



PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

A Member of the Texas A&M University System

MEMORANDUM

To: PVAMU Faculty

From: James M. Palmer *JMPalmer*
Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: August 7, 2020

Re: Update on Fall 2020 Courses

Classes for the fall semester begin August 24, and the semester will require adherence to standards of social distancing, sanitation, personal protective measures, testing, contact tracing, as well as quarantine or isolation protocols. In June, I mentioned a number of changes and measures to be implemented in the fall, and some updates were made during the hosted Town Hall in July and through the [FAQ pages](#) on the website. Further updates include the following:

The Fall Academic Calendar

We will start the fall semester as noted and end any face-to-face instruction at the end of the day on Tuesday, November 24. Dorms will remain open after November 24 with continued campus services. Fall classes, however, will resume solely online after Thanksgiving Break on Monday, November 30. This online activity will include remaining coursework, review days and final exams.

Course Instruction

The fall semester employs a mixture of face-to-face, online and hybrid learning. As of earlier this week, the course mixture included about 45% face-to-face or hybrid and 55% online (both asynchronous and synchronous). As the Registrar shared with students last Friday, online courses can be 1) scheduled (synchronous) at a certain time and day where faculty and students meet online or 2) unscheduled (asynchronous) where faculty and students are not required to be online at a particular time. Note that if a student has an asynchronous online course, s/he cannot be required to meet online at a particular time or day.

This fall, in keeping with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) definition and allowance, hybrid courses are a combination of online and face-to-face interaction with at least 15% of the class taking place in the face-to-face environment. The face-to-face interaction is determined and communicated by the faculty member to students.

In some cases due to social distancing requirements, courses listed as face-to-face may have part of a class meeting face-to-face in one location with the rest of the class meeting at the same time in an overflow or other location. Class capacities have been designated and posted, and those will be communicated to instructors next week. It is imperative that faculty understand how to use Zoom in the classroom for recording class time, and this is why summer eCourse training is so important. Additional trainings will be offered during the virtual Faculty Conference to be held August 18-20.

Faculty and students will need to examine their fall schedules as they have changed since May, and students will need to consult with their advisors to make adjustments if the longer day's schedule and

deep-cleaning time periods have created time conflicts. There are a few dozen lab and other courses that remain to be re-scheduled as of today. More details on class instruction will be shared next week by Tina Montgomery, Demitris Cambric and me. Furthermore, the Faculty Conference will focus a number of sessions on teaching and interacting virtually.

Academic Support

150 classrooms are being enhanced with video streaming capability, nearly 30 mobile computer carts with video streaming capability have been secured, and additional cameras have been purchased as backup. These will enable faculty to record lectures and post them in eCourses for student access or for those students not physically in the classroom to see the lecture in real time. 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, 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 and provide timely responses to student queries.

Classroom Protocols

Cloth face masks will be provided to every student, faculty and staff member, and everyone will be required to wear masks on campus, including in the classroom and in all public settings. In addition, face shields will be provided to all faculty members for use in lieu of face masks when needed. Although masks are required of students in the classroom, they are not required of faculty when conducting face-to-face classes or when recording lectures. In all cases, faculty will maintain social distancing.

Entry and exits points of all buildings will be clearly marked and followed. Students will be released from class on a timed and orderly schedule. Time between classes has been increased slightly, and there are no classes scheduled at the noon hour on selected days to ensure cleaning of high traffic areas and identified buildings. We continue to work on securing canisters of Clorox wipes for every faculty member as well.

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

Course Attendance

Faculty will record attendance and report absences per the Attendance Reporting schedule as determined by the Office of the Registrar. This is done each semester to verify attendance and participation as required for federal financial aid, and this will be done in online courses as well. Furthermore, faculty members will create opportunities to maintain course participation and engagement while ensuring that students experiencing symptoms of illness do not physically attend class. Alternative course participation includes:

- Recording and posting classroom lectures (via Zoom and eCourses)
- Allowing students to attend class remotely (via Zoom)
- Permitting alternative participation via discussion board activities in eCourses

Students who are sick or who are self-quarantining due to COVID-19 related illnesses must not attend in-person class sessions. Students who are feeling sick should follow the recommendations on the PVAMU website at <https://www.pvamu.edu/coronavirus/>. Students will not be required to provide documentation for absences of less than two weeks and will not be penalized for absences. However, if a student has to miss more than two weeks, then a doctor's note must be provided to the Division of Student Affairs, Dean of Students, Mr. Steve Ransom at saransom@pvamu.edu.

Course Grading

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.

Updated Syllabus Template

Attached is an updated syllabus template which reflects changes in the University rules and procedures, student services, technology services, and other pertinent areas. A section related to COVID-19 has been added. The template meets electronic syllabus accessibility requirements (based on the Electronic Information Resource guidelines).

Contact Tracing

Moving forward, TAMUS has established a centralized COVID-19 reporting portal for all System universities and agencies to facilitate contact tracing by the COVID-19 Investigation Operations Center (Ops Center) located in College Station. Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 or who have had contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be required to self-report through the online portal. The Ops Center contact tracers will review the information and make direct contact to gather vital information needed to slow the spread of the virus. When it goes live for the campus, the portal will be prominently displayed on the University website. Until then, contact tracing will continue to be coordinated by members of the COVID-19 Task Force.

Testing

Free COVID-19 testing will be available throughout the semester to students, faculty and staff in multiple testing events. Testing events will occur at different locations around campus including the Baby Dome, a drive through testing location and the Health Center. All testing events will require pre-registration through an advertised period before the event. Based upon the testing event, testing will be conducted through either the nasal swab or self-administered oral swab.

More details on the fall semester and the Faculty Conference will be shared next week. Deans and Department Heads, share this with anyone in the hiring pipeline.

xc: Ruth Simmons, President