2019 FACULTY IT SURVEY

Executive Summary

UBIT Communication and Engagement

Office of the VPCIO

UB Information Technology

2019 FACULTY IT SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Technology is changing at UB, in part because the work of the academic professional is changing.

In every area of their careers, faculty are required to do more, often with the same amount of time and resources. More UB faculty expect to be teaching courses in a hybrid, or entirely online, format within the next five years (pg. 6). From a technology perspective, they are also being asked to give more consideration to information security than ever before (pg. 7).

There is unprecedented opportunity for IT to provide faculty with the resources and support needed to meet their changing goals. UBIT's efforts in recent years—like the extension of classroom recording to faculty devices with Panopto, or the introduction of institution-wide video conferencing with Webex—have focused closely on designing a technology ecosystem that compliments the new, fluid nature of academic work.

"AIM FOR SIMPLICITY."

Each member of UB's faculty, in every university school and college, works differently, and a "one size fits all" technology solution is rarely possible. But, because of the diverse response to this survey, UBIT can identify areas of improvement and further collaborate with faculty to make informed decisions about how best to support academic work across the institution.

Throughout this report, we will highlight the diverse perspectives UB faculty shared with UBIT, and look ahead to upcoming opportunities for UBIT to address the common concerns of faculty, and improve knowledge of and support for the services we offer.

We welcome any additional feedback—please contact us at ubit-communication@buffalo.edu.

Pictured on front: Jaroslaw Zola, an assistant professor, in UB's new "SCoRe Group" lab, with PhD students. Zola was awarded the NSF Career grant to continue work on scalable probabilistic graphical modeling with applications to biomedical informatics.

THE SURVEY

The 2019 Faculty IT Survey was open from April 15 to May 3, 2019, and contained 16 questions designed in collaboration between Instructional and IT support staff and the UB Faculty Senate IT Subcommittee.

436 UB faculty members responded to the 2019 survey, with respondents from every UB school or college, representing 17% of university faculty overall.

Affiliation
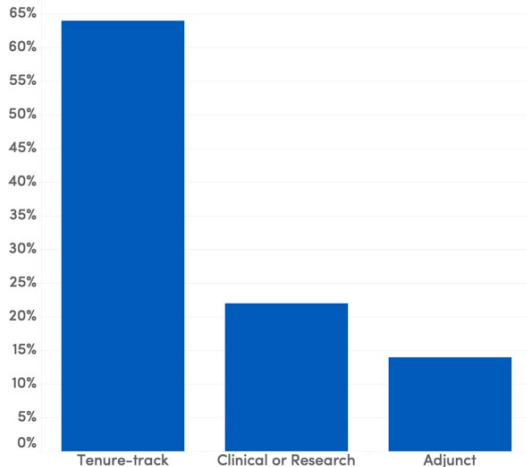
Years at UB
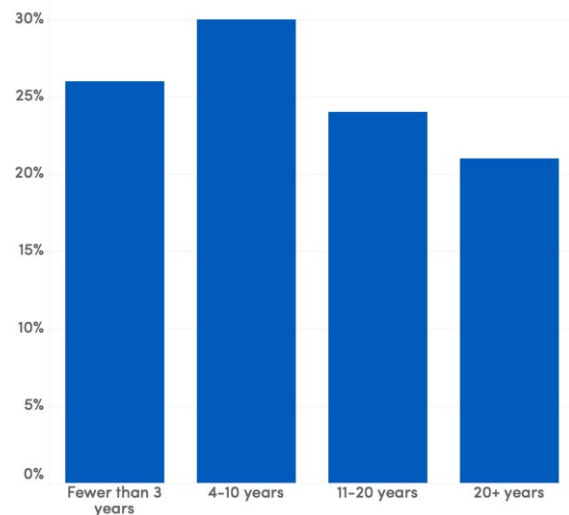
An explicit goal of this survey was to build on findings from the 2017 Faculty IT Survey to determine the nature and extent of change in faculty attitudes and perspectives relating to technology. The instrument was designed to balance ease of participation—reducing the size of the survey by half—with the opportunity to collect thorough and candid feedback from faculty.

Devices used
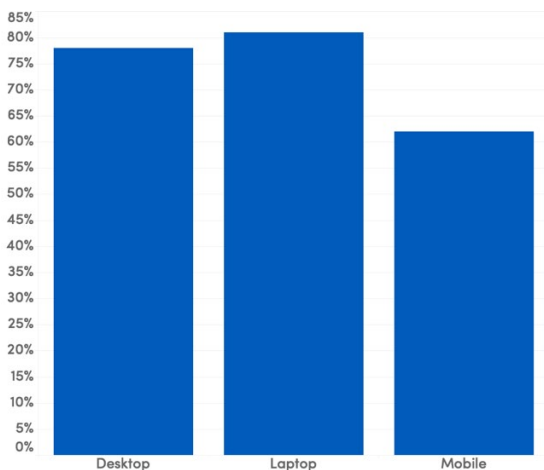

Faculty are beginning to more closely resemble students in their increasing use of laptops (81%) and mobile devices (62%) for work.

Looking ahead: As faculty rely more on mobile devices, there will be implications for information security and data privacy.

Per the 2017 faculty survey, the majority of these devices are personally owned. In 2019, UBIT is deploying Jamf for mobile device management, making it easier for UB departments to support dedicated Apple mobile devices (the most popular among UB's faculty) for work.
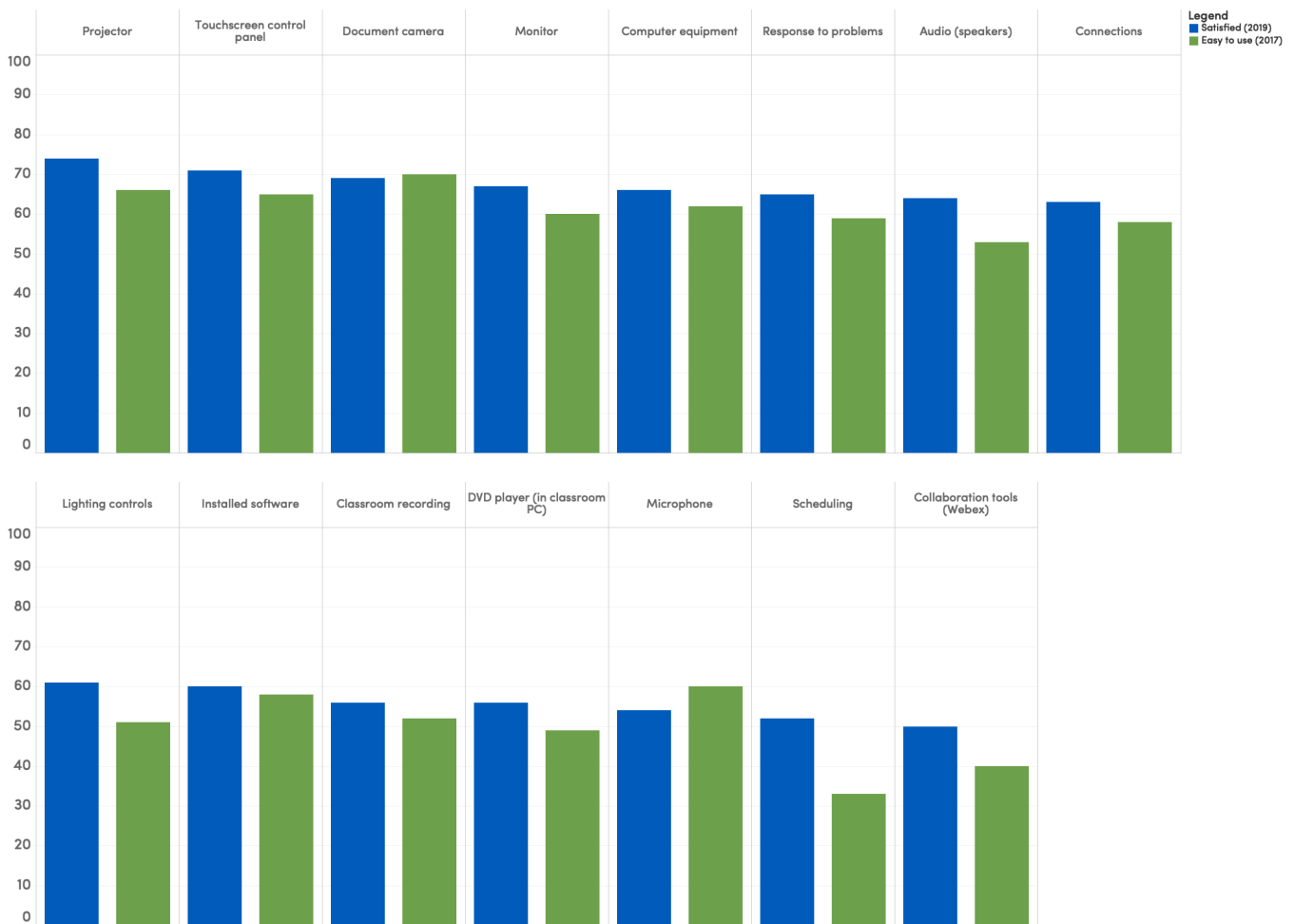
SATISFACTION WITH CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY

"Please rate the following aspects of teaching technology in UB classrooms with regards to your satisfaction in meeting your needs."
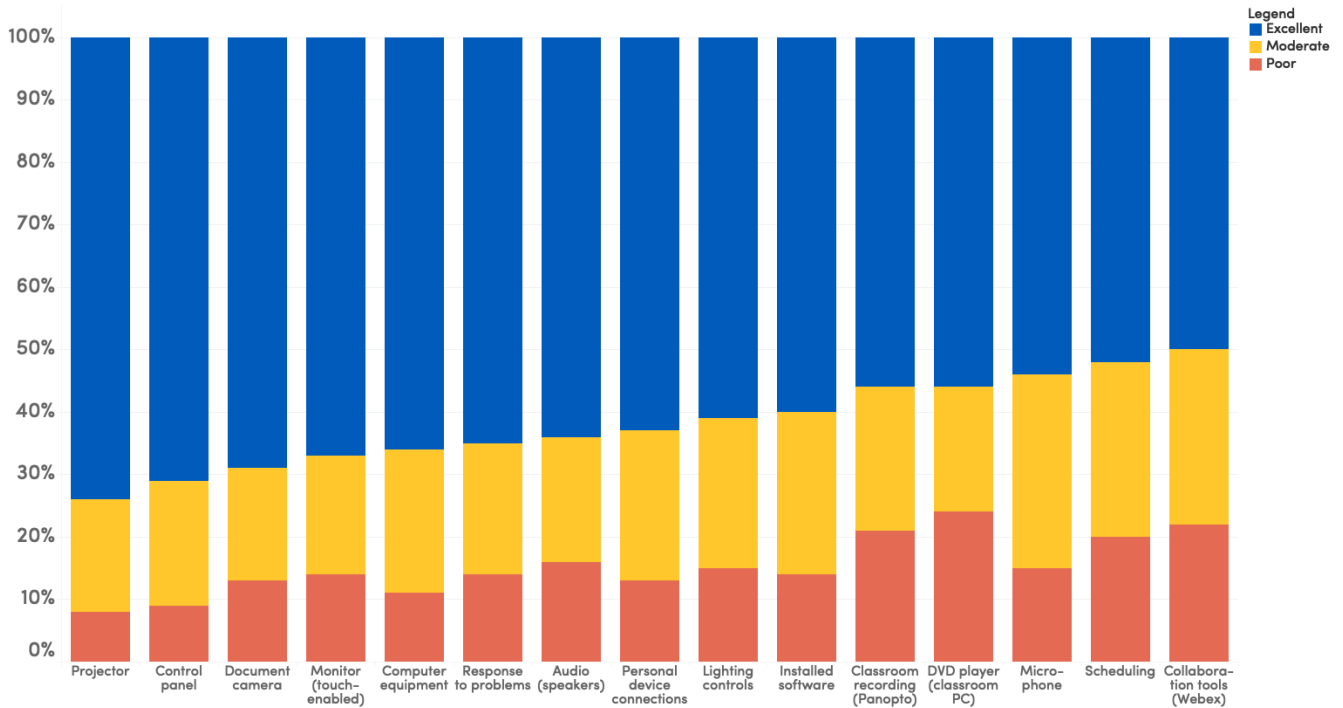
Satisfaction with classroom technology correlates closely with perceived ease of use, as reported in the 2017 survey (see following page). Collaboration tools (Webex) had the lowest rate of satisfaction (50%), however Webex was only introduced in Fall 2018, suggesting a need for more education and support as adoption continues.

Looking ahead: In 2019, UBIT will begin upgrading classroom technology, in part to better integrate Webex collaboration tools with existing classroom technology. This project will also improve other classroom technology like micophones, classroom recording and personal device connections.

Satistfaction with classroom technology (2019) vs. perceived ease of use (2017)


In most cases, satisfaction with classroom technology reported among UB faculty fell within 10 points of perceived ease of use, as reported in the 2017 Faculty IT Survey.

This has several important implications for IT. Notably, it appears that the perceived ease of use of—and, by association, satisfaction with—a technology may increase with greater exposure and familiarity; the top-rated technologies in UB classrooms (the touchscreen control panel, internal computer equipment, monitors and projectors) are all central components involved with classroom control and display.

Looking ahead: Classroom scheduling is the only major exception to the correlation between satisfaction and ease of use: 52% reported being satisfied with classroom scheduling, but only 33% of responding UB faculty reported finding it easy to use. This discrepancy suggests an action item for better customer satisfaction, i.e. working to improve ease of use of the classroom scheduling system.

MOBILE DEVICES IN THE CLASSROOM

"Do you encourage the use of mobile devices in class for class-related activities?"
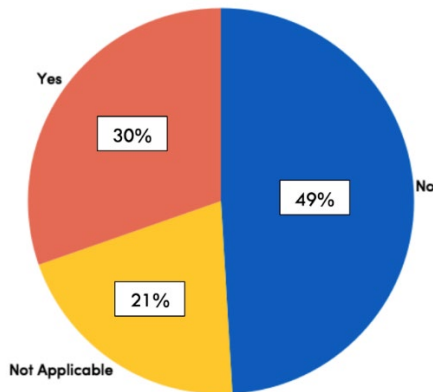

49% of respondents indicated they do not encourage their students to use smartphones and tablets in class to enhance their learning, showing a slight reduction from 54% in 2017. At that time, responses suggested that this is largely due to the "distraction" factor: faculty feel it is easy for students to lose focus on a lecture when encouraged to use their phones, which can easily channel them into viewing other content designed to capture and hold their attention.

Of those who do incorporate mobile devices into their class activities, the most popular use case is enabling collaboration between students. The use of mobile devices as "clickers," or classroom response tools, has also gained tremendous popularity in the last two years, up to 42% from 19% in 2017.

Looking ahead: In 2017, faculty members requested more knowledge and support for how to incorporate mobile devices in the classroom. Since that time, UBIT has introduced formal support for Top Hat, classroom technology that leverages student mobile devices for interactive presentations, quizzes and exams, as well as taking attendance.

"How do your students use mobile devices in the classroom?"
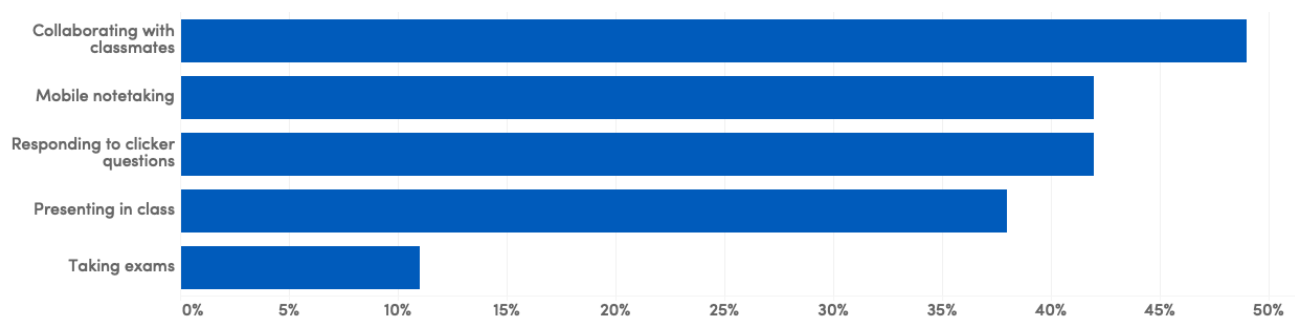
THE FUTURE OF TEACHING

"How do you currently teach at UB? How do you see yourself teaching in the next five years?"
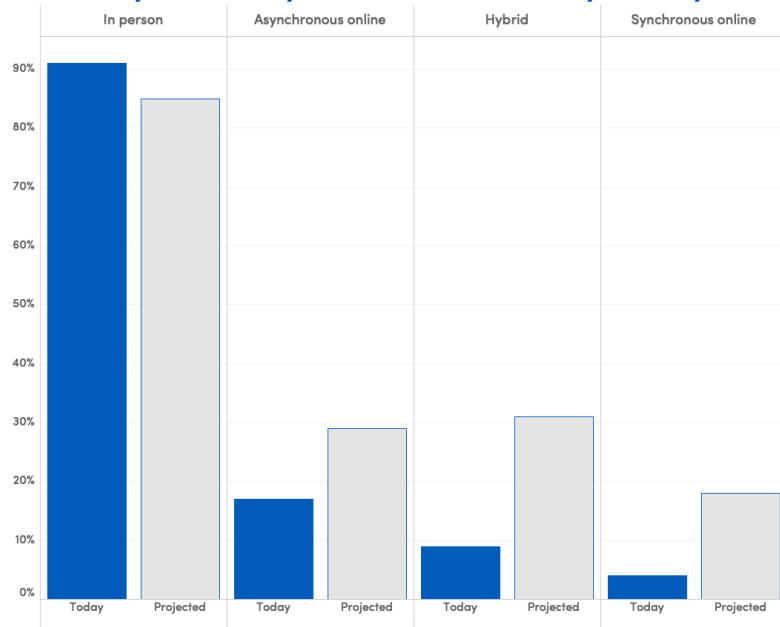

More UB faculty report expecting to teach online in some capacity within the next five years. Notably, while some (~5%) expect they will no longer be teaching in person at all within five years, the biggest expectation is that more UB faculty (31%, as opposed to 9% today) will be teaching classes with some combination of online and in-person learning.

Looking ahead: Many faculty expressed doubt about the efficacy of online teaching. Yet, with many expecting to be teaching online in the near future, they emphasized the need for more education about best practices, and better support for the related technology.

In addition to updating classrooms to take advantage of Webex, which supports hybrid and synchronized online learning, UBIT is also producing more multimedia support documentation, including tutorial videos, and currently in the early stages of implementing a live chat option for improved Help Center support.

"What IT resources would help you teach online courses?"
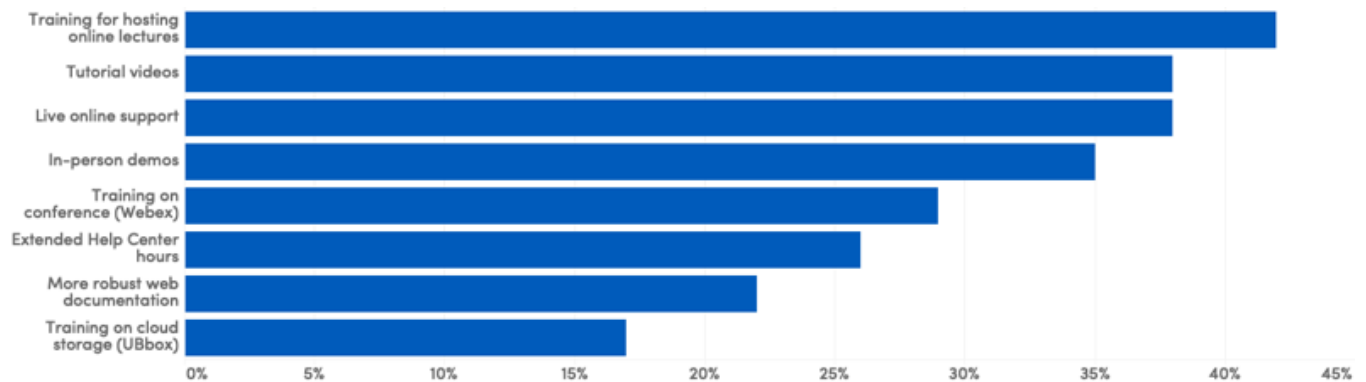
INFORMATION SECURITY

In 2017, at the request of Provost Zukoski and with input from UB faculty and distributed IT staff, standards were developed for security on university-owned devices in order to aid in compliance with federally funded research requirements. These standards are part of an ongoing, larger initiative to bring UB policy and practice in line with SUNY and federal guidelines, and protect the viability of its research and data.

Over 30 faculty respondents left comments expressing concern about, or dissatisfaction with, these standards. Responses commonly highlighted the additional burden these standards place on faculty, and their effect on everyday work:

"IN ORDER TO DO ANYTHING ON MY OFFICE MAC I NEED TO PUT IN AN ADMIN PASSWORD. INSTALLING APPS, UPDATING, CHANGING PREFERENCES, EVEN SMALL THINGS REQUIRE ME TO PUT IN A TICKET WITH IT. IT IS A HUGE WASTE OF BOTH MY TIME AND IT'S TIME."

*"THESE POLICIES ADD DELAYS TO EVERYTHING AND ARE CRIPPLING RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY."*

"HAVING TO TAKE MULTIPLE STEPS TO PRINT OR USE MY COMPUTER REMINDS ME, EVERY TIME I PRINT AND EVERY TIME I COME BACK TO MY COMPUTER TO DO MY WORK, THAT THE ADMINISTRATION DOES NOT TRUST FACULTY OR VALUE THEIR TIME."

Looking ahead: UBIT is working with distributed IT staff to develop processes and support tools that enable faster response times and greater flexibility for supported faculty and staff. The needs of every department are different, and distributed IT staff are given freedom to implement and deploy these solutions accordingly.

As one faculty respondent suggested, two-step verification is one way the university can provide greater security with more flexibility. UB is implementing Duo two-step verification for select UBIT services beginning Fall 2019.

While the most faculty are not opposed to the use of two-factor authentication at UB (see below), roughly 20 respondents expressed concerns about the inconvenience and imposition of being made to use their personal device (ie., their mobile phone) for this purpose. UB is aware of this concern, and a non-mobile device verification option will be made available for those who do not wish to use their mobile phone.

"Do you think two-factor authentication (2FA) would be a valuable practice for UB?"
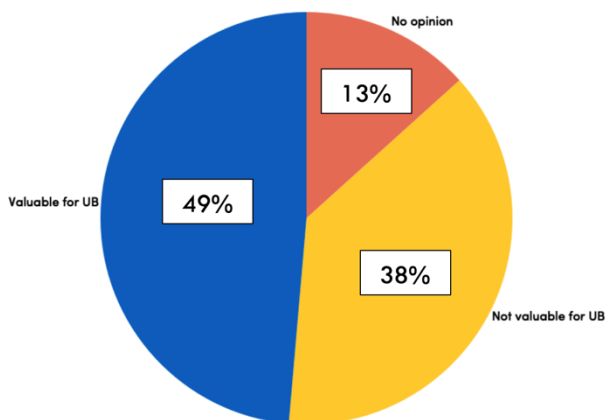
CONCLUSION

The full results from this survey are available online at the UBIT website.

UBIT wishes to thank the faculty at the University at Buffalo for their ongoing involvement in the development of a more robust, modern and flexible technology environment at the university. During a time of growth, it is crucial to develop solutions through a process in which those affective feel empowered and contribute their perspectives.

This survey is only the latest component of an ongoing collaboration between UB faculty and technical staff. In consultation with faculty through the Faculty Senate, the Faculty IT Liaison Program and ongoing UBIT-sponsored focus groups, UBIT will take the feedback from this survey and collaborate to find more ways to adapt our services to better meet the needs of the faculty, whose dedicated work is tantamount to the continued success of the university.