

Friday, May 8, 2020 (7:32 pm) – COVID-19 Planning Update & Observations

Dear Colleagues,

I thought you could use an update on how COVID-19 planning is moving along, so below you will find some reminders of what has been shared along with some observations.

But first, CONGRATULATIONS! This is the last instructional day of what I not affectionately call the COVID-19 semester. I have heard from colleagues who have been teary-eyed during their last classes this week, as we say goodbye to graduating seniors and graduate students. It has been an emotional week that ends a difficult semester. So, I hope you are breathing a sigh of relief as we move into final exam week.

As we finish up Spring 2020, I know we are thinking about the future and what Fall 2020 will bring. We heard from [President Myers that the University intends to have face to face instruction this fall](#), as long as we can do so following health and safety measures included in the [Reawakening Framework](#) shared this Wednesday. But, of course, as social distancing abates there is always the possibility that COVID-19 incidents will increase, and then we may have to return to remote work.

Given these uncertainties, we will have to strategize as faculty and staff. We will have to think about redesigning our courses to account for pivots to online instruction or changes to schedules. We will have to reimagine what our Research, Scholarship, Creative Activity, and Discovery looks like moving forward, developing “reawakening” plans for research, but also preparing for the possibility of a return to “hibernation” if we have to close campus again. We have to create housing and dining plans, IT and facilities adjustments for employees, students, and other events and gatherings. We have to grapple with uncertainties about childcare and K-12 education, as well as our collective physical, mental, financial, and social well-being.

With all of this uncertainty and anxiety, I thought it might help you to know some things that I have observed over the last couple of weeks.

1. As [President Myers shared last weekend](#), several budget scenarios have been developed at the University-level to vision what our financial situation could look like moving forward. College deans and University VPs have been tasked with developing their own unit-specific scenarios by May 15 to allow for the University to get a better picture of our situation and how we might move forward. We should hear more in the beginning of June.
2. Some college deans are consulting with their [college committees on planning \(CCOPs\)](#) as they develop plans for the future.

3. The [COVID-19 working groups](#) now include a bit more faculty representation and are collectively working through scenarios and different plans for operational returns to campus. They are thinking through very practical recommendations, like those that some of you have written to me about, including working through what can be centrally provided to campus (PPE, cleaning and sanitizing tools, etc.). More information is coming soon.
4. Instructional return plans from various institutions and return guidance from national associations have been collected and a group will form in the next week or two to develop K-State's specific plans. The Chief Academic Officers from KBOR institutions will meet next week to compare notes on this topic as well.
5. **Employee well-being** is considered in planning group discussions, including physical health, access, mental health, childcare needs, etc. Even through difficult decisions, the [guiding principle](#) to “preserve the **health and safety** of our University community” remains central.

Many of you have reached out to ask advice about your return plans. Some of you have offered your own suggestions and observations about how best to return. These are incorporated into the COVID-19 working groups, so continue to reach out to members of these teams, your Deans office, or your [shared governance](#) representatives. Your ideas for moving us forward are valued.

Tuesday, May 12 is my last day as your faculty senate president. We are extremely fortunate that Mindy Markham will serve as your president for 2020-2021. It has been a great honor and pleasure to serve you this year, and to walk beside you during this unprecedented time in higher education. I appreciate all that I have learned from you and I continually marvel at your collective ability to remain #kstatestrong.

As always, if I can be of any service or assistance, please let me know.

With best wishes for your continued health and well-being,

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