

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

International Activity in a Post Pandemic World

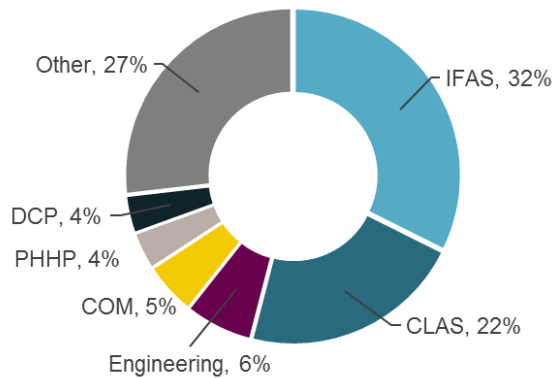
Summary of Survey Results (Summer 2020)

Since March 2020, mobility for faculty, students, and staff at UF has come to an abrupt stop. The long-term prognosis for face to face meetings and travel for collaboration, meetings, conferences, etc. is unclear. In light of this uncertainty, the International Center (UFIC) surveyed 720 faculty who are active in international research. We

“I think being a global citizen is more important than ever.”

distributed the survey in July and August and received 272 usable responses, representing a response rate of 38%. The response rate reflects the number of surveys distributed. The majority of surveys were sent to faculty in the Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Percent of Respondents by Unit



research. More than three quarters reported that they have collaborated on joint publications and other scholarly activity; have visited faculty and staff at an international partner institution and have hosted faculty from abroad at UF.

Key Findings

Almost 90% of respondents report that their international activity is tied to international

Globally, UF faculty have well-developed networks; respondents had, on average, seven partners/collaborators outside of the US. During this travel disruption, **44% believe that their international partners abroad will be able to continue the research activity that needs to be completed locally.**

In what ways have you worked with international partners?

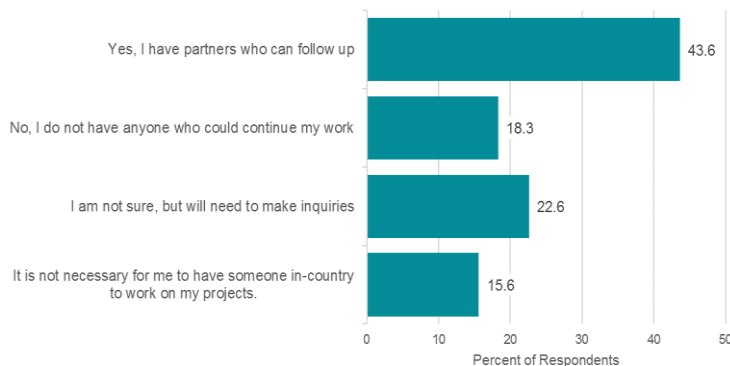
- 89% Collaborative research
- 87% Joint publications and other scholarly activity
- 84% Visited colleagues at international partner
- 74% Hosted international faculty
- 64% Hosted partner’s students at UF
- 60% UF students visited international partner

On Average Respondents:

- Take 3.3 trips per year;
- Are planning their next trip in 8 months;
- Have 7 international collaborators.

However, almost one in five do not have a local partner. More than half have activities in Europe and almost another half in Latin America and the Caribbean.

If you are unable to travel to your destination, are there people in your network who could continue the activities on your behalf?



TRAVEL DISRUPTION

For the majority of respondents, the travel disruption this summer and fall has not changed the likelihood that they continue to work with their current international partners. Only five percent stated that they will no longer pursue international activities; overwhelmingly, 88% report that they will continue to collaborate with their current partners.

The majority, almost 85%, had travel plans that were disrupted and almost 80% noted that their international activity was disrupted this summer. Three quarters report that they canceled travel to conferences and have canceled prearranged trips to collaborate with partners. A little more than half report that project deadlines were set back.

“I have delayed grant submissions that would have supported international research.”

14%

Will shift focus to address topics tied to a post pandemic world.

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH IN A POST PANDEMIC WORLD

Respondents reveal that their international research is relevant to issues that are of importance to a post-pandemic world. Indeed, almost half (48%) believe their work is relevant and another 32% are not sure. A segment of the faculty believes the coronavirus has increased the importance of their work, and a substantial number are not yet sure whether their topic has a unique significance in a post pandemic world. The implication is that international research will make a substantial contribution to overall COVID-focused research. The topics they identify as relevant include those tied to health, wellness, and disease; as well as, topics related to climate change, community resiliency, environmental impact, food production, food safety and food security, economic systems, educational systems, ecological systems, and issues tied to technology.

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AI WITHIN AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

A segment of the international researchers surveyed believe that their work will include applications of artificial intelligence (AI). A little more than a quarter (29%) believe that their work touches on AI, while a substantial percentage, 40% are not sure. Additionally, 18% believe their partners have AI capabilities. Clearly, UF’s international connections have the potential for making a substantial contribution to the new university-wide AI initiative.

29%

Current international research is relevant to AI.

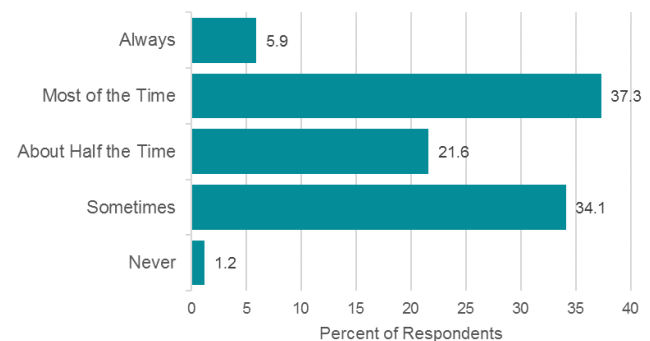
18%

Have international partners with experience in AI.

FUTURE OF INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

Looking toward the future, 60% believe that they will continue their programs similar to that before the travel restrictions. However, 40% stated that the travel restrictions have modified how they perceive future international research. Their comments reflect that respondents believe change is inevitable and they will re-think their involvement in international programs. A large number report concerns for their health and safety, as well as for the wellbeing of their students and collaborators.

In the future, how often do you think you will interact with your international partners using remote technology?



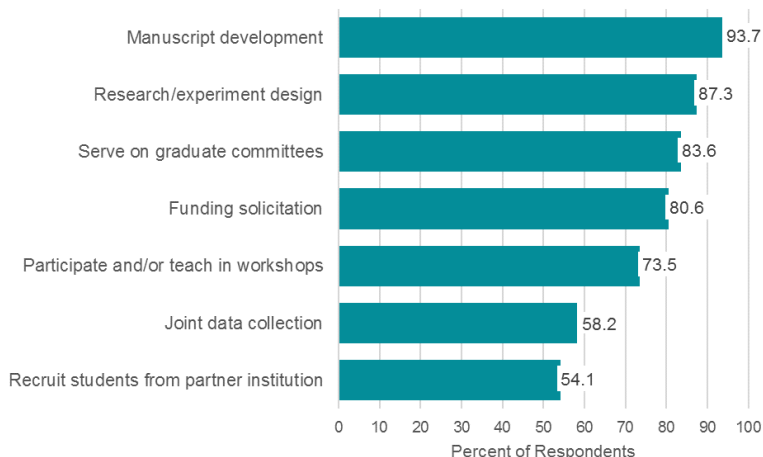
68% VERY CONFIDENT

Using remote technology with international partners to prepare manuscripts.

Virtual and technological solutions are often

“I hope that the International Center can serve as an advocate for stronger ties to other cultures”

Very and Somewhat Confident in Using Remote Technologies.



mentioned as probable means of overcoming travel limitations. Remote technologies will serve as substitutes for working with international partners. For most activities, faculty are confident that they can perform various collaborative activities using remote technologies. To support the growing trend of using technology to supplement or replace travel, UFIC is investing in programs to support virtual exchanges designed to advance global learning and other international collaborative activities.

“I’m trying to find ways for my research group to network and maintain relationships with international partners despite the lack of travel.”

The majority will continue pursuing projects and activities with an international outlook, and the need for university programmatic support is clear. Based on their comments, faculty look to UFIC for advocacy on their behalf and on behalf of their students.

Additionally, 55% look to UFIC to provide seed funds to explore new international research opportunities, and 53% to provide seed funding for graduate students who pursue international work. [Fifty-two percent look to UFIC for assistance in identifying sponsored research and 36% to facilitate connections to research institutions abroad.](#) The status of the University of Florida is tied to our international reputation.

“I am concerned about my students (both grad and undergrad) being able to have the opportunities for international research collaboration.”

As our faculty continue their work in this increasingly complex world, UFIC has an opportunity to support them in ways that has the greatest potential to accelerate their impact. The results of this survey suggest a mandate of continued programmatic and strategic investment; a mandate that serves UF’s mission and elevates our reputation worldwide.