



The COVID-19 Pandemic and Workload: Results from a National TYCA Survey

Two-Year College English Association

Workload Task Force

Date: February 2022

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Abstract

In spring of 2021, the Two-Year College English Association distributed a 23-question survey to two-year college English faculty to learn about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their workload. This report summarizes the key findings from the 438 two-year college English faculty responses to the close-ended questions of the survey. Specifically, the report discusses shifts in teaching modalities, resources provided to adjust teaching, changes to workload and work tasks, and compensation during the pandemic.

Introduction

In 2019 the Two-Year College English Association (TYCA) Workload Task Force conducted a survey to examine the workload of English faculty at two-year colleges (Suh et al.). During the analysis phase of the study, the COVID-19 pandemic drastically altered the labor conditions and workload of educators across the country, which prompted us to create and distribute a follow-up survey in spring of 2021 to explore the impact of the pandemic on the workload for faculty at two-year colleges. In this report, we present findings¹ to the close-ended survey questions about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on English faculty at two-year colleges.

¹ Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add to 100%.

TYCA Pandemic Survey

Survey Distribution

As a follow-up to the 2019 TYCA survey on faculty workload (Suh et al.), the task force disseminated a 23-question survey in spring of 2021 through the TYCA national listserv and via regional chapter listservs. The survey included 23 questions, five of which were open-ended, that asked faculty to describe their professional experiences during the pandemic.

Survey Participant Demographics

Self-reported demographic data from the 438 two-year college English faculty respondents are included in Table 1. These demographics include things such as type of employment contract, gender, race, and TYCA region. Since participants were not required to answer every question, the total number of responses for each of the demographic categories will vary.

Table 1: Participant Demographics²

Participant Demographics	Count	Percentage
Type of Employment Contract		
Tenure-line (tenure-track or tenured)	222	51.9%
Non-tenure line (long term contract)	61	14.29%
Non-tenure line (renewable contract)	72	16.86%
Short term (limited contract)	66	15.46%
Other	6	1.41%
Gender		
Female	292	74.87%
Male	80	20.51%
Nonbinary	3	0.77%
Another Identity	0	0%
Prefer not to say	15	3.85%

² Table 1 and Table 2 both appear in Griffiths et al..

Race		
Asian/Pacific Islander	7	1.79%
Black or African American	15	3.83%
Latinx	9	2.30%
Multiracial	6	1.53%
Native American or American Indian	2	0.51%
White	326	83.16%
Other	9	2.30%
Prefer not to say	18	4.59%
Two-Year College English Association Region		
TYCA Northeast	39	9.9%
TYCA Pacific Coast	35	8.88%
TYCA Midwest	126	31.98%
TYCA Pacific Northwest	45	11.42%
TYCA Southeast	36	9.14%
TYCA Southwest	71	18.02%
TYCA West	42	10.66%

Survey Findings

To gain a better understanding of how many respondents taught during the pandemic, the first question on the survey asked participants the following question: “Have you taught at least one English course at a two-year college in 2020 or 2021?” Of 438 respondents, 431 (98.4%) responded “yes” and 7 (1.6%) responded “no.”

The survey findings below report issues related to changes in teaching modalities, resources provided to faculty to adjust teaching, changes to workload and work tasks, and compensation during the pandemic. Since participants were able to opt out of answering any question, the number of responses for each question varies.

Teaching Modalities Prior to Pandemic

The survey asked respondents to explain the kinds of experience they had prior to the COVID-19 pandemic with teaching modalities: “Before the global COVID-19 pandemic, what types of instructional modalities did you have experience teaching in?” Respondents were able to check multiple³ modalities, and the results suggest that many faculty had experience with online,

³ For questions where participants were able to select multiple answer choices, the total number of answer choices selected for a question can be greater than the number of respondents. This can cause the total response percentages to exceed 100%.

hybrid, or other distance learning teaching modalities prior to the adjustments that were required by the pandemic. Of the 417 respondents to this survey question:

- 89% indicated that they had previously taught in a face-to-face context
- 59% had taught a completely online asynchronous course with no scheduled component
- 13% had experience teaching hybrid or blended courses with both online and scheduled in-person components
- 45% had taught completely online courses with a scheduled class meeting time
- 9.518% had taught either synchronous live streaming or recorded distance education courses

The vast majority of respondents had taught in multiple modalities, primarily face to face, but a surprising number, well over half, had also taught completely online asynchronous courses, which speaks to how common such teaching modalities are in two-year colleges. At least for two-year college faculty, the transition to online teaching may have been less unfamiliar than for university colleagues, particularly colleges that are primarily residential in nature and that had not been offering online courses at the rate of those campuses where nontraditional/returning adult and commuter students make up a larger portion of the student body.

Changes to Teaching Modalities in the Early Days of the Pandemic

Through the following closed-ended question, the survey asked participants to provide information about how two-year college English programs restructured course delivery near the beginning of the pandemic: “During spring 2020, how did your institution change the structure of in-person English courses and adapt instructional modalities in response to the global pandemic?” A majority (53.72%) of the 417 respondents who answered the question indicated that English courses at their institutions were offered completely online, with some classes meeting synchronously through videoconferencing while others were asynchronous (without a scheduled meeting time). Almost a quarter of participants (23.74%) indicated that courses in their programs were offered entirely online without any scheduled class meetings. A smaller percentage (15.11%) indicated that all English courses were offered through videoconferencing at a scheduled class time. Few respondents indicated that some courses met in person while others met online (3.84%), and only one person noted that in-person courses and instructional modalities did not change during spring 2020.

These results suggest that initial pandemic safety measures of higher education institutions resulted in significant changes to the teaching and learning environments for two-year college English instructors and their students. Almost all respondents worked in programs in which courses moved rapidly online.

When given the option to report on “Other” instructional modalities, 13 (3.12%) respondents provided written comments, with all describing some form of online teaching. Some comments reported on how the move to new modalities increased their teaching workloads and/or affected their working conditions. For example, one respondent stated: “We could offer synchronous classes (which I did), but had to offer a totally online version for students who could not make it

to the synchronous meetings. So I had to prepare and teach two versions of the same course.” Another noted that “[s]ome classes were moved online, but some classes remained face to face. Faculty had the option to teach face to face with Zoom for students who didn't want to come into class. Faculty had to be in the classroom for these classes; we were not given the option to teach face to face classes remotely.” Another described offering “real time meetings” to help students transition to a new online environment.

Managing Changes to Teaching during the Pandemic

Respondents rated their initial experiences with pandemic teaching through the following closed-ended question: “In spring 2020 (early months of the pandemic), which of the following best describes your initial experience with changing how you teach in response to the pandemic?” Accompanying instructions directed survey participants to “focus specifically on the teaching components of your workload, not on other aspects of your life during the early months of the pandemic.”

Respondents’ selections from the available options show that most respondents (about 70%) had a challenging but manageable transition to changes in their teaching workload:

- Parts of the transition were challenging, but overall I was comfortable with making changes: 38.22% (159)
- Most parts of the transition were challenging, but I was able to manage the changes: 31.49% (131)
- It was mostly easy for me to make a transition to new ways of teaching: 12.98% (54)
- I didn’t have any major changes in how I teach: 7.93% (33)
- The transition was overwhelming and/or unmanageable: 6.49% (27)
- Other: 2.88% (12)

A relatively small percentage of respondents, 12.98% (54), indicated that the transition was “mostly easy.” Only a small percent, 7.93% (33), made no changes to teaching, and an even smaller percent, 6.49% (27), suggested that the change was “overwhelming and/or unmanageable.”

Respondents were asked about changes to their Fall 2020 academic calendar through the following question: “Did your institution make any changes to the Fall 2020 academic calendar because of the global pandemic? (select all that apply).” The majority of respondents, 63.91% (294), stated that their institutions did not change the academic calendar. Few respondents indicated changes, and such changes included the following:

- Classes moved online partway through the semester or term: 8.26% (38)
- My institution eliminated one or more planned breaks: 5.22% (24)
- The first day of class was later than normal: 4.78% (22)
- Not sure: 4.35% (20)
- In-person classes ended earlier than normal: 3.48% (16)
- All instruction ended earlier than normal: 2.17% (10)
- The first day of class was earlier than normal: 1.52% (7)

A number of respondents, 6.3% (29), selected “Other.” As some of the following examples illustrate, “dual credit started 2 weeks late” and “course drop deadlines changed—that is all.”

The survey also asked participants to identify the modality of their courses during the pandemic: “For fall 2020, which of the following options best describe your department’s or program’s overall approach for offering English courses in response to the global pandemic?” Of the 401 participants responding to this question, the distribution of responses is below:

- All in-person courses moved online, and some courses had synchronous (scheduled) class meeting times while others did not: 37.41% (150)
- All courses were offered online; courses that would normally meet in person had scheduled (synchronous) class meetings offered through videoconferencing: 23.19% (93)
- Other: 16.96% (68)
- Courses that would normally meet in person have an online component, but students still attend small-group in-person class meetings at a scheduled time (modified hybrid): 6.98% (28)
- All courses were offered completely online without any scheduled class meetings: 6.73% (27)
- In-person courses continued to meet for most class periods, and students had the option to attend class in person or participate remotely (hyflex): 6.23% (25)
- Instructional modalities did not change: 1.75% (7)
- Not sure: 0.75% (3)

Of the 68 respondents who selected “Other,” many offered comments to further explain their responses. One respondent commented, “About 90% of classes were offered online with a few face-to-face being offered in a reduced class size with CDC safety measures in place.” Many responses indicated safety protocols that were in place. Additionally, some respondents mentioned they had the ability to choose their teaching modality. For example, one respondent shared, “My Dean allowed each faculty member to choose how he or she wanted to offer classes for fall 2020; I chose to offer all my courses online, but with a scheduled synchronous class meeting several times each week through Zoom.”

Autonomy in Determining Instructional Modality

Participants were asked to respond to the closed-ended question, “In fall 2020, how much autonomy did instructors in your English department or program have in determining whether their courses would be offered in person?” Of the 401 participants who responded to the question, 42.39% (170) indicated that institutional administrators decided how courses were offered without input from the department or program. Respondents also identified the following as decision-makers regarding their instructional modality:

- All English instructors: 14.21% (57)
- State-level officials (i.e., the legislature, governor, state system administrators, or a governing board): 13.22% (53)
- One or more English department administrators, but excluding individual instructors: 7.23% (29)

- Full-time faculty decided whether to teach in person courses, but excluding part-time or contingent instructors: 6.98% (28)
- Some instructors based on seniority, age, health indicators, or other factors, but other instructors had no choice: 4.24% (17)

Twenty-four respondents (5.99%) were unsure about how instructional modality was determined for the fall of 2020, and an additional 23 (5.74%) indicated that the decision was made by another individual or process.

Resources Provided to Adjust Teaching Instruction during Pandemic

The survey asked participants about the resources they were provided to adjust their teaching instruction during the pandemic: "Throughout the pandemic (spring 2020 to the present), what kinds of resources were made available to English instructors to help them adapt their instruction in response to changing working conditions? (select all that apply)." The type of resources can be classified into the following three categories: technical and logistical resources, disciplinary-specific resources, and compensation (time and money). Since participants were able to select more than one response, the count for the number of responses is greater than the number of respondents. See Table 2.

Table 2: Types of Resources Provided to Help English Instructors Adjust Teaching Instruction during Pandemic

Type of Resource	Percentage Selecting	Count
Technical and Logistical Resources		
Training in using technology (for videoconferencing, learning management systems, or instructional tools)	20%	358
Institutional training in online or hybrid teaching techniques	18%	324
On-demand tutorials or links to video support	14%	254
Individual consultations with IT experts	12%	219
Individual consultations with teaching and learning experts	8%	145
Development shells with standardized course content for online or hybrid teaching	7%	133
Disciplinary-Specific Resources		
Discipline-specific mentoring groups or professional learning communities	6%	113

Discipline-specific training for English instructors (for example, workshops in online writing instruction)	5%	86
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Compensation (Time and Money)

Stipends or other monetary compensation	5%	95
Funding for external professional development activities related to the pandemic	2%	41
Not Sure/Other	2%	31
Reassigned time (course load reduction) to prepare courses	<1%	8

Workload Changes Due to Pandemic

In regard to changes in workload, participants were asked, “How has the global pandemic changed the time that you spend on work for your job as a two-year college English professional?” Out of 392 respondents, more than three-quarters, 78.57 (308), of participants expressed spending more time on work:

- I spend somewhat more time on work without additional compensation: 31.38% (123)
- I spend significantly more time on work without additional compensation: 45.41% (178)
- I spend more time on work, but I receive extra compensation: 1.79% (7)

A sizeable percentage of respondents, 17.60% (69), indicated “I spend about the same amount of time on work as I did before the pandemic.” Only a small percentage, 3.32% (13), expressed “I spend less time working for my job than I did before the pandemic.” Meanwhile, 0.51% (2) indicated “Not sure.”

Furthermore, participants were asked to select all relevant responses to the question “How has the global pandemic changed the number of your work responsibilities as a two-year college English professional? Did you take on more responsibilities?” Of 392 respondents, over half, 58.42% (229), indicated increases in work responsibilities:

- My work responsibilities increased somewhat: 39.80% (156)
- My work responsibilities increased significantly: 18.62% (73)

Over a third, 35.97% (141), of respondents selected “I have experienced minimal or no changes to my workload responsibilities,” 4.59% (18) indicated “I have fewer work-related responsibilities,” and 1.02% (4) selected “Not sure.”

Participants were also asked to select all responses that applied to the question “How has the global pandemic changed the types of tasks that you do as a two-year college English professional?” Out of 392 respondents, over three-quarters of respondents noted their work tasks have changed:

- My work tasks have changed somewhat: 52.04% (204)
- My work tasks have changed significantly: 28.06 (110)

However, a significant number of responses indicated “I have experienced minimal or no changes to the types of work tasks I do” 18.88% (74), and several, 1.02% (4), selected “Not sure.”

Compensation for Work

Participants were asked to select all of the relevant responses to the question “How has the global pandemic affected your compensation for work as a two-year college English professional?” Just over half, 58.22% (255), of 438 respondents indicated that their salary and compensation remained unchanged. Several respondents noted that their salary had decreased because of the pandemic:

- “I received less compensation because my teaching course load was reduced in response to enrollment or budget issues connected to the pandemic”: 12.33% (54)
- “My compensation was reduced because of mandatory state or institutional furloughs”: 2.74% (12)
- “My compensation was lower because my non-instructional work at my institution was reduced or eliminated because of the pandemic”: 2.51% (11)
- “My compensation was reduced because I made a personal choice to teach fewer courses or eliminate other work responsibilities for reasons connected to the pandemic”: 2.05% (9)

Some respondents offered additional comments to contextualize their responses. For example, one explained, “My institution normally contributes to employee retirement accounts; they ‘paused’ these contributions, including matching contributions. They also decided not to allow any raises.” No participants reported having to take unpaid medical or family leave because of COVID-19; however, an additional five (1.14%) respondents indicated that their salary or other compensation decreased for reasons not related to the pandemic.

Fewer respondents reported an increase in compensation or salary in 2019. Thirty-five of the 438 (7.80%) respondents reported a compensation or salary increase for reasons unrelated to the pandemic. Seventeen (3.88%) participants indicated that their compensation increased because of additional paid work responsibilities related to the pandemic. One participant reported that they were unsure whether their salary or compensation changed.

Twenty-nine participants provided a response other than the provided closed options. As noted above, the majority of these comments offered context for the participant’s response. Several comments explained how no change in pay actually amounted to a decrease in compensation due to increased workload. As one respondent explained, “As a coordinator, my compensation was lower because administration would not compensate for all of the additional work I did to work with faculty, approve courses, hold trainings, etc.” Another respondent noted how pandemic teaching conditions allowed the college to benefit from faculty’s uncompensated use of personal technology and internet access. Others described pay freezes, elimination of raises, and foregone cost of living adjustments. Those who provided additional comments about an increase in compensation noted receiving a “bonus” or “[a] very small stipend (\$75) at the beginning.”

Few of the additional responses distinguished between full-time and adjunct or contingent faculty or indicated that the respondents were aware of potential differences. However, two responses suggest that adjunct faculty may have experienced additional uncertainty and financial hardship as a result of the pandemic: “All full time faculty had pay freezes and no raises. Adjunct pay rates were frozen and very few courses were available to non-full time faculty.” Another respondent’s comment that “FT faculty received \$500 for technological expenses related to the pandemic (printing/internet, etc.)” suggests that a similar stipend was not made available to part-time faculty. These responses suggest an exacerbation of pre-COVID inequitable labor conditions for adjunct faculty and limited compensation for all two-year English faculty regardless of position (Suh et al.).

Conclusion and Implications

Responses to the TYCA pandemic survey provide a glimpse into how two-year college English faculty had the ability to adapt during the early phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. This adaptability called on faculty to work differently during a time of crisis by making adjustments to their teaching practices. What the responses show is that the kinds of resources made available to faculty to support this transition varied, with some instructors reporting that they received support primarily in technology use and many fewer receiving direct compensation or training in disciplinary teaching techniques for distance learning.

Further, the number of faculty who took on additional work responsibilities was significant, about 58%; at the same time, a significant number (more than one-third) did not find that their workload increased much at all. Though we do not know the factors behind this difference, we hypothesize that several factors may explain it. For example, some faculty with administrative, committee, or coordinator positions may have had to take on additional labor to support adjunct instructors or colleagues in the transition. Gender or other identities may influence which faculty took on more workload responsibilities than others, or regional differences in COVID-19 community spread may have influenced how institutions responded to the moment. Additional investigation could verify some of these hypotheses.

However, what is suggested by the survey is that although teaching modalities and work tasks shifted, labor conditions were merely exacerbated (not necessarily *created*) by the pandemic. The original [TYCA workload survey report](#) certainly suggested that some of the workload inequities and insufficient resources existed pre-pandemic. As the societal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic persist into a third academic year at the time of this report writing, TYCA must attend to the ongoing labor that is being asked of instructors—emotional, material, pedagogical—and identify areas where the organization will be able to ease the burdens many instructors are taking on.

Works Cited

Griffiths, Brett, et al. "Community College English Faculty Pandemic Teaching: Adjustments in the Time of COVID-19." *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, vol. 46, issue 1–2, Dec. 2021, pp. 60–73.

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