
*The Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) strongly encourages institutions where ethnomusicologists work—colleges, universities, archives, libraries, cultural institutions, etc.—to maintain or adjust workplace environments as necessary to protect the health of all students and employees, including institutional support staff who remain present to keep the institutions operational. We also recognize and thank the many institutions who have already taken such precautions.

*The SEM would like to draw particular attention to staff working in the arts as music performers, teachers, and researchers. These individuals are especially vulnerable to the pandemic’s economic impacts. Institutions should recognize that a long-term shift to virtual environments will impoverish the collective knowledge base while disproportionately impacting the livelihood of employees in the arts. Many colleges and universities employ ensemble directors or private lesson instructors whose work requires face-to-face synchronous interactions. The pandemic has curtailed both live performance and teaching, upon which contingent music faculty rely to supplement their income. The SEM encourages institutions to continue to employ these faculty in Higher Education both to participate in finding effective instructional solutions during this period and to help support those struggling financially due to COVID-19.

*The SEM supports institutional support staff including, but not limited to: transportation workers; librarians and library workers; buildings, grounds, and traffic personnel; custodial and maintenance workers; food service personnel; post office and emergency personnel; and office staff, interns, and student workers. We believe institutions should not put employees and students in harm’s way. We encourage institutions to provide students and employees with personal protective equipment such as masks and to make necessary accommodations to enable appropriate hygiene and physical distancing.

*We strongly encourage institutions not to terminate or furlough any employee without the employee’s written consent. Every employee should be held harmless, economically and professionally, for the dislocations caused by COVID-19. No employee should be required to use paid sick leave in order to enact the institution’s response to COVID-19 or in order to quarantine, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, in the event of known exposure. Likewise, hiring decisions regarding faculty and staff should not be made on the basis of antibody tests or past COVID-19 status.

*We recognize that many institutions will open prior to vaccinations or cures for COVID-19 becoming available. Many faculty and staff members have co-morbidity issues that would make them particularly vulnerable to adverse impacts from COVID-19, or have household members with such health issues.
strongly encourage these institutions to allow such faculty and staff to teach or work remotely, without penalty to their income or seniority.