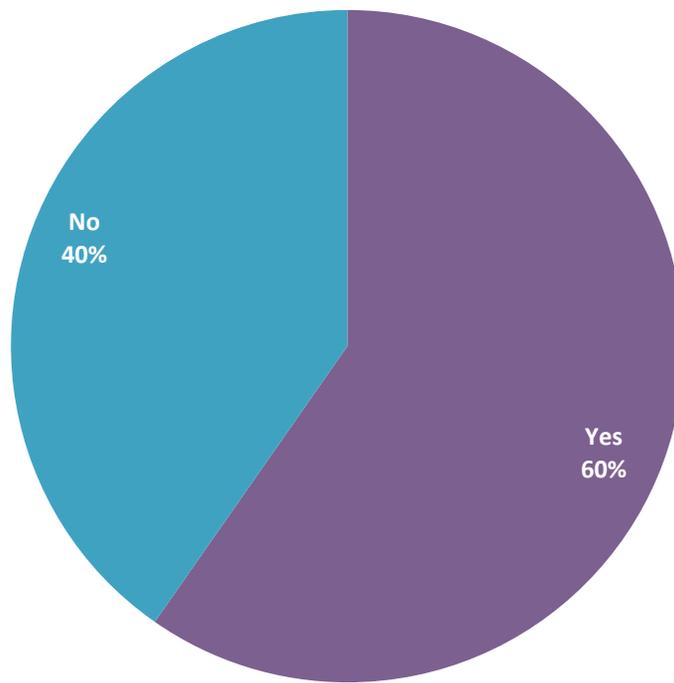
**Communication about COVID-19**

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Responses
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
So far, the College’s leadership has taken appropriate action in response to COVID-19.	1,471	65.00%	733	32.40%	46	2.00%	12	0.50%	2,262
I feel well-informed by the College’s leadership about the impact of COVID-19 as things change and evolve.	1,254	55.40%	865	38.20%	117	5.20%	26	1.10%	2,262
I’m confident the College’s leadership will reopen campuses and facilities only when it is safe.	1,078	47.70%	1028	45.40%	124	5.50%	32	1.40%	2,262
I feel comfortable communicating concerns or making suggestions about COVID-19 to my supervisor.	1,228	54.30%	831	36.70%	152	6.70%	51	2.30%	2,262

**Table 1 Q1: Please indicate your level of agreement**

The majority of respondents agree MC’s leadership has taken the steps to ensure safety during the pandemic. They’ve also been great at communicating the ever-changing details of the school’s, region’s and country’s response to COVID-19. Likewise, one can infer the modes of communication—college email, live video streams and websites—have also been acceptable.

Respondents think administrators will reopen only after thoughtful deliberation about the safety of doing so. Finally, the majority are also comfortable discussing concerns about these matters with their supervisors. Maintaining this level of openness is paramount at a time when so much uncertainty and COVID-19 misinformation abounds. Unfortunately, a tiny fraction of employees lamented that their supervisors have not been helpful with guidance or expectation-setting during this period. This is a liability that no unit can afford now. All leaders should be encouraged to err on the side of overcommunication as MC navigates these uncharted waters.



	Percent	Count
Yes	59.7%	1,350
No	40.3%	912
Totals		2,262

**Figure 1 Q2: Have you visited the Resilient MC website?**

The Resilient MC website has been visited by a majority of respondents. Yet, a fair number have not used this resource. The Administration should obviously not use the website as its exclusive communications vehicle. Instead, it should continue the multimodal approach since no single method is best for all employees.

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Don't Know		Responses
	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	
I find the content of the Resilient MC Roadmap helpful.	454	33.60%	784	58.10%	63	4.70%	6	0.40%	43	3.20%	1,350
I find the content of the MC COVID-19 Health and Safety Plan to be helpful.	468	34.70%	762	56.40%	60	4.40%	5	0.40%	55	4.10%	1,350

**Table 2 Q2a: Please indicate your level of agreement with these statements about the content on the Resilient MC website.**

Of the 1,350 participants who’ve visited the Resilient MC Roadmap website, 92% and 91% respectively found the website and Health and Safety Plan helpful (<https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/resilient-mc/index.html> and <https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/documents/resilient-mc/health-and-safety-plan-covid-19.pdf>).

### Getting Support while Working Remotely

The survey participants generally know where to get support for most resources during this mandatory teleworking period. The one area they have less knowledge about is “Information and resources for emotional support and stress.” It garnered an 85% combined agree and 15% combined disagree score.

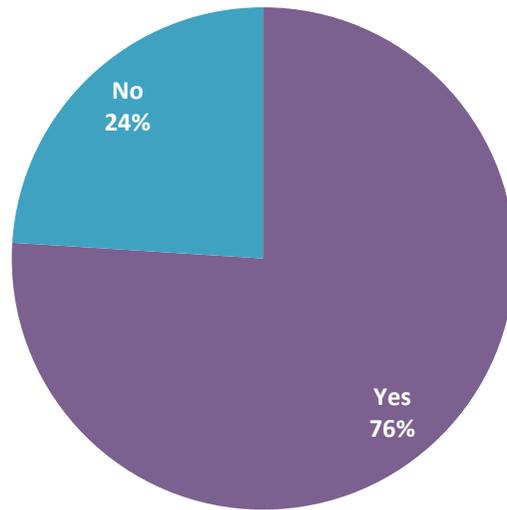
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Responses
	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	
Technology resources and equipment	989	43.70%	1,047	46.30%	190	8.40%	36	1.60%	2,262
Technology training	1,042	46.10%	1,063	47.00%	140	6.20%	17	0.80%	2,262
Information resources and strategies for working remotely	972	43.00%	1,116	49.30%	152	6.70%	22	1.00%	2,262
Communication with and directions from supervisor	1,243	55.00%	867	38.30%	112	5.00%	40	1.80%	2,262
Communication and engagement with colleagues/co-workers	1,144	50.60%	955	42.20%	143	6.30%	20	0.90%	2,262
Information and resources for emotional support and stress	782	34.60%	1,148	50.80%	275	12.20%	57	2.50%	2,262

**Table 3 Q3: I know where I can get support for the following while working remotely.**

As both work- and COVID-19-related stress and anxiety were often discussed or alluded to in the 4,154 survey comments, supervisors as well as the Office of Human Resources and Strategic Talent Management should continually remind employees about the resources available to alleviate stress.

Also keep in mind that just because participants know where to go for support doesn't imply they've availed themselves of the help or have been satisfied with the support they've received. Neither resource use nor satisfaction were studied in the survey. However, qualitative evidence in the survey comments reveals dissatisfaction with some aspects of the support (see the next section).

**Resources to Effectively Work Remotely**



**Figure 2 Q4: I have ALL the resources I need to effectively work remotely.**

	Percent	Count
Yes	76.0%	1,720
No	24.0%	542
Totals		2,262

Seventy-five percent (n = 1,720) of participants have the resources they need to work remotely. But as alluded to in the previous section, this doesn't mean they wouldn't like more or better resources. For instance, some employees indicated they're making due with their obsolete technology. They're willing to be team players short term, but over the long haul, the slow laptop, small monitor or nonexistent printer, for instance, makes working stressful, less productive and ergonomically painful. And if a technology failure occurs during an SRT session, student learning and satisfaction take a hit.

In frustration, some employees have gone out-of-pocket to purchase what they need. More than a few called for a reimbursement policy to recoup these expenses or at least access to a well-publicized perk that allows them to make employee-discounted purchases from the College's technology vendors.

Getting office supplies, materials and teaching aids is also a pain point for faculty and staff. There seems to be confusion about or too much variation in how these practices are administered. What's the correct way to order and pick up supplies? Are employees permitted to briefly get into their offices to retrieve, say, books or paper files? If so, what's the protocol? Some universal clarity is needed.

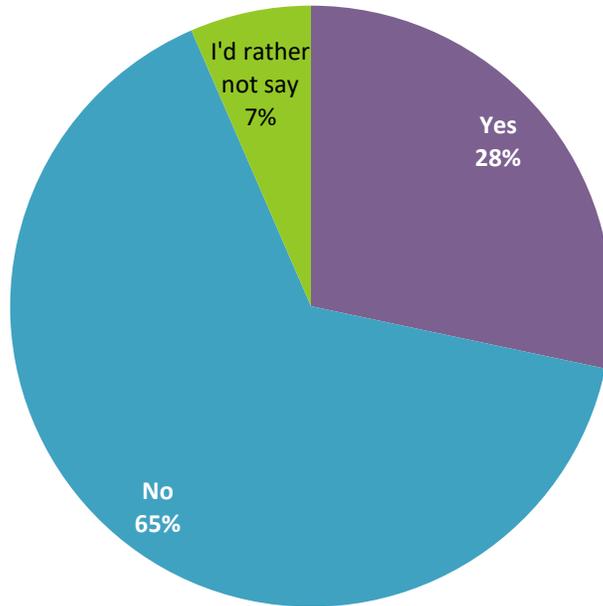
The 542 participants who answered "No" to the "all the resources I need" question were asked the follow-up item highlighted in the table below. Their most frequent requests/complaints are presented.

Theme	Count (n = 542)	%
PCs, Macs, printers, monitors, scanners and related peripherals	245	45
Access to my office or other campus or worksite resource	57	11
Office Supplies	44	8
Ergonomic or ADA-Compliant Furniture	40	7
Updated WiFi or Internet-related Resources	36	7
MyMC, VPN, remote desktop, Blackboard, Banner and Office 365 access or connectivity issues	23	4
Equipment to better simulate the classroom experience or demo/teach labs online	22	4
Insufficient home office space	22	4
Access to textbooks and classroom materials	19	4
Reimbursement for remote-work-related expenses	13	2
Issues with online remote video conferencing/collaboration software	11	2
Specific Software Request	10	2

**Table 4 Q4a: Please describe the resources you're having trouble getting.**

*\*Note multiple responses can apply to the same participant's comment.*

**Challenges for Families with School-Aged Children**



**Figure 3 Q5: Are you a parent living with children in elementary, middle or high school?**

	Percent	Count
No	65.1%	1,473
Yes	28.3%	640
I'd rather not say	6.5%	148
Totals		2,261

The participants who answered “Yes” here were asked the follow-up item summarized in the next table.

Theme	Count (n = 534)	%
Juggling both the work schedule and coordinating my children's virtual learning	169	32
Continuation of remote work is essential while schools are closed	62	12
Making myself available to help with school assignments	58	11
Not worried, few challenges	45	8
Have to secure childcare, daycare or after care if onsite work restarts	44	8
Juggling professional and responsibilities for young children	35	7
Inadequate wi-fi bandwidth at home given the increase in household demand	35	7
Children's education will be unsupervised when I return to campus	31	6
Allocating space for everyone to work quietly, respectfully and interruption-free at home	26	5
Children cannot be left alone due to age, disability, or health condition.	26	5
Hard to get or need to get childcare, daycare or afterschool care	24	4
Uncertainty about or lack of trust in the safety of schools or daycare	24	4
Keeping kids engaged in home schooling	21	4
Worried about exposing elderly family members or those with underlying conditions	20	4
Work/life balance is harder to achieve	20	4
Fear of contracting COVID-19 and infecting family	20	4
Supervision and safety of children	20	4
Childcare may prevent my return to fulltime, onsite employment	18	3
General fear of myself or family becoming infected	18	3
Family interruptions while working remotely	15	3

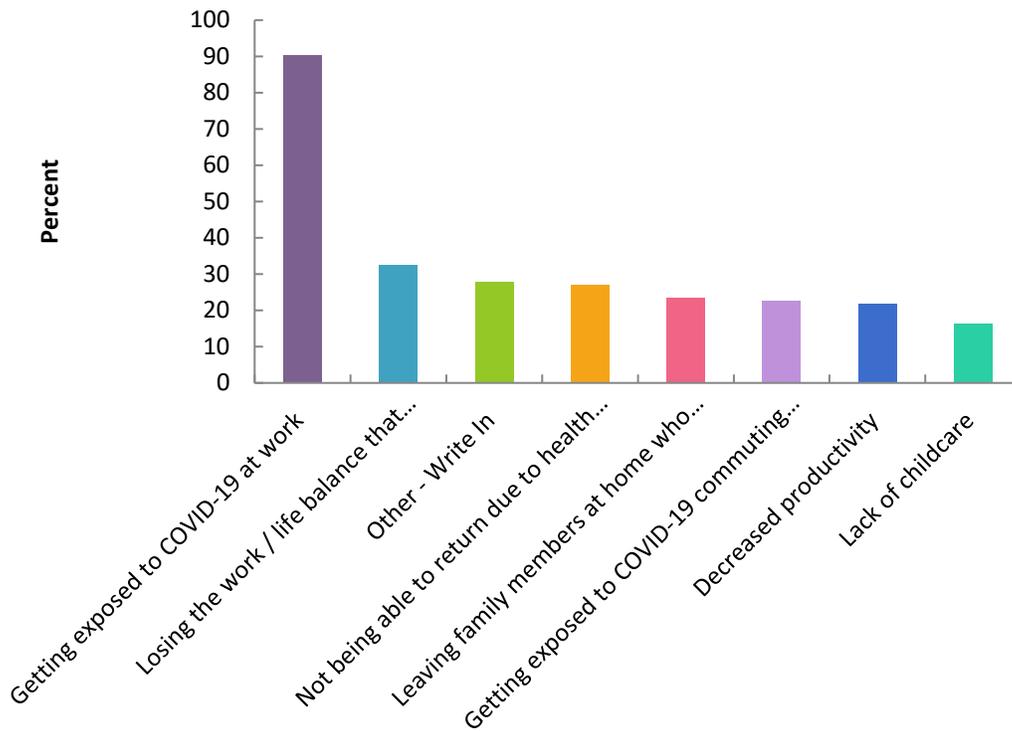
**Table 5 Top Twenty Responses to Q5a: What challenges do you and your family face due to the elementary, middle and high school closures? What challenges do you foresee when MC reopens its campuses and worksites?**

\* Note multiple responses can apply to the same participant's comment.

It is clear that multitasking between one's children's remote education, home life, childcare and work responsibilities is especially fraught in the close-quarters, line-blurring environment of remote working during a pandemic. There is little wonder, then, that the above themes echo this loud and clear. Note also that similar opinions were reiterated by employees who care for adult-aged children with special needs.

A critical determinant of how this group of employees will fare in the future depends on the reopening of the public school system and the availability of safe, affordable childcare and daycare. The untenable corner few want to be pushed into is having to make a mutually exclusive choice between parenting and returning to onsite work. It’s imperative that the Administration devises options for employees to succeed at both.

**The Top Concerns about Returning to Campus or the Worksite**



**Figure 4 Q6: Which of these concerns you about returning to your campus or worksite? (Please check all that apply.)**

	Percent	Count
Getting exposed to COVID-19 at work	90.4%	2,042
Losing the work / life balance that remote work gives me	32.4%	732
Other - Write In	27.9%	631

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	Percent	Count
Not being able to return due to health concerns	26.9%	607
Leaving family members at home who need assistance	23.5%	530
Getting exposed to COVID-19 commuting to work	22.6%	510
Decreased productivity	21.7%	491
Lack of childcare	16.2%	366

Some noteworthy aspects about the question-six responses are...

- The top concern is shared by almost everyone who took the survey (90% or n = 2,042).
- The second highest concern is a bit of misnomer as the written comments for this and previous items reveal work/life balance can be elusive under the current circumstances.
- Six hundred and twenty-one participants (n = 631) wrote in other concerns of which the following were the most dominant.

Theme	Count (n = 631)	%
Catching COVID-19 and exposing others	148	23
Staying COVID-free because I live with or have to care for family who are at high-risk	143	23
I'm in a high-risk group	70	11
No concerns so long as everyone follows the safety protocols	62	10
General expression of fear re. the impact of COVID	43	7
Noncompliance of others with the safety protocols	39	6
Sanitization and disinfection of all facilities	35	6
Increased stress and anxiety	28	5

**Table 6 Dominant Themes in the Q6 Other-Write In Responses (1 of 2)**

Theme	Count (n = 631)	%
General concern for the safety of students and coworkers	27	4
Would prefer to return to campus or office	19	3
Poor air circulation or ventilation in our facilities	19	3
Reconfiguration of office and classroom spaces	16	3
How to maintain physical distancing while teaching, tutoring or interacting with students	13	2
Not being available to help my children or family members who are at home	12	2
Lack of PPE	11	2

**Table 6 Dominant Themes in the Q6 Other-Write In Responses (2 of 2)**

It’s worth emphasizing that a subset of this group is not overly concerned about the health risks and would prefer to return to the office now. They are generally comprised of

- Staff who believe they’d be more productive onsite,
- Faculty who teach courses that include a lab or other “hands-on” instruction that cannot be easily replicated via SRT,
- Faculty who would prefer to deliver their SRT sections from an onsite classroom where all the necessary equipment and teaching aids are readily available (e.g. whiteboards, strong and reliable wi-fi connections),
- Faculty who worry about the anticipated adverse impact of SRT on disadvantaged student populations,
- Faculty who believe the experiences of other schools can be used as models for a safe and immediate MC reopening,
- Faculty who are eager to return to in-person teaching and are experiencing burnout from the extra work SRT entails.

**Ways to Continue Social Distancing after Reopening**

And finally, when asked for recommendations on how to continue social distancing after the reopening, 61% of respondents unleashed a vortex of ideas and opinions. It’s instructive to entertain the sheer breadth of the entire list. Note also how these suggestions should be litmus tested against the well-taken admonishment of two commenters. They insist that employees re-language “social distancing” to “physical distancing” and always temper the concept against our core mission.

**Commenter 1:** “First - Don't use the term ‘social distance’. We can be social at any distance. We should have an appropriate ‘physical distance’.”

**Commenter 2:** “I do not agree with this question; social distancing is a must. The question should be: How do we integrate social distancing in our Classrooms and Labs while continuing to improve student success rates?”

Theme	Count (n = 1388)	%
Mandatory PPE specified by MC and distributed as appropriate to employees, students and visitors	320	23
Reduce class sizes	278	20
Staggered onsite and/or hybrid employee scheduling	249	18
Building/room capacity limits	232	17
Reconfiguration of classroom, office and communal spaces to institute safety protocols	187	13
Disinfection of the facilities on a rigorous schedule throughout the day	175	13
It's not possible to safely social distance or rigorously follow all safety protocols	123	9
Allow for the continuation of 100% remote work where appropriate	99	7
Encourage the use of online teleconferencing, telephone and email communication	89	6
Continue SRT or maintain an expanded number of online courses	81	6
Install plastic, plexiglass partitions	79	6
Staggered online/on-campus student attendance	70	5
Remain totally remote until a vaccine is available	62	4
Floor markers and signage for physical distancing	52	4
Signage that describes and promotes safety protocols	51	4

**Table 7 Q7: What are some ways for us to continue social distancing when MC reopens its campuses and facilities? (1 of 4)**

\* Note multiple responses can apply to the same participant’s comment.

Theme	Count (n = 1388)	%
Hybrid classes and activities	42	3
Hold outdoor classes, which are facilitated by an online mechanism to reserve outdoor venues	35	3
Control elevator occupancy	34	2
A no-tolerance stance on students and employees who do not comply with safety protocols	32	2
Limit or prohibit social events and gatherings	29	2
Onsite COVID-19 Testing	23	2
Require access to some buildings or offices by appointment only.	22	2
Follow CDC and medical expert guidelines	20	1
One-way walk paths and other methods of controlling foot traffic	17	1
Create a lab schedule that allows for a safe number of students at a given time	16	1
Body-temperature checks	15	1
Clarity on the use of sick leave for COVID-like symptoms so employees won't feel compelled to come in sick	12	1
Begin only with those classes where in-person meetings are imperative	12	1
Prohibit on-campus faculty office hours in lieu of virtual office hours	11	1
Offer, improve and expand online student service options	11	1
Use larger spaces like the gym to hold classes	10	1
Hold outdoor events	10	1
Security guard enforcement of safety protocols	8	1
Prohibit the use of small or windowless classrooms	8	1
Enforcement mechanism to ensure adherence to safety protocols	8	1
Close all cafeterias and indoor eating spaces	7	1
Rigorous contact tracing	7	1
Reopen gradually	7	1
Adopt best practices from school systems that have safely reopened	6	< 1
Automatic/keyless doors or other methods to limit touching of handles/knobs	5	< 1
Hold asynchronous classes	5	< 1
Hold more evening and weekend classes	5	< 1
Student meeting with faculty by appointment-only	4	< 1
Mandatory safety protocol training for all students and staff	4	< 1

**Table 7 Q7: What are some ways for us to continue social distancing when MC reopens its campuses and facilities? (2 of 4)**

\* Note multiple responses can apply to the same participant's comment.

Theme	Count (n = 1388)	%
Eliminate face-to-face tutoring	4	< 1
Prohibit the use of drinking fountains	4	< 1
Shorten the workday	4	< 1
Train students to adopt good cleaning practices	3	< 1
On-campus SRT where faculty teach from their offices	3	< 1
Reduction in the duration for class meetings	3	< 1
Remove hot-air hand driers from bathrooms	3	< 1
It's not possible to safely provide services to students face-to-face	3	< 1
Restrict students and visitors from faculty and staff offices	3	< 1
Students with appointments can wait in their cars until they arrive and are told via text or phone call to come in.	3	< 1
Work and hold meetings outside	3	< 1
Hold office hours in classrooms or conference rooms rather than offices	3	< 1
Avoid holding f2f classes in close proximity to one another	3	< 1
Minimize the number of on-campus class sections	3	< 1
Use aseptic methods in health sciences labs	2	< 1
New student orientation to online learning	2	< 1
Schedule online-only advising appts. with students	2	< 1
A commitment to personal and corporate responsibility re. one's own health, symptoms	2	< 1
Allow additional time between classes so that leaving and entering students are less likely to interact	2	< 1
Open all exit doors to a building to avoid bottleneaking	2	< 1
Increase shifts to reduce the number of people present at any given time	2	< 1
Increase FT faculty ESH load for distance learning	2	< 1
Institute curbside pick-up where applicable	2	< 1
Lengthen the class day	2	< 1
Add more student shuttle busses so that physical distancing can be enforced on them	2	< 1
Improve videoconferencing software to simultaneously instruct several classroom cohorts	2	< 1
Those with offices should restrict themselves to their offices	2	< 1
Use MC Alerts or texts to continually remind employees to abide by the safety protocols	1	< 1

**Table 7 Q7: What are some ways for us to continue social distancing when MC reopens its campuses and facilities? (3 of 4)**

\* Note multiple responses can apply to the same participant's comment.

Theme	Count (n = 1388)	%
Reserve elevators for those with physical disabilities	1	< 1
Restrict facilities to students and employees	1	< 1
One-way traffic flow and entrance/exit doors	1	< 1
Offer the opportunity for late shift work where possible	1	< 1
Remote proctoring	1	< 1
Host virtual job fairs	1	< 1
Host events that will promote ways to gather but reinforce physical distancing	1	< 1
Ensuring that students have the technology needed for remote learning	1	< 1
Technology used in parking lots to facilitate curbside services and events	1	< 1
Create a mobile registration office	1	< 1
Ensure a gradual return to projects that involve a lot of physical interaction with others	1	< 1
Eliminate or restrict access to common areas	1	< 1
Make remote-event software/hardware toolkit available to all units that need it	1	< 1
More equipment for labs because group work will be eliminated	1	< 1
Use only the larger conference rooms for face-to-face meetings	1	< 1
Give access to classroom buildings only to students who have classes on a given day	1	< 1
Institute self-service cafés instead of cafeterias	1	< 1
Add shuttle bus stops to minimize crowds waiting at each stop	1	< 1

**Table 7 Q7: What are some ways for us to continue social distancing when MC reopens its campuses and facilities? (4 of 4)**

*\* Note multiple responses can apply to the same participant’s comment.*

The above table is the equivalent of a brainstorming clinic. It’s a pitch-perfect paraphrasing of the Resilient MC strategy at a tactical level. In it lies the blueprint for all things pertaining to creative teaching methods, service offerings, the repurposing of our facilities and adapting employee work schedules. The Administration need look no further than MC’s inhouse talent and expertise to find the innovative change agents who possess the stamina to achieve MC2025.

