UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON
STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

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IMPROVE UH ONLINE

Whereas, having one form of communication between students and professors will be simple and easier for students to utilize, in contrast to numerous professors having their own personalized way of communicating. Also, students may have pressing issues or emergencies that are happening in their personal lives, and in some cases, students need their professor's permissions to extend an assignment due date, or even to miss class. If they are not going to respond within 2 to 3 business days, students will not be able to take care of their personal business promptly. Furthermore, having more than one means of way of communicating can confuse students.

Whereas, online surveillance gives students anxiety. Cameras and microphones give access to their homes and families possibly being shown on cameras, and is a violation of privacy[1];

Whereas, university students are not required to disclose details about their personal lives to their peers, but privacy is lost in video and microphone-based classrooms and tests. To turn on video means allowing others into their home.[2]

Whereas, this could be a threat to students that have undocumented immigrants as family members, or who themselves are undocumented immigrants from being exposed.

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[1] https://theconversation.com/5-reasons-to-let-students-keep-their-cameras-off-during-zoom-classes-144111
[2] https://theconversation.com/5-reasons-to-let-students-keep-their-cameras-off-during-zoom-classes-144111

According to the Migration Policy institute, "In the United States there are 3.2 million undocumented children and young adults under the age of 24."[3]

Whereas, many of these online platforms are not as secure as we think. The evidence lies in the "Zoombombers" who have infiltrated classes, often disrupting them. There have also been reports of them sharing personal information, such as their name and where they live.[4]

Whereas, having cameras and microphones on is invasive, because how far are universities willing to go to prevent cheating. It was never agreed-upon students, nor did students consent their private homes being heard and shown on cameras and microphones.

Whereas cameras during exams require students to show a 360 area of where they are taking their tests and may show intimate areas of their home up close, such as bedrooms, desks, living rooms, and kitchens.

Whereas, there have been reports from students that have been flagged for cheating, just for not looking at the camera for a couple of seconds, sneezing, looking down during test, and etc.[5]

Whereas, many students who live-in low-income areas do not have high-speed Internet, or sufficient laptops that can record them. Because of this camera systems may flag them for cheating because they don't have high-speed Internet, because their laptops may be behind "The University of California, Berkeley banned online exam proctoring, concerned that poor and rural students lacked sufficient access to high-speed connections and compatible laptops."[6] "The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign announced that it will discontinue its use of remote-proctoring software Proctorio after its summer 2021 term. The decision follows almost a year of outcry over the service, both on UIUC's campus and around the US, citing concerns with privacy, discrimination, and accessibility."[7]

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[3] https://www.migrationpolicy.org

[4] https://theconversation.com/5-reasons-to-let-students-keep-their-cameras-off-during-zoom-classes-144111

[5] https://theconversation.com/5-reasons-to-let-students-keep-their-cameras-off-during-zoom-classes-144111

[6] https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/12/learning/should-students-be-monitored-when-taking-online-tests.html

[7] https://www.theverge.com/2021/1/28/22254631/university-of-illinois-urbana-champaign-proctorio-online-test-proctoring-privacy

Whereas, when online, students are often expected from their teachers to look at the laptop for the entire class and stay focused on their lecture, while their classmates look at them. "This can result in feelings of prolonged eye contact, which can feel threatening and uncomfortable."[8] Students may feel like everyone is watching them which may distract them from the lecture. This uncomfort that student's experience is enhanced by the fact that the faces on the screen are much larger and appear very close. "This can trigger the body's "flight or fight" response, leaving students feeling on edge and impairing their concentration."[8]

Whereas, online learning and test contribute to more fatigue than in a normal classroom. "Most of us learn much from nonverbal cues. The face-only format of online video still results in missing many nonverbal cues such as hand gestures and requires people to work harder to interpret the ones they can see. The face-only format also leads people to focus more on verbal cues, which can be tiring."[9] When students see many faces on the screen, we try to focus on all of them which can result in having continuous partial attention. Switching very quickly between tasks can diminish their memory and their ability to perform may decrease. These problems happen naturally to students when they are less engaged in participants which results in students -feeling drained."

Whereas, not all classes require a camera to be on during class or even during an exam, so therefore if it is accepted for some classes, then it should be for all of them. If the university was truly worried about students cheating on exams, (that is the main reason why the university requires cameras on for some exams), then they should have required it for all classes, but they did not.

Whereas, not everyone has the privilege to have a safe, quiet private place to take their exams. Many students just have large families so it is more difficult for them to find a quiet place to take their exams. This also violate students privacy of their homes. In addition to that, after winter storm Uri, many families are now living with their other families and friends. Due to the circumstances, it is less likely that students are going to find a private and quite place to take their exams.

Whereas, due to the pandemic many students, especially international students have had to go back to their homes and home countries and do their university classes online. The time that the classes are at maybe in a different time zone than where they live, so it

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[8] https://theconversation.com/5-reasons-to-let-students-keep-their-cameras-off-during-zoom-classes-144111

[9] https://theconversation.com/5-reasons-to-let-students-keep-their-cameras-off-during-zoom-classes-144111

would be very difficult for many students to make it those classes. Therefore, having recorded lectures posted to Blackboard would help these students to be caught up with the class along with your peers.

Whereas, when classes are online, it increases the chance of technical difficulties such as internet problems, and computer issues, preventing students from attending live lectures when they are facing those issues. It only makes sense for professors to record their lectures and post them to Blackboard promptly in case students fall into any of these difficult situations.

Whereas, students need their accommodations in a quick fashion to adapt and get adjusted to their class type which can vary from online to in-person format. If accommodations granting prolong a week, this proves to hinder students' success in their courses in that they will not perform their best on exams and assignments.

Whereas, the University of Houston promotes student inclusivity.[10] To successfully exercise inclusivity, policies listed in class syllabus should be subject if majority of students in that class are not in favor of the policy of that class in which they pay for. This provides a system of comfortability and freedom for undergraduate and graduate students attending their courses.

Whereas, various platforms presents technical difficulties and demonstrates inappropriate usage of online learning for students. Having a consistent platform assist in delivering proper online support for students.

Whereas, when students are given impromptu assignments that are not listed in the syllabi, this develops hardship for student as this can disrupt a scholar's obligations and arrangements with other courses, work, and extracurricular.

Whereas, members of a household may need to use the internet at the same time due to school, work, and extracurriculars being online. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, daily activities have been shifted to where many of our interactions rely on a computer and Internet connection.

Therefore, be it enacted by the Senate of the Student Government Association of the University of Houston:

Be it further enacted, Professors should utilize business and professional email etiquette and respond to students within 2 - 3 business days.

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[10] https://www.uh.edu/about/diversity-statement/

Be it further enacted, having external or internal webcams as well as microphones on should be presented as an option for students for all courses during their class time.

Be it further enacted, having external or internal webcams as well as microphones on for exams should be not be present at the University of Houston.

Be it further enacted, all professors must be required to record and keep all lectures and post them on their respective platforms for the duration of the course.

Be it further enacted, All Center for Students with Disabilities Accommodations must be made within the first week of the students' request and professors should be made known of pending accommodations.

Be it further enacted, Students should be granted to option to amend their class syllabi accommodations with ¾ of the class in favor.

Be it further enacted, All Professors should utilize consistent Video Conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Classroom.

Be it further enacted, Professors could give at least 4-6 days of time for an assignment's due dates if needed.

Be it further enacted, Professors should not require all members of a household to be a disconnect from the household internet when students are taking an exam.

Jasmine Khademakbari
Student Government President
Date of President's Approval: __3/31/21__

Julian Cheng
Speaker of the Senate
Date of Senate Approval: __3/31/21__