



January 19, 2022

Dear President Whitten, Provost Applegate, Dr. Carroll, Vice Provosts & Vice Presidents,

As cases of the Omicron variant of the SARS-COV-2 virus are increasing, there is **growing concern among members of the Indiana University community** that we are not well equipped for an in-person semester. In response to the rising case rate, other large institutions, including Harvard University, Northwestern University, and almost the entire University of California system, opted to move their courses online for the beginning of the Spring semester. As instructors, we appreciate the appeal of in-person instruction, but believe that additional protective measures should be taken.

We ask that the administration address the following concerns to best protect its graduate student workers:

**We urge the university to provide KN95/N95 masks in each campus building.** KN95/N95 masks reduce virus transmission because of their better fit and protection against droplet spread. [Indiana University currently recommends these types of masks](#) based on their superior protective qualities compared to cloth or standard surgical masks. We believe that Indiana University should act urgently to secure KN95/N95 masks for the Indiana University community. We urge Indiana University to give their best effort in protecting those who are working on campus, including graduate instructors.

**We urge the university to extend greater flexibility in course modality to graduate workers who are teaching or working in campus facilities.** Currently, Indiana University's policy on [Faculty Instructional Responsibilities](#) states, "Variations from the schedule may occur for a variety of reasons, including illness, professional activities, and pedagogical considerations." This is contradicted by IU's COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions Page, which states that "The mode of instruction indicated in the course schedule is the mode that should be used to deliver the course." We are concerned that this language creates some confusion around whether instructors (including graduate students working as Associate Instructors) may, without consequence, alter the course format on a case-by-case basis if they themselves are exposed to COVID-19. We ask that the COVID-19 guidance be revised to align with BL-ACA-H28 and to clearly state that instructors (including graduate worker Associate Instructors) may alter their mode of instruction for a class meeting if they are ill or concerned that they may have been exposed to someone who is ill. This will reduce the risk of an instructor transmitting COVID to their students.

We understand that these are challenging times for everyone. In line with our determination to support Indiana University as best as we are able, we ask that these additional protective measures be implemented to keep everyone as safe and healthy as possible.

We look forward to your public statement in response to the above concerns. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

*Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition - United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America*