

[Dear President Eisgruber, we hope you take our feedback into consideration when you re-write this. Our community deserves information, support, and action, not empty platitudes and vagaries. In times like these, it is especially important to uphold the standards of rigor and research that make Princeton one of the world's leading educational institutions.

Best wishes, Princeton Graduate Students United.]

Dear members of the Princeton community,

Eight weeks ago, I asked the University to move instruction online to slow the spread of COVID-19 on campus. My message promised that we would reassess the need for virtual instruction by April 5. In early March, it was still possible to hope that the disruption might prove short-term.

...and yet you take 7 more paragraphs to actually tell us your decision? Less is more!

late work will be docked one point per day

That is no longer so. We confront a durable and damaging public health crisis that will number among American history's greatest upheavals. I write now to update you about the state of the University and our planning for the year ahead.

I do so keenly aware that this virus has disrupted lives and sown distress throughout our community. Many among us have lost friends or loved ones to COVID-19. Others are struggling to recover from the infection or are experiencing financial hardship as a result of the shutdowns caused by the pandemic. I have heard several heartbreaking stories about the toll this virus has taken on Princeton families.

?? Repetitive AND vague

Thanks, but we need more than sympathy -- we need support!

All of you have my deepest sympathies and best wishes. This crisis has required us to do hard things already, and I am grateful to all of you—faculty, staff, students, and alumni—who have stepped up to help the University and your local communities. There are undoubtedly more hard things to come. That is, I know, an unwelcome thought. The pandemic came upon us swiftly, and its impact and duration are in many ways tough to grasp. As we look ahead, it is important to assess honestly the difficult challenges that confront not only our University, but our country and indeed the world.

who is "us"? be more specific

In its early days, the pandemic seemed to many of us like a terrible storm or natural disaster. Metaphors about “waves of infection” and “sheltering in place” reinforced that idea. These comparisons, however, fall short of capturing the crisis we face. Storms and natural disasters are sudden events. The recovery process, even when long and difficult, takes place after the event has occurred. The pandemic will not pass quickly. We cannot simply hunker down, pick up the pieces, and return to normalcy.

YES!! This is why we need a universal funding extension for all grad students NOW!

Neither is the pandemic a war, but its damage, its pervasive impact on our lives, and the shared responsibilities for sacrifice and action that it imposes upon all of us are more akin to wartime than to a natural disaster. The virus has already claimed the lives of more New Jersey residents than World War I, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War combined. Unemployment percentages have risen to levels not seen since the Great Depression. Our most basic tasks, like grocery shopping, have changed overnight. Ordinary recreations, like going to the theater or a ballgame, are forbidden. The pandemic is not a storm that we can wait out, but instead a global struggle that demands the commitment and energy of our society and societies around the world.

Here and in the above paragraph, your use of metaphor

is excessive and unnecessary, especially when you've yet to make the central claim of this piece.

AVOID BLOATED LANGUAGE!

Desirable for university profs, maybe, but not for many grad students already facing a precarious job market.

Our collective efforts have helped to “flatten the curve” of infections in New Jersey, and it is tempting to hope that we might soon vanquish the virus and return to normal. Epidemiologists and public health experts tell us, however, that until we have either a vaccine or “herd immunity,” the virus will continue to spread. We must prepare for the possibility that new outbreaks will flare in the months ahead, and we must do so when much is still unknown about the disease, its short- and long-term effects, and its treatment. We will be dealing with COVID-19 for months or longer. This University, like all of ~~America~~ **the United States** and the world, must proceed accordingly.

We've sent you 2 petitions, 700+ signatures each, and 100 individual testimonials. When will you respond to THIS information??

To plan successfully in the face of so much uncertainty, we will have to be steadfastly faithful to Princeton's teaching and research mission; firmly committed to protecting the health and safety of our community; and ready to respond to **new information** as it becomes available. Our goal will be to restore Princeton's on-campus, in-person research and teaching enterprise as soon and as fully as is consistent with sound public health principles.

?? Is Princeton a corporation? Is teaching enterprise or education?

Our ability to restart our in-person teaching and research will depend upon whether we can do so in a way that respects public health and safety protocols. Dean for Research Pablo Debenedetti and University Librarian Anne Jarvis are chairing committees to ensure that we can safely and responsibly reopen Princeton's laboratories, libraries, and other facilities when state law permits. We are optimistic that we can do so, and we are also optimistic about resuming on-campus graduate advising and instruction this summer and in the fall. Exact dates may vary from program to program, and we will provide additional information as it becomes available.

And you'll continue to make sure advisors/ PI's don't pressure grad students to work in unsafe conditions... right?

Undergraduate education presents more vexing questions. On the one hand, everyone at this University values in-person academic engagement and the co-curricular and extracurricular experiences that accompany it. We want to restore residential education as soon as we safely can. On the other hand, the interpersonal engagement that animates undergraduate life makes social distancing difficult. **That is partly because undergraduates live in close proximity to one another, but even more fundamentally because they mix constantly and by design in their academic, extracurricular, and social lives.**

This is true of graduate students too. We aren't reclusive hermits!!

[Many people] have pointed out that COVID-19 infections are rarely fatal or even severe in people as young as our undergraduates. That appears to be true, though much remains unknown about the disease. Young people can, however, spread the virus to others. Rapid spread on our campus could require us to quarantine large numbers of students or place additional strains on the local healthcare providers. To bring back our undergraduates, we need to be confident of our ability to mitigate the health risks not only to them, but also to the faculty and staff who instruct and support them, and to the surrounding community.

Is this supported by research/ data? Cite your sources.

and graduate students!!

We do not yet know enough about the path of this pandemic, and the medical response to it, to determine whether that is possible. For example, we do not know whether quick and accurate testing for the virus will be available in the fall. We do not know whether we will have anti-viral remedies that could reduce the lethality of the disease for those who contract it. We do not know how many people on campus and the surrounding community have already been exposed to the disease and might be immune to it.

We want our decision to be as fully informed as possible. We will undoubtedly learn more about the course of the pandemic, and about the techniques available to combat it, over the next two months. For that reason, Princeton will wait until early July before deciding whether our undergraduate teaching program will be online or residential in the fall term. I appreciate that this uncertainty can itself add to the distress of this pandemic, but I am convinced that it is the most responsible way for Princeton to proceed.

Grad workers will need to secure housing at short notice if we're expected to teach -- are you aware of this??

[Over the past weeks, my colleagues and I considered whether to postpone the beginning of the academic term until later in the fall or even until January. Waiting would obviously yield more information, and we could hope that with time would come new advances in testing or treatment for the disease. That is only a hope, however, not a guarantee. The only guarantee is that we would lose teaching time through inactivity. We have therefore decided that we will proceed with the fall semester calendar as currently scheduled, whether we can teach residentially or not.]

Condense: this could be 1-2 sentences.

Does this mean

teaching loads will increase for grad students??

undergrad or grad??

Regardless of what else happens, Princeton University is committed to offering the best possible undergraduate education consistent with the health and well-being of our community.

We are accordingly asking faculty members to begin planning now under the assumption that their classes will be online in the fall. In the event that we are able to resume residential instruction, we will be able to pivot quickly back to the instructional techniques more familiar to all of us—though we should anticipate that even if we can return to on-campus instruction in the fall, University life will be subject to significant restrictions for as long as the pandemic continues.

HUGE assumption. Who is "we"???

faculty aren't the only teachers on campus! Recognize and compensate grad labor! #PrincetonWorksBecauseWeDo

Our deans will soon write to all faculty to inform them of new resources available to support their teaching in the year ahead. We have talked to Princeton faculty and students about the six weeks that we spent online this spring and about how to enhance the remote teaching and learning experience. They agree that the most crucial ingredient for successful teaching is personal engagement of students with faculty, teaching assistants, and one another, and that sustaining this engagement requires additional effort and more instructional resources in a remote environment. Such connections are the heart of Princeton's teaching model, and we will



Will graduate student AIs / instructors be compensated accordingly?? Who benefits from these "resources"?

Will these preceptors and TAs be compensated for their labor? Will they get to decide whether they take on this additional work?

* be hiring additional preceptors and teaching assistants so that we can fortify those connections if we are teaching remotely.

so you'll be compensating graduate student teachers for their labor, right?

We are making these investments because they are critical to our mission and essential even at a time of great economic distress. We have also raised stipends for the upcoming year to support our graduate students, and we will continue to meet the full financial need of every undergraduate student at the University. Meeting these needs will, however, require strict budget discipline and trade-offs across the University, and I want now to say something about our economic outlook.

You do this every year b/c of inflation.

What about grad students?

Section breaks and clear subject-headings can really help to clarify and strengthen long-form essays like this.

Don't try to pretend this year's exceptional.

This public health crisis and the economic chaos accompanying it have affected all of the University's revenue streams: ailing markets have diminished endowment returns, giving has declined despite the spectacular loyalty and generosity of our donors, indirect cost recoveries are down because we have suspended laboratory research, and the University loses room charges when its dormitories stand empty. At the same time, Princeton has taken on new expenses to support remote instruction and to increase financial aid to families adversely affected by the crisis.

Thx for the reminder that you're our landlord as well as our employer.

See: slavery.princeton.edu

Princeton is blessed to have an exceptional endowment, built up through the generosity of our donors, leveraged by the impact of Annual Giving, and sustained over time by the careful stewardship and disciplined spending policies of past generations. That endowment buffers our University from some of the more extreme pressures affecting other institutions of higher education. It helps us to pursue our mission during the crisis and to emerge from it as energetically as possible. But the endowment does not save us from having to make tough choices or exercise financial discipline; indeed, as I have noted already, endowment returns have declined along with the University's revenue streams.

Indeed!!

Do these

"tough choices" include administrative pay-cuts?

Does this not include students' health and well-being??

People sometimes mistakenly regard endowments as though they were savings accounts or "rainy day funds" that can be "tapped" or "dipped into" during hard times. That is an error: endowments are more like lifetime annuities. They must support active operations of the University each year and last as long as the University does.

Who are you talking about?

are graduate research and teaching not active operations of the University?

Our budget model in fact presupposes that we will "tap" or "dip into" our endowment every year. We spend about 5 percent of our endowment each year by design. Put differently, Princeton spends more than \$1.3 billion from its endowment every year, including in years where endowment returns are negative. We spend at a rate such that, absent growth, the entire endowment would be gone in 20 years.

Imprecise. You are describing expenditures from endowment REVENUE, which is to say, the university can run on surplus alone.

This is imprecise and confusing. In most years, endowment growth exceeds 5%.

In the past 20 years, the endowment grew from \$7.4 billion to 26.1 billion. Surely you're not suggesting such growth could *cease* for the next 20 years due to COVID-19?

"stipends" that are in fact salaries paid in exchange for labor.

* *

What about the fact that Princeton paid more \$\$ to private equity fund managers than to students last year? How, precisely, does that factor into the university's "operating budget" and "core mission"?

This endowment spending accounts for more than 60 percent of the University's operating revenue every year, supporting a substantial part of faculty salaries, graduate stipends, financial aid, and other budget lines. We have to sustain that level of annual spending forever or radically reduce future expenditures on our core mission.

We're asking for exceptional action on a short-term time-frame... nobody is threatening the endowment "forever" ...

Including administrative salaries, construction, athletics, private equity firms...?

We believe that an average annual endowment spend rate slightly above 5 percent is in fact sustainable. With this year's decline in endowment value, however, we expect to be spending more than 6 percent of our endowment. That rate is not sustainable. We therefore need to reduce the University's operating expenditures, especially because there is a substantial risk that greater economic distress may lie ahead. That is why Provost Deborah Prentice has rightly called for salary freezes, tighter vacancy management, and reductions to non-essential expenditures.

.WRONG!

In 2019 the Board of Trustees voted to raise "the upper boundary of the spending target range to 6.25 percent". Are you implying the BoT was trying to bankrupt Princeton before COVID? Or perhaps this rate is actually "sustainable"...

As we make the tough choices required by economic stress, our priorities are clear: we need first and foremost to protect the quality of our teaching and research commitment. We must also uphold this University's signature commitment to financial aid. We must do that as efficiently as possible so that we can also sustain the community that is so important to this University. We have thus far avoided the kinds of furloughs and layoffs that have taken place at other universities; while we do not know what the future holds, we want to minimize the risk that such actions might be needed in the future. Feeble attempt to mask austerity under the guise of "community."

AGREED!!

Whose jobs get protection? Who is considered "essential" and who is not? WHOSE RISK GETS MINIMIZED?

These times are not normal, nor are they a short diversion, such that we can simply wait for the pandemic to end. This crisis requires that we do rather than merely wait. We must persist through the crisis, pursuing our mission in the face of these unwanted but unavoidable circumstances with courage, grit, and creativity. That will require all of us to do hard things, made all the harder because we cannot take joy and inspiration from friends, classmates, co-workers, and neighbors in the ways that we usually do. I am confident that this extraordinary University, this fiercely devoted band of Tigers, is up to the challenge, and that we will eventually come through this unprecedented crisis stronger than ever.

then why have you failed to take action ????????

cliché

repetitive

With best wishes,

Chris Eisgruber

We wish solidarity was more than a platitude to you, but we will continue to practice it by fighting austerity and doing our best to protect our ENTIRE community.

You forgot to sign the honor code.