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June 29, 2020

To: Dr. Larry H. Dietz, President of Illinois State University

Illinois State University has made a decision to invite students back to campus for the fall 2020 semester. The signatories of this letter differ on whether, as things stand, reopening the campus is the best course of action. We all agree, however, that it is incumbent upon ISU to acknowledge and to act on the extraordinary responsibility that must inevitably accompany such a decision: to limit the spread of SARS-CoV-2 in order to safeguard the health and well-being of our campus community and of the Bloomington-Normal community to which we owe so much. This is especially urgent given that university campuses have been recognized as especially conducive to viral transmission,¹ and given that many scientists and public health experts believe that lifting restrictions on physical distancing is likely to result in [increasing infection rates](#), as we are [presently seeing in various regions](#) of the US.

We appreciate the efforts of those who have participated in the committees and workgroups that have guided ISU's planning process thus far, and who have developed the recommendations laid out in *Redbirds Return: A Progress Report for Fall 2020* (hereafter *Redbirds Return*). We believe, however, that the plan in its most recent iteration does not adequately address a number of key issues.²

In what follows, we discuss the potential impacts on public health of ISU's plan to return students to campus, and we suggest how the University can better mitigate corresponding risks. We then detail three strategies for limiting the spread of the virus on campus and in the surrounding community: (1) maximizing physical distancing, which will necessitate telework to the greatest extent possible; (2) using science-based best practices for transmission avoidance and containment; and (3) assuring equitable labor and inclusive planning practices. All three of these strategies are consistent with the principles laid out in *Redbirds Return*, and they reflect the concerns of many in our campus community that we do our utmost to keep both our campus and the public safe. Our suggestions do not exhaust the list of what the University could or should do to keep the public and the members of the ISU community safe, but they are the principles that should be the basis of any just and equitable reopening plan.

Please note that in this letter, "employee" refers to anyone employed by ISU in any capacity, and "instructor" refers to anyone employed by ISU who engages in teaching, and thus includes graduate instructors, teaching assistants, staff instructors, and non-tenure-track, tenure-track, and tenured faculty.

¹ As the [American College Health Association notes](#), "The high touch, highly interactive, mobile, densely populated living and learning environment typical of most campuses is the exemplar of a congregate setting with multiple risk factors for ready transmission of COVID-19."

² Our letter is based on, in addition to *Redbirds Return*, what we have learned about ISU's plans for the reopening of campus through official University communications, meetings and conversations with University administrators and supervisors, and news media reporting.

I. Public Health: Minimizing Risk to the Broader Community

While *Redbirds Return* offers recommendations for protecting the campus community's safety and well-being, it does not address the significant risks that ISU's decision to invite students back to campus poses to the broader community, or the steps ISU will take to mitigate these risks. During their time in Bloomington-Normal, ISU students interact with the broader community as employees and patrons of local businesses; volunteers and interns at local organizations; observers and teachers-in-training in K-12 classrooms; users of public services and public transit; and residents of off-campus neighborhoods. Bringing students back to campus in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic thus creates risk for all of the people who live and work in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County.³ This is especially so for the many individuals who are part of groups known to be at higher risk for complications from COVID-19, such as those who are immunocompromised or who have chronic heart, lung, or kidney conditions. However, people who are not part of officially designated risk categories have become seriously ill and died from COVID-19,⁴ and many questions remain about the long-term health implications of the virus even when symptoms are mild or non-existent at the time of infection.⁵ Moreover, statistics on COVID-19 infections nationwide reveal virus' disproportionate impact on communities of color⁶—a pattern that has held true locally⁷—and low-income communities, as a result of the conditions in which they live and work and unequal access to resources.⁸ This disproportionate impact is compounded by the overrepresentation of people from these communities among those who do not have access to [adequate healthcare](#), a group whose numbers are likely to grow in the coming months if unemployment [levels continue to rise](#).

³ In some cases, ISU's attempts to reduce risk on campus appear to simply displace that risk into the surrounding community. This is arguably the case with its plan to de-densify on-campus housing.

⁴ According to [CDC data from 13 June 2020](#), adults aged 18-29 have a hospitalization rate of 30 per 100,000 (see pg. 8). Reporting from the [Texas Tribune](#) on the recent surge of cases in the state suggests that adults in their 20s are increasingly getting sick with hospitalization rates for 20-29 year olds significantly higher than national averages. For example, 20-29 year olds made up 8.3% of hospitalizations in Travis County and the city of Austin. As of 24 June, the [CDC](#) reports that 132 individuals aged 15-24 died of COVID-19 with an additional 45 deaths due to COVID-19 and pneumonia.

⁵ See [here](#) and [here](#).

⁶ According to the [LA Times](#), disparities in COVID-19 death rates among Black and Latinx people under 50 “believe the conventional wisdom that old age is the primary risk factor for death.” The [Guardian](#) has reported that Native Americans are being systematically left out of public health data on COVID-19, particularly those who do not have healthcare provided by [Indian Health Service](#), which reports COVID-19 statistics in areas it covers. Nonetheless, even with these data issues, reporting indicates significant disparities for Native Americans (see, for instance, [here](#)).

⁷ For instance, 8-10% of McLean County residents identify as Black or African American (as per Census 2010 data) and consist of [~28% of local COVID cases](#).

⁸ Race and class disparities in vulnerability to COVID-19 result from various factors. These include (1) the longstanding environmental injustices that have left communities of color exposed to increased quantities of toxic substances, air pollution, and other harms that lead to asthma and other health conditions thought to create increased vulnerability to COVID-19; (2) the fact that low income is associated with higher rates of diseases associated with susceptibility to COVID-19; and (3) the fact that many low-income persons perform essential work that brings them into greater contact with those who are already infected with COVID-19. (See [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).)

For all of these reasons, it is highly likely that a COVID-19 outbreak at ISU will have its most severe impacts off campus, hitting communities of color and low-income communities in Bloomington-Normal hardest.⁹ It is thus imperative that ISU develop and make publicly available as soon as possible a clear and comprehensive plan for mitigating the public-health risks that a re-opened campus creates. In addition to things like contact tracing, testing, and maximizing physical distancing on the ISU campus—all of which we discuss below—mitigating risks for the residents of Bloomington-Normal and McLean County should include the following:

1. Educating students and families as to their role in helping our ISU community and the state of Illinois weather the COVID-19 pandemic. This is in accordance with [ISU's core values](#) of educating the people of Illinois and mentoring “ethical leaders who will craft, promote, and further positive goals for the betterment of society.” ISU should communicate, at minimum, that when students and parents limit time on campus, physically distance, wear masks, and limit visits home as much as possible, they are protecting themselves, their loved ones, *and their communities*.
2. Developing a *mandatory* responsible Redbird pledge statement¹⁰ (see II.1.B.1 below) that lays out in clear terms not only the rules according to which students must comport themselves while on campus, but also guidelines for how students should comport themselves while off campus, especially with respect to face coverings, physical distancing, and avoiding unnecessary travel.
3. Ensuring that University messaging does not give students the impression that their University experience, including their lives off-campus, will be identical to what they may have enjoyed prior to COVID-19.
4. In consultation with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and other relevant authorities, determining and communicating to the ISU community and to the public what specific COVID-19 conditions will trigger a University-wide move to remote learning.¹¹ Additionally, ISU should determine and publish specific criteria and COVID-19 conditions, at least as rigorous as those of the Governor’s original *Restore Illinois* plan, that will govern whether it operates according to guidelines for Phase 3 or Phase 4.
5. Making quarantine and/or isolation facilities and care available to any member of the ISU community who is or fears they might be infected with COVID-19 and does not have an alternative arrangement that will not put others at risk of infection.¹² [According to the CDC](#), university residents who have COVID-19 or who have been identified as close

⁹ This is consistent with recent reporting suggesting that public health experts are concerned that [young people](#) “are helping to spread the virus to more vulnerable Americans.”

¹⁰ *Redbirds Return* (p. 7) suggests a “voluntary responsible Redbird pledge statement.”

¹¹ *Redbirds Return* (p. 7) states that ISU will revert to remote teaching “in the event of a resurgence.”

¹² *Redbirds Return* (p. 8) states that ISU will “rapidly identify and isolate those with the virus, as well as quarantine individuals who had close contact.”

contacts of individuals with COVID-19 “should not necessarily be sent to their permanent homes off-campus. Sending sick residents to their permanent homes could be unfeasible, pose logistical challenges, or pose risk of transmission to others either on the way to the home or once there.” This is especially the case for international and out-of-state students, and for ISU community members whose permanent homes include individuals who are at increased risk of complications from COVID-19—a category in which the [CDC includes](#) “people >65 years old, young children, pregnant women, [and] people who are immunocompromised or who have chronic heart, lung, or kidney conditions.”

II. The ISU Community: Safety, Well-Being, and Equity

(1) Primary Strategy: Maximizing Physical Distancing

A. Maximizing physical distancing by encouraging telework

Absent a vaccine or an effective treatment for COVID-19, maximizing physical distance between persons is the most important thing institutions and individuals can do to stem the virus’ spread. While we appreciate ISU’s efforts thus far to facilitate physical distancing on campus, and note the presence of thoughtful suggestions in *Redbirds Return*, ISU has not adopted one of the most effective methods of ensuring physical distancing: the CDC’s recommendation, made in its [Considerations for Institutes of Higher Education](#) (hereafter *CDC CIHE*), that institutes of higher education “encourage telework for as many faculty and staff as possible.”¹³ For example, ISU’s communications to date have [indicated](#) that its approach to telework will be to allow it only for employees who qualify for an “applicable leave” or if they have a “disability which prevents them from reporting to work as directed and would like to request a reasonable accommodation.”

In addition, while we appreciate those chairs and directors who have worked to accommodate instructors’ preferences regarding class modalities, our understanding is that the University is seeking to ensure that a certain percentage of courses take place in face-to-face or in hybrid form (with face-to-face components), and that supervisors and those at higher ranks retain the right to alter the modality in which a course will be taught in order to meet these thresholds.

Unfortunately, this approach runs counter to several of ISU’s stated goals and values:

- It is at cross-purposes with ISU’s stated commitment to ensuring “the safety of students, faculty, and staff.”¹⁴ Not allowing employees who wish and are able to telework to do so increases risk for those employees and, by making the campus environment denser, for others, on campus and off, as well.

¹³ [IBHE](#) guidelines indicate that in Phase 4 “IHEs should consider options for faculty and staff to work remotely” (pg. 4).

¹⁴ *Redbirds Return*, p. 2

- It is at cross-purposes with the [University's core value](#) of "Diversity and Inclusion." As a recent statement from the [Accessible Campus Action Alliance](#) (ACAA) puts it, "Given the disproportionate representation of COVID-19 infection and death in Black and brown communities, university policies that emphasize in-person work and teaching run the risk of compounding the impact of racial inequity. These policies also risk endangering already-marginalized members of university communities, including staff and contingent faculty who are less likely to have the option to take time away from work."

The [ACAA also notes](#) that "marginalized people (particularly people of color, disabled people, and poor people) are less likely to be believed or to have access to the types of healthcare necessary to provide [medical documentation of underlying conditions]."

We were glad to see the University acknowledge, in *Redbirds Return*, that among the "health, financial, and social-emotional needs" that the University must address are those of students, faculty, and staff who are "disproportionately affected by COVID-19."¹⁵ The University has an opportunity to address these needs by changing its current plans so that they no longer compel on-campus work for people who can work remotely.

- It is at cross-purposes with *Redbirds Return's* guiding principle of placing "highest importance on the physical and *mental health* of our university community members"¹⁶ since it is likely to cause unnecessary stress and anxiety, especially for those who, while they may not fit into an Americans with Disability Act (ADA) category, are at higher risk for complications from COVID-19.¹⁷ It is also likely to cause unnecessary stress and anxiety for persons who are primary or sole caregivers for dependents and in whose cases illness or death will deprive their dependents of a primary or sole caregiver.
- It is at cross-purposes with the recommendation of the [Campus Climate Task Force Progress Report](#) that ISU work to "Elevate and Protect the Status of Women" as well as with *Redbirds Return's* guiding principle of "maintaining a high employment rate."¹⁸ [Ample research shows](#) that women are more likely than men to abandon employment because of childcare responsibilities. In a context in which opportunities to place children in schools, childcare centers, and summer camps and with caregivers are limited, and will likely continue to be so for some time, failing to accommodate employees' preferences for telecommuting risks leaving many with no choice but to take leaves or abandon their jobs when they would prefer not to, and this at a moment of tremendous economic uncertainty. ISU has an opportunity to protect all of its employees, and the women it employs in particular, by encouraging and arranging telework for those who need it.

¹⁵ *Redbirds Return*, p. 3

¹⁶ *Redbirds Return*, p. 4, our emphasis

¹⁷ As an example of a less-well known risk factor, people with type A blood have been shown to be 50% more at risk for developing complications of the disease. (See [here](#).)

¹⁸ *Redbirds Return*, p. 4

- It will be, in some cases, at cross-purposes with ISU’s stated principle of maintaining “high-quality instruction.”¹⁹ Given that in-person classes will require instructors and students to utilize face coverings and maintain six feet of physical distance, instructors may face difficulties carrying out important active-learning pedagogical practices, such as small-group work and peer-to-peer discussion, and may determine that remote instruction best allows students to meet the course’s learning objectives (regardless of class size). Efforts by the University to maintain certain percentages of face-to-face, hybrid, and online classes²⁰—or to place implicit or explicit restrictions on the composition (remote vs. face-to-face) of hybrid courses—may thus impede some instructors’ ability to organize their classes in the ways that they deem most effective.

In the interest of maximizing physical distancing on campus, we call on the University to adopt the CDC’s recommendation that institutes of higher education “encourage telework for as many faculty and staff as possible.” This means, at a minimum, adhering to the following principles:

1. Employees who want to telecommute to work should be allowed to do so to the greatest extent possible, with supervisors and employees working together to devise creative approaches to transferring duties formerly carried out in an office to an online format (e.g. alternative assignments, cross-training of employees, sharing duties, etc.). ISU should facilitate this transition by providing broadband hotspots or other technological resources to employees who need them.
2. Necessary in-person activities (e.g. in areas such as academic and student support services) should be identified by supervisors and directors in consultation with employees, with telework being used to the greatest extent possible following [CDC CIHE](#) recommendations. For example, library reference services should continue to be provided via the already existing virtual reference desk.²¹ Similarly, in departments and student support units, staff can be available to answer student questions through a combination of phone and Zoom accessibility, with face-to-face meetings by appointment if absolutely necessary.
3. Employees who self-identify as high-risk themselves, who live with persons who identify as high-risk, who cannot find appropriate care for their dependents due to COVID-19 related closures, or whose illness or death would deprive their dependents of a primary or sole caregiver must be permitted to telecommute to work. If necessary, they should be provided with alternate assignments which allow them to work from home.

¹⁹ *Redbirds Return*, p. 4

²⁰ *Redbirds Return*, p. 6

²¹ [IBHE](#) echoes this guidance for academic and student services when the state is in Phase 3. It does not provide specific guidance for Phase 4 (see pg. 7).

4. Because of the barriers and bias that make it difficult for many people to receive the necessary medical documentation and disclosures, and in accordance with the [best practice recommendations of the ACAA](#), ISU “should not require disclosure of personal medical, financial, or familial information to the institution in order to receive access to remote participation in teaching and learning.”
5. Following guidance from the [CDC CIHE](#) and the [American College Health Association’s \(ACHA\) guidelines](#) for re-opening institutions of higher education (hereafter ACHA guidelines or guidance), employee meetings should continue to be held virtually or with the option for virtual attendance.
6. Instructors should be allowed to exercise—within the public-health parameters established by the University—their expert judgment to decide the modality in which they choose to teach their classes (or classes that they have taken over for a co-worker). Instructor judgments should not be overruled by the administration in order to meet a threshold whose purpose is unrelated to the achievement of course learning objectives.
7. For as long as physical distancing requirements are necessary, University messaging should refrain from suggesting that remote instruction is necessarily inferior to face-to-face instruction under the present circumstances; instead, these context-specific changes will maintain our commitment to pedagogical excellence and ethical leadership during the current crisis. Communications with students and families should therefore underscore that course modality has been determined on the basis of instructors’ expert judgment, including in regards to how best to achieve learning outcomes in the context of constraints imposed by the pandemic.

B. Other methods for maximizing/complementing physical distancing:

In addition to encouraging telework, the University should do the following in order to maximize and complement physical distancing:

1. Develop a *mandatory* responsible Redbird pledge statement (see I.2 above) that lays out in clear terms the rules and guidelines for student behavior on and off campus, and any sanctions for non-compliance. In addition to University expectations for face covering and physical distancing, this pledge should include the requirement that students participate fully and honestly in contact tracing and self-isolate/quarantine for the fully required duration of time when directed to do so by the University or relevant public health authority.

Enforcement of the pledge should never be carried out by local or campus police. Rather, ISU should adopt a proactive and preventative approach to promoting student compliance. It should, following [IBHE](#) guidelines, provide training on all required public health measures through “videos, signage, and step-by-step guides in multiple

languages” (pg. 5) and in all needed accessible formats. It should also develop and expand a wide variety of academic, social-emotional, and mental health strategies and services. For example, Student Counseling Services should lift caps on counseling sessions and provide additional group counseling services at no additional cost (most, if not all, sessions should be offered virtually).

In no way should the University seek to have this pledge also function as a liability waiver.

2. Require all members of the ISU community to wear masks while on campus in any situations where they are likely to encounter other people, even if they are able to maintain a six-foot berth between themselves and others as the [CDC](#) recommends. The university should also strongly communicate that all members of the ISU community should follow the same procedures when off campus.²²
3. Follow [IBHE](#) guidelines to “implement plans that consider traffic flow in and out of buildings, dining centers, classrooms, labs, and studios, and other congregate spaces with particular attention to surge times and choke points, as well as spacing of students, faculty and staff to be consistent with IDPH and CDC guidelines.” ISU’s plans should include consideration of staggered or altered course schedules, designated entry and exit doors, and other measures suggested in the IBHE guidelines (pg. 5).
4. Utilize low- or no-contact in-person work as the first option if services cannot be completed through telework. For example, most library patrons should access circulating library materials via “curbside checkout.”
5. Following guidance from the [CDC CIHE](#), [IBHE](#), and [ACHA](#), direct supervisors to stagger the shifts of employees who share work spaces (e.g. offices, classrooms, labs) so as to maximize physical distancing among employees on campus.
6. Follow [CDC CIHE](#) recommendations to “close shared spaces such as dining halls, game rooms, exercise rooms, and lounges if possible; otherwise, stagger use and restrict the number of people allowed in at one time to ensure everyone can stay at least 6 feet apart, and clean and disinfect between use.”
7. Follow [ACHA guidelines \(p. 9\)](#) regarding on-campus housing to put in place and enforce “restrictions on building access by non-residents, including outside guests,

²² *Redbird Returns* (see pg. 8) states, “Face coverings will be the norm on campus, consistent with the Restore Illinois Phase 4 guidance.” Here, lack of specificity is concerning. There must be clear, specific guidance that ensures that employees are not put at additional risk by being forced to deal with unmasked individuals. These guidelines must be unambiguous to ensure that questions of interpretation on the policy are not outsourced to individual employees.

non-residential staff, and others [understanding that] these restrictions may not apply to some people, such as personal care attendants for students with disabilities.”

8. Follow [CDC CIHE](#) recommendations to “limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations...especially with individuals who are not from the local geographic area.”
9. Follow [CDC CIHE](#) recommendations regarding cafeteria and food service venues, which should offer “grab-and-go” and “individually plated meals” primarily. Dine-in service should be limited.²³

(2) Second Strategy: Using Science-Backed Best Practices for Transmission Avoidance on Campus

A. Testing, Tracing, Quarantining, and Isolating

Testing, contact tracing, quarantining of those exposed to COVID-19, and isolation of those infected (whether symptomatic or not) are crucial to suppressing the spread of the virus. As the Director-General of the World Health organization has [stated](#), these practices should be the “backbone” of the response to the virus. For ISU, this means:

1. The University should develop and publish a plan, in consultation with IDPH and McLean County Department of Health (MCDH), for testing. To the maximum extent test supplies and lab capacity allow, this plan should seek to achieve the following goals:
 - a. All students coming to campus should take COVID-19 tests as close to campus return as test-result delivery times will practically allow. Students who test positive should remain at home until such time as their illness is over and they receive a negative test result.
 - b. COVID-19 diagnostic tests should be available free of charge, on demand, and on campus to any ISU community member (student or employee) who has reason to believe they may be infected with the virus, who wishes to ensure the safety of others in their workplace, or who desires a test for any other reason.²⁴ While some employees may elect to take COVID-19 tests through their own healthcare providers, this cannot be relied upon given the reality of [inadequate quantities](#) of tests in some communities, and [racial bias](#) impeding access to tests in others. Employees with work-from-home arrangements should receive COVID-19 tests if they return to on-campus work.

²³ *Redbirds Return* (p. 11) recommends “encouraging” these options, but then describes an array of dine-in options, implying that most students will still be dining in groups.

²⁴ *Redbirds Return* stipulates “consider[ing] requiring student, faculty, and staff participation in antigen and/or antibody testing” (p. 10).

2. All employees working on campus should engage in daily symptom and temperature checks,²⁵ should leave work if symptoms appear, and then should undergo testing as soon as possible.
3. Students should be given the information necessary for accurately conducting their own daily symptom tests and should be encouraged to do so.
4. Contact tracing is imperative for ensuring that one or two COVID-19 cases do not lead to campus-wide outbreaks. ISU should work with IDPH, MCDH, and other relevant public health agencies to develop and publish a contact tracing plan prior to the start of the semester.²⁶ While respecting student and employee privacy, ISU must engage in proactive practices that will allow it to collaborate effectively with IDPH, MCDH, and other relevant agencies.
5. If an ISU community member becomes infected with COVID-19, the University must work with chairs and supervisors to ensure that every student, instructor, and staff member who may have been in close contact with the infected individual knows to get tested and to quarantine themselves until they have been tested and received results.
6. In accordance with IBHE and ACHA guidelines, ISU should work with local departments of public health to ensure that it has “sufficient accommodations for isolation and quarantine available” ([IBHE](#) p. 5). It must also identify ahead of time rooms that can be used “to accommodate an increase in need” ([ACHA](#) p. 10).
7. Because of the ease of transmission of COVID-19, and in accordance with [ACHA guidelines](#) (p. 10), “isolation and quarantine rooms should be physically separated from other residential student rooms.”
8. Quarantine and isolation spaces, as well as “case management” services like “psychological support, support for basic needs, and ongoing monitoring,”²⁷ must be provided to students and other ISU community members who need it at the University’s expense. This is especially crucial to ensuring that asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic individuals remain quarantined, in accordance with [CDC guidelines](#).

²⁵ *Redbirds Return* suggests conducting checks/screenings “where appropriate and when recommended in certain settings” (p.10). In contrast, [IBHE](#) recommends “IHEs should emphasize the importance of self-monitoring and require self-quarantine or isolation, following CDC and IDPH guidelines, when an individual has symptoms, has been exposed to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19, or has traveled in a high-risk area as defined by the CDC” (pg. 5).

²⁶ *Redbirds Return* (p. 10) mentions meeting with officials and developing capabilities.

²⁷ The [CDC recommends](#) “14 days of quarantine after exposure based on the time it takes to develop illness if infected.”

9. To ensure that students are not penalized for quarantining or isolating themselves, ISU should direct instructors to, in accordance with [ACHA guidelines \(p. 5\)](#), develop “attendance and excuse policies that acknowledge and support students who become ill without creating barriers and without requiring unnecessary visits to health facilities for documentation of illness.” These policies should also extend to students who are following University directives to self-isolate even though they may be asymptomatic, and to students who are in quarantine due to close contact with someone infected or potentially infected with COVID-19.

B. Facilities, Cleaning, and Supplies

1. ISU, in consultation with the IDPH and other relevant scientific bodies, should develop and publish a schedule of what Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is required for all types of University labor,²⁸ and any required PPE beyond a basic face covering should be provided for employees by the University. Employee requests for additional PPE, if grounded in scientific recommendations, should be heeded. As per ACHA guidelines (p. 6), the University’s PPE supplies should also be stocked so as to meet “patient care and testing needs.”
2. ISU should follow [IBHE](#) guidelines (pg. 6) to “provide personal cleaning resources in classrooms for students who want to clean their area.” This voluntary cleaning, however, in no way absolves the University of its responsibility to ensure that all teaching and research spaces are professionally cleaned.²⁹ Instead, ISU should adhere to IBHE guidance to “follow protocols and use equipment (e.g. HEPA vacuums) as outlined by the IDPH and CDC for cleaning-disinfection.” These [protocols](#) include requirements that cleaning be done by trained staff provided with recommended PPE and training on its proper use and disposal. In addition, they mandate all cleaning staff “are trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals used in the workplace in accordance with OSHA’s Hazard Communication standard.” ISU should also communicate proper use and potential hazards for any cleaning supplies issued to staff and students through videos and posted signage in all needed accessible formats.
3. Where HVAC systems allow, ISU should adhere to the [CDC HVAC guidelines](#) for infection control in healthcare facilities. In facilities where that is not possible, ISU should implement the filtration and fresh air minimums proposals in *Redbirds Return*³⁰ and also adopt CDC guidance for occupied high-volume spaces without high ventilation capacity systems like those in healthcare facilities. These include adopting “clean-to-dirty”

²⁸ *Redbirds Return* fails to clarify how decisions about appropriate PPE will be made, writing only that the University will “ensure ready access to personal-protective equipment to employees as required” (pg. 8).

²⁹ *Redbirds Return*, by contrast, states that “the campus community will continue to be responsible for keeping personal workspace clean throughout the day, including using disinfecting wipes on shared surfaces and objects” (p. 9).

³⁰ *Redbirds Return*, p.9

directional airflows and using “ceiling fans with upward airflow rotation combined with upper-air ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) disinfection systems” where facilities allow. (See [here](#).) The changes and adaptations made to each facility should be publicly posted online and at the sites themselves in all needed accessible formats.

(3) Third Strategy: Equitable Labor and Inclusive Planning Practices

We appreciate the University’s commitment to maintaining high employment as stated in *Redbirds Return*.³¹ It must also be committed to equitable labor practices and to an inclusive planning process. This means, at a minimum:

1. No employees should have their workloads intensified unduly for reasons related to COVID-19 planning/responses without an appropriate increase in compensation. Whether additional work is addressed through increased compensation or through the hiring of additional personnel is a decision that should be made with the input of the affected bargaining units or employee groups. Thus, for example, while additional cleaning of teaching and research spaces is critical, it should not lead to an undue intensification of the workload of the employees who currently perform this work.³²
2. In addition to “strongly recommend[ing] that employees who are ill remain home,”³³ ISU should modify its sick leave and paid-time-off policies to ensure that there are no disincentives for employees making the correct choice to isolate or quarantine themselves if they are ill or have come into contact with someone who is. This means:
 - a. Increasing sick and personal leave time to encourage employees not already teleworking to stay home if they have been in contact with someone who is infected with COVID-19, or at the first signs of illness.
 - b. Permitting temporary telework for employees who wish to continue to work while in quarantine or in isolation, while also recognizing that employees who are ill and on sick leave cannot be required to work while on sick leave.
 - c. Ensuring that no employees who can be covered under the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) are exempted from its protections.
4. Chairs, supervisors, and faculty status committees should take into account the labor and time involved in designing/carrying out successful online and hybrid courses when evaluating instructor performance and should support instructors who have considerable additional work by providing TA support, additional compensation, or course releases.

³¹ *Redbirds Return*, p.4

³² On page 9, *Redbirds Return* notes only that the work of “disinfecting ... high traffic areas, as well as high touch surfaces” has been “added to the regular cleaning process.”

³³ *Redbirds Return*, p.8

5. Employees who are asked to take over duties for a co-worker who cannot come to work for COVID-19-related reasons should have the right to refuse to do so.
6. Employees who take over duties for a co-worker who cannot work for COVID-19-related reasons should be appropriately compensated.
7. Instructors who take over teaching responsibilities for colleagues unable to continue teaching for COVID-19-related reasons should be free to change the course modality from face-to-face to hybrid or all-online, or from hybrid to all-online.
8. Employees whose job involves direct contact with those who are infected with COVID-19 should receive hazard pay.
9. ISU should collect and publish data on disparate risks and impacts within the ISU community due to COVID-19 prior to and throughout the course of the fall semester. All plans should explicitly account for actions taken to eliminate disparate harms based on this data as well as those from county, state, and national health agencies.
10. ISU should commit to full transparency regarding planning and budgeting decisions for the foreseeable future. This means, for example, proactively making budget information available to all employees, and ensuring that HR directives received by supervisors are circulated to the entire campus employee base through FAC-L, CS-L and AP-L.
11. All bargaining units and other employee groups on campus must be meaningfully and consistently involved in the development of ISU's plans to return students to campus. This is especially vital when decisions concern particular employees directly. For example, any decisions about the feasibility of health and safety measures must be made with the input of the employees most likely to be affected. Employees who participate in ISU's planning processes should be recognized for this labor and, if it is not already part of their job description (e.g. a faculty member's service), should be appropriately compensated.
12. No employee working on campus should be understood as disclaiming, waiving, or otherwise releasing the University from any of its legal obligations, including its duties to take reasonable care and due precautions in light of COVID-19.

COVID-19 has created challenging conditions for colleges and universities of a kind unseen in the US for nearly a century. These challenges also present an opportunity for ISU to craft a response based on care, compassion, and equity for our entire community, and in so doing to become a model of ethical leadership for higher education in Illinois. If ISU moves forward hastily, without considering all the ramifications of its actions, it will not only lose this opportunity, but will be laying the ground for unnecessary sickness, suffering, and death at ISU and in

Bloomington-Normal. ISU's best path forward is to take seriously the safety and equity concerns of its employees and to allow us to help the University plan for a future that is safe and just for all. Navigating this extraordinary moment successfully calls for an extraordinary degree of work and an extraordinary degree of collaboration.

We look forward to doing this work, and to participating in a planning process that is, going forward, based on ISU's values of respect, integrity, and inclusion.

Sincerely,

[First 50 names in alphabetical order. To sign this letter, click [here](#).]

1. Fusun Akman, Faculty, Mathematics
2. Olcay Akman, Faculty, Mathematics
3. Joe Amato, Associate Professor, English
4. Casey Babcock, Alum, English
5. Guy Banicki, Faculty, Educational Administration and Foundations
6. Christopher Breu, Faculty, English
7. Carrie Anna Courtad, Faculty, Special Education
8. Susan K Drissi, Community Member
9. Katherine Ellison, Faculty, English
10. Kass Fleisher, PhD, Faculty, English
11. Hina Gilani, Staff, Office of Technology Solutions
12. Gabriel Gudding, Faculty, English
13. Kristen Grimes, Staff, Office of Technology Solutions
14. Chris Haines, Undergraduate Student, Education of Social Sciences History
15. Alyssa Herman, Graduate Student, English
16. Matt Himley, Faculty, Geography, Geology, and the Environment
17. Sarah Hochstetler, Faculty, English
18. Martha Callison Horst, Faculty, School of Music
19. Sandra Keller, Faculty, Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
20. Amanda Klingler, Alum, Biological Sciences
21. Laurel Krapivkin, Graduate Student, English
22. Rebecca Lorenzo, Graduate Student, English
23. Kim McHale, Faculty, Math
24. Sayanti Mondal, Graduate Student
25. Mary Jeanette Moran, Faculty, English
26. Kee-Yoon Nahm, Faculty, School of Theatre and Dance
27. Heather O'Leary, Graduate Student, Graduate Workers Union
28. Melissa Oresky, Faculty, School of Art
29. Reecia Orzeck, Faculty, Geography, Geology, and the Environment
30. Stacy Otto, PhD, Faculty, Educational Administration and Foundations
31. Aaron Pitluck, Faculty, Sociology and Anthropology

32. Mara Plantholt, Alum
33. Keith Pluymers, Faculty, History
34. Brian Rejack, Faculty, English
35. Trevor Rickerd, Graduate Student, Biology
36. Amy E. Robillard, Faculty, English
37. Rachel S., Community Member, Alum, English
38. Lisya Seloni, Faculty, English
39. Debbie Shelden, Faculty, Special Education
40. Rachel Shively, Faculty, Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
41. Alex Skorpinski, Community Member
42. Sarah Smelser, Faculty, Wonsook Kim School of Art
43. Erika M. Sparby, Faculty, English
44. Rachel Sparks, Graduate Student, School of Biological Sciences
45. Todd Stewart, Faculty, Philosophy
46. Livia K. Stone, Faculty, Sociology and Anthropology
47. Bryanna Tidmarsh, Graduate Student, English, Graduate Workers Union
48. Ashley Waring, Graduate Student, School of Biological Sciences
49. Julie Webber, Faculty, Politics and Government/Women's and Gender Studies
50. Gaywalee Yamskulna, Faculty
51. Kim McHale, Faculty, Math
52. Anonymous, Faculty, School of Art
53. Rhondal McKinney, Emeritus Professor
54. Jeanne Howard, Emeritus Professor
55. Anonymous, Faculty, College of Arts and Sciences
56. Crystal Tempel, Community Member
57. Lisa Dooley, Graduate Student, English
58. Anonymous, Graduate Student
59. Anonymous Full Professor, Special Education
60. Tony Brook, Staff, Office of Technology Studies
61. Julie Jung, Faculty, English
62. Peter Kramer, Undergraduate Student, Computer Science
63. Anonymous Pre-Tenure Faculty, College of Education
64. Erwin Cornelius, Graduate Student, Mathematics
65. Jason Whitesel, PhD, Faculty, Sociology and Anthropology/Women's and Gender Studies
66. Thomas P. Crumpler, Faculty, Elementary Education and Literacy
67. Anonymous, Faculty, School of Teaching and Learning
68. Anonymous, Alum, English/Women's and Gender Studies
69. Stewart Winger, Faculty, History
70. Claire Leanard, Undergraduate Student
71. JS, Graduate School Alum, English
72. Yusuf Sarfati, Faculty, Politics and Government
73. Dr. Matt Felumlee, Community Member
74. Samantha Huffman, Alum

75. Anonymous, Faculty, College of Education
76. Anonymous, Alum
77. Stephanie A. Kratz, Community Member and Alum
78. Kristin Carlson, Faculty
79. Mark Zablocki, Faculty
80. Anonymous, Staff
81. Anonymous, Community Member
82. S. Gavin Weiser, Faculty, Educational Administration and Foundations
83. Kate Weiser, Staff
84. Anonymous, Undergraduate Student
85. Zachary Mobbille, Graduate Student, Mathematics
86. Meghan Leonard, Faculty, Politics and Government
87. Kyle Ciani, Faculty
88. Eric Willey, Faculty, Milner Library
89. Jenny Hansen, Staff, Milner Library
90. Lori Riverstone-Newell, Faculty, Politics and Government
91. Anonymous, Faculty
92. Katrin Paehler, Faculty, History
93. Dianne Renn, Faculty, College of Education
94. Jill Janes, Lauby Teacher Education Center
95. Anonymous, Faculty, Mathematics
96. Raven Preston, Graduate Student
97. Ama Oforiwaa Aduonum, Faculty, School of Music
98. Do-Yong Park, Faculty, School of Teaching and Learning
99. Anonymous, NTT Faculty, Mathematics
100. Anonymous, Faculty, Politics and Government
101. Susan Kalter, Professor, English
102. Anonymous, Faculty
103. Andreas Fischer, Faculty, Wonsook Kim School of Art