June 29, 2020

Dear Faculty:

Chancellor Subbaswamy recently announced the Fall Reopening Plan for the campus, and I am certain that you will have many questions as we work together to implement this plan. I am writing now with an update to facilitate your planning for the fall semester and to encourage you to keep the lines of communication open with your department head/chair, your dean, and my office, so that we may continue to support you. These are certainly unprecedented times and our role as faculty members teaching and mentoring our undergraduate and graduate students has changed immensely under the conditions in which we find ourselves in the midst of this pandemic. I continue to be inspired by your hard work and dedication and your flexibility and patience, as we work together to balance the mission of the University with the health and safety of the campus community.

Some of you may be concerned by the invitation to allow students to return to campus. The reasons that the Chancellor gives are compelling, but I can assure you that the health and safety of our faculty and staff was a priority in making the decision to restrict on-campus face-to-face instruction to those courses where hands-on work is necessary, prioritizing these courses when needed to bring advanced undergraduate and graduate students to degree completion. We will also be encouraging faculty to hold completely remote office hours, perform any faculty advising and mentoring of students remotely, and conduct all in-person activities such as oral exams, thesis and dissertation defenses remotely as well.

Below, I highlight information that may be of help to you as we take the next steps in preparing for the Fall 2020 semester.

**Essential face-to-face and remote course designations**

Courses that have been already requested and approved by my office as face-to-face and essential for delivery in the fall, will be offered face-to-face. These courses include labs, studios, performance and hands-on courses that are required for degree pathways, licensure or accreditation for upper level students and graduate students who are close to degree completion. All other courses will be offered fully remote (online). Faculty can find the instructional modality for their course(s) by looking at their Faculty Center in SPIRE. In the My Teaching Schedule>Fall 2020 Room field the essential face-to-face courses will have a building and room location identified while the fully remote courses will have “Fully Remote Class” in the Room field. Students will also be able to see the instructional modality of all of their courses in their Student Center in SPIRE.
It is important to note that only essential face-to-face courses that have been previously identified and approved will be able to meet in person on campus. And some of these courses will have the lecture component offered remotely while the lab, studio portion will be offered face-to-face. For the health and welfare of the broader campus community, faculty should not independently hold face-to-face classes if the course has not already been identified as an essential face-to-face course. If you have been assigned a face-to-face course and are in a group that is at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness as defined in CDC guidelines or have other reasons for seeking an accommodation, you should contact your department chair and Human Resources.

All honors thesis projects/independent studies should be held remotely unless it involves essential lab-work. Faculty should request approval for students to work in laboratory or field research work via the research laboratory and field work operating plan process. It is recommended, though, that projects be adjusted to remote work if possible. The Honors College will also be communicating directly with faculty and students regarding lab-based honors thesis work and alternative arrangements that may need to be made to accommodate health and safety protocol.

**Academic Calendar and Class Day/Time Matrix**

Fall 2020 instruction will begin August 24 and conclude November 20, with classes held on Labor Day, the second Monday in October, and Veterans Day. Final exam week will be held Monday, Nov. 30-Friday, Dec. 4th and will be conducted remotely. With this earlier start to the semester, some students may experience difficulty in moving into their off-campus housing in time to begin face-to-face instruction on campus. Faculty teaching face-to-face courses will be asked to assist these students with make-up accommodations or other alternatives so the students can remain enrolled in the class. In addition, we may experience a higher-than-usual occurrence of students being absent from class due to health reasons. Whatever flexibility you can offer and accommodations you can provide to assist these students will be greatly appreciated. And please avoid attendance policies that might encourage students to attend class when they are not feeling well.

The day/time course schedule will also be adjusted to increase time between classes to 30 minutes to reduce interactive foot traffic on campus and provide time for increased cleaning of lab and classroom spaces when needed. Classes being offered fully remote should adhere to their day/time assignment if they have synchronous activity so as not to conflict with another course assigned day/time in the student’s schedule.

**Faculty Assistance and Support with Fully Remote Instruction**

Extensive assistance and support in converting courses to fully remote (online) delivery will be provided to faculty. The Center for Teaching and Learning, the IDEAS group, Information Technology, and the Libraries have worked together to outline best practices and step-by-step guidelines for faculty to use in planning, creating and implementing their fall courses.
These resources include short videos and guidelines for course redesign, a full series of webinars on various instructional technologies, faculty course modules offered through Moodle and Blackboard, information on the use of Echo, Zoom and other technology tools, as well as a range of consultation and help services offered to support faculty and departments in course design, technology use and accessing library resources. These resources will be accessible through a central web portal and include a centralized help request for all services. This team will email all faculty and instructors, including graduate teaching assistants, with instructions on how to access services.

Thank you again for ALL you are doing to provide the best quality educational experience we can to our students in the midst of this challenge. We look forward to working together with all of you in the weeks and months ahead in preparation for the Fall 2020 semester.

John McCarthy  
Provost & Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
Distinguished Professor