Gillings Guidelines for Gatherings through Spring 2022

Q: I’m organizing meetings or events for AY 2021-22. Should I use a virtual format (on Zoom) or shift to in-person?

A: Throughout fall 2021 semester, we successfully navigated holding in-person classes by strictly following campus community standards (see below). We aim to translate this success to meetings and gatherings. When planning Gillings events or meetings, we recommend organizers:

- Consider meeting or event objectives, topics and (especially) participant needs very carefully and how, specifically, an in person versus virtual format may improve the meeting outcome.
- Where feasible, understand and seek to honor participant preferences.
- Monitor campus community standards, and shift to virtual format if warranted.
- Hold larger meetings online, recognizing that other factors (below) may be applicable.

Strong reasons for using Zoom/virtual for meeting or event:
Zoom/virtual meetings work better when:
- Main purpose of meeting is information-sharing (e.g., seminars, trainings, town halls).
- Virtual meeting has had track record of high attendance, good engagement & outcomes.
- Participants know one another, have established working relationships.

People and logistics: Consider using Zoom/virtual platform if:
- Some participants have concerns & barriers with transportation to/from campus.
- Some participants may feel pressured to come to campus when not comfortable.
- You are seeking more equitable participation (Zoom auto-transcription helps hearing impaired people participate fully).
- All your participants have regular access to broadband; don’t have tech issues.
- Meeting space is unavailable or cost-prohibitive.

Strong reasons to hold in-person meetings or events:
In-person works better when top meeting priorities include:
- Building relationships, creating community (social events, for example).
- Fostering free-flowing discussion & conversation.
- Building trust among participants.
- Providing a venue where participants can “read” each other (e.g., body language, facial expression) to tackle challenging discussions productively.

Logistics are manageable:
- Space is available with suitable capacity, configuration and technology (for social events, this would be possible in lower and upper atriums in MHRC).
- It’s feasible to meet outdoors.
- You are confident that participants will comply with community standards (mask wearing, for example).
- All people are comfortable meeting in person, do not feel pressured to join (see above).

What about hybrid (some participants in person, some virtual/remote)?
Hybrid meeting and events are more challenging to manage well. Consider using this format when:
- An in-person group wants to offer occasional flexibility to participants.
- Room technology has been tested & verified to work well for remote participants.
- Leaders have track record of managing meeting effectively for in-person and remote participants.
- Group has strong track record of equitable and inclusive participation (e.g. in-room participants do not dominate; multiple conversations/sidebars are kept to an absolute minimum, etc.).

Food and drink
Food and drink for social events should be served and consumed outdoors (or served indoors but consumed outdoors). For events smaller than 36 people, the lower atrium may be reserved for an event with food service. Boxed items are strongly preferred. If buffets are used, food must be served by gloved/masked individuals; self-serve is not permitted. Consider offering refreshments in “shifts” for large groups. Nobody should be required to attend or serve.

Community Standards
We are required to wear a mask indoors at all times unless by ourselves in a private office with door closed. No physical distancing requirements are currently in place. Courses and meetings may be held at normal room capacity.

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