




PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

A Member of the Texas A&M University System

MEMORANDUM

To: PVAMU Campus Community
From: James M. Palmer, Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs 
Date: June 22, 2020
Re: Plan for Fall 2020 Courses

On May 29, The Texas A&M University System announced that the System's 11 university campuses would reopen for the fall semester and would employ a mixture of face-to-face, online and remote learning. The plan for reopening calls for socially distancing by using smaller classes, longer days to reduce congestion, Saturday classes, adjustments to the academic calendar, and a phased-in arrival on campus in August.

I know that you are both nervous and excited about returning to campus. As President Simmons mentioned in her announcement on May 6 about our phased in plan for staff return, we are convinced that we can safely achieve our goals by adhering to standards of social distancing, sanitation and personal protective measures. A number of changes and measures are being implemented to provide a safe and engaging academic experience. Among those are the following.

The Fall Academic Calendar

We will start fall semester coursework as scheduled on August 24 but end face-to-face instruction at the end of the day on Tuesday, November 24. Classes will resume solely online after Thanksgiving Break on Monday, November 30. This online activity would include remaining coursework, review days and final exams.

Course Instruction

Although there are more online and hybrid courses scheduled this fall than in the past, due to reduced classroom capacity by as much as 65% in some cases, we will further convert some face-to-face courses in the next two weeks. To ensure distancing, students can expect that some coursework will be offered in the Hybrid/HyFlex mode where part of a class will meet face-to-face while the other part will participate remotely via Zoom at the same time. A rotation will be established and shared in July. Faculty may be teaching in various locations as well.

By July 10, we will release an updated course schedule for Fall 2020 that will include the mode of delivery, the class location, and the days and time for each course. Because classes will be altered for distancing requirements and to reduce congestion between classes, students will need to re-examine their course schedules after July 10 to make adjustments with their advisors.

Academic Support

Along with safety, ensuring a strong and supportive learning environment for faculty and students is our most important goal. For this reason, faculty will be undergoing additional training this summer to prepare for fall online and hybrid coursework. We are employing several additional instructional designers to support faculty, and we will hire additional graduate students and teaching assistants for increased faculty and student support. In addition, Information Technology Services (ITS) is working to secure computer checkout vending machines, purchasing loaner computers for both students and faculty, and expanding Zoom technology support and classroom video capacity.

We will continue to provide services such as advising and tutoring virtually with pre-scheduled and controlled face-to-face interaction. Faculty will hold office hours virtually in the fall semester, but students will be able to arrange pre-scheduled face-to-face meetings provided proper distancing can be ensured. Full time faculty will be required to hold a minimum of six hours per week on at least two days during the week.

Classroom Safety

As Vice President Sams mentioned in his memo to students last week, life on campus will be dramatically different. It will be vital that everyone adhere to the new safety requirements being put in place. All faculty, staff and students will be required to wear masks on campus, including in the classroom and in all public settings. This is for the safety of all of us. Students will be released from class on a timed and orderly schedule to ensure distancing and time for cleaning of classrooms and buildings at scheduled times during the day. Entry and exit signs in buildings will be posted and followed.

In addition to the training and certification that will be required of every faculty, staff and student before returning to campus, weekly certifications will be required to ensure adherence to regular safety checklist items.

Course Attendance and Grading

We are working on an electronic attendance mechanism for attendance reporting, and updates will be given as we approach the fall semester. If a student becomes ill, this electronic system will help with contact tracing.

As was done in the spring and summer, we will continue to utilize the Pass/Not Pass (P/NP) grade options. Students considering the change from graded to P/NP should consult with an academic advisor, athletics advisor, and/or financial aid advisor to understand the implications of the grade selection. Students will again be able to select P/NP after grades are visible at the end of the semester.

Research Activity and Travel

Research faculty and staff have slowly started to reopen labs. With strict adherence to social distancing and other safety protocols, they will be available for graduate students needing to conduct research for continued academic progress. Along with renewed research activity comes the desire to present results at conferences. While many conferences have been canceled or moved to the remote environment, some remain scheduled later in the fall. Travel thus far continues to be restricted to mission critical activity if funded by the University.

Mini-Mester Coursework

Prairie View has not held courses between the fall and spring semesters, but plans are underway to identify courses and faculty to offer these as student options. Courses will be offered online and will be compressed and intense. Options will be available for viewing and registration in November.

On-going Planning for the Fall

Working together, we can ensure a successful start and finish to the fall semester. Continue to stay safe this summer, and be on the look out for additional details regarding the fall.

xc: Ruth Simmons, President