Testimony of Dick Veit  
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I am a Professor (Full) in Biology at College of Staten Island and have been here since 1996. I teach mainly upper level (300 level and above; but some 100 and 200 level as well) classes in Biology. I study ecology of birds and teach classes in Ecology, Evolution, Animal Behavior, Statistics and Mathematical Biology.

All of the exams I give in any class are written (essays). I think that multiple guess/ multiple choice exams are a.) a useless educational tool and b.) very easy to cheat on, especially in an online class. One cannot gauge whether students are grasping the material unless one asks them to explain something within a written essay. I am not going to change this procedure, even given the worst possible COVID prediction.

At CSI, we are fed the line that class sizes will double (especially laboratory sections of classes) and that this will not entail extra work for faculty because the exams are all online and “will be graded for you” by computer (that is, all multiple choice questions).

This is a travesty of good education, and the students will learn less because of it. I understand that teaching online, even the best teaching online, will unlikely ever be as good as in-person teaching, but this prepackaged online tutorial stuff is many notches worse than that, especially in a science course (and I doubt it is much different in other courses). Further, I have discussed the actual content of these online labs, and they are clearly constructed by people with little experience teaching or conducting research. The questions are rather bizarre, and unlikely to help the students learn the material.

Obviously I am willing to put up with online teaching, and using Zoom. It is actually much better than I thought it would be (though the students don’t like it as much). I can live with the online classes. But compounding this step down in quality by doubling class sizes basically destroys the educational quality of our institution.

I should add that I ranted and raved to my department chair about the above and he managed to back off for my particular class (ecology) for the spring and I do appreciate that. That is, I will be teaching with the normal (16) not doubled (32) class size.