

Subject: From the Provost: Pivoting to Fall 2020

Date: Wednesday, May 13, 2020 at 8:19:52 AM Eastern Daylight Time

From: UofL Update,Service Account

To: UofL Update,Service Account

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to let you know of the planning that is going on as part of our “pivot to fall.” As I have said in other emails to the campus, we expect to be open in fall, but are planning for various scenarios; we will follow the guidelines from the CDC and our governor, and our plans are likely to adapt as we learn more about the virus.

We have established three committees to prepare for the fall semester: a coordinating committee, a safe return to work committee and an academic scenario planning committee. The committees have begun to meet and develop plans for a safe and successful fall semester under our “new normal.”

Coordinating Committee

I am chairing the coordinating committee that includes leaders from Enrollment Management and Admissions, Campus Health, Undergraduate Education, Student Affairs and Housing, Facilities and Operations, University Counsel, Research and Innovation, and the College of Arts and Sciences. We began meeting informally last month to discuss what we need to do to be prepared for fall semester, and we have augmented our ranks as the need has arisen. We will continue to add new members, if necessary. The committee members are listed [here](#).

Safe Return to Work Committee

Kevin Gardner, executive vice president for research and innovation, and Phil Bressoud, director of Campus Health Services, are chairing a committee tasked with coordinating the testing and contact tracing necessary to safely return to work. As many people are aware, our university has been testing hospital patients, healthcare workers, individuals from long-term care facilities and community members since March 11. UofL has significant expertise in infectious diseases, virology and public health in addition to many other areas that are critically important in this time, such as mental health, advanced manufacturing and music therapy, to mention a few. This committee is working to take advantage of our many experts to develop plans for testing our UofL community for COVID-19 and antibodies that may indicate a level of immunity to further infection, conducting rapid contact tracing to contain infections, and establishing practices to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

This committee is focused on 1) designing a testing strategy; 2) developing the logistics to carry out testing strategies (which may be different with different community infection levels); 3) ensuring privacy of data; 4) exploring digital and other approaches to contact tracing; and 5) establishing campus practices for different levels of community infection (masks, physical distancing). Please feel free to contact the co-chairs or any committee members with ideas, input or concerns as we navigate this challenge. The committee members are listed [here](#).

Academic Scenario Planning Committee

Our expectation is that most faculty and staff will be back and that we will welcome most students back on campus in the fall; we also expect to operate under new physical-distancing measures and will take other precautions, including reducing the density of our classrooms through the use of online and hybrid instruction. We will also need to consider accommodations in order to deliver our academic programs if the virus returns with a vengeance this fall. I wish to emphasize that just because we say we are considering a particular scenario does not mean that we have made a final decision; we must be agile (one of our Cardinal principles) as conditions change.

In order to prepare to be agile, I have charged an academic scenario planning committee to help us plan for face-to-face, hybrid and online learning for fall. Even if students are back on campus, we need to prepare for different scenarios, including growing our online offerings to capture a student population that may wish to work on a degree remotely, and to accommodate faculty who prefer to teach online because they have conditions that put them at greater risk than the general population. I asked Beth Willey, interim associate provost for undergraduate education, to co-chair the committee with me, and all of the deans have appointed a faculty member to serve. We also have folks from Delphi, IT, University Counsel, the SGA, faculty and staff senates. The committee members are listed [here](#).

At the first meeting on May 4, I charged the academic unit representatives with working with their deans to establish unit planning committees with strong faculty representation to plan in parallel with the university-wide academic scenario planning committee. I hope that if you are interested in helping us to plan for a safe and academically successful fall, you will contact your dean or your unit representative and ask how you can serve. If you are not able to help your unit to plan, I hope you will find the time this summer to check in with your unit rep to see how you need to prepare for fall, and to reflect upon the design of your fall courses.

At yesterday's academic scenario planning meeting, we broke into four groups to explore four areas: faculty concerns; scheduling and classroom density; hybrid and online models; face-to-face experiences and testing/academic integrity. There will no doubt be more to explore as the month continues, and I welcome your suggestions.

Please be assured that our highest priority is the well-being of our students, faculty and staff. As we plan through May and adapt as we learn over the course of the next four months, we will keep your safety and that of our students at the forefront of our efforts.

And finally, I've again attached some articles on the impact of the pandemic on higher education for you to read if you are interested.

Congratulations on the finish of this most unusual "semester with an asterisk," and thank you again for all you do.

Best,

Beth A. Boehm, PhD
University Provost

Related Articles from the Chronicle of Higher Education:

- [How to Address the Elephant in the Room: Academic Costs](#)
- [The Coronavirus Enrollment Crash](#)