Academic Plan for Reopening campus for Fall 2020


Plan approved by University Committee for Reopening Campus on June 2, 2020.


The following list of key elements are common to all subcommittee plans, including the Academic Subcommittee:

- Social distancing and density reduction will serve as a cornerstone for all plans.
- Students, faculty, staff, vendors, and other members of the university community will be required to wear approved masks/face coverings in all indoor settings, including in the classroom, except when an individual is alone in a private office or lab. Masks will also be required in outdoor settings when social distancing is not possible.
- A screening process for faculty, staff, and students returning to campus will be developed and implemented.
- Health/Safety Education will be required of all faculty, staff, students, vendors, contractors, and other members of the university community.
- Temperature monitoring may be used when indicated.
- A COVID-19 testing regimen/protocol will be developed and implemented.
- A mechanism for contact tracing will be developed and implemented.
- Hand sanitization stations and cleaning supplies will be made widely available across campus. Strategies for cleaning/sanitizing rooms, offices, and common areas will be developed and implemented.
- Flu shots will be ordered in greater quantity than prior years and will be strongly encouraged.
- A maximum size for gatherings may be established based on guidance from public health authorities and enforced across all divisions.

The plan is posted on the Academic Affairs website and will be subject to revision as circumstances change. The plan was developed based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and on the American College Health Association Considerations for Reopening Campus.

Plan to Re-Open Campus for Students, Faculty and Staff

The current plan is to re-open campus for students and faculty with a modified academic calendar. We will do so unless public health conditions change such that reopening would pose a significant threat to the health of students and employees as determined by the University Committee for Reopening Campus (UCRC) and based on guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other public health authorities.
Modified Academic Calendar

The first day of Fall 2020 classes will be moved up one day to Monday, August 17, 2020 and Convocation will be canceled. Fall break, scheduled for Thursday and Friday, October 8-9 will be canceled, and those days will be used as class days. Fall 2020 Classes will end Tuesday, November 24 and students will not return to campus after the Thanksgiving break. Final exams may be given in the last class meeting between 11/18- 11/24 during the allotted class time or virtually during a scheduled final exam period between 12/1- 12/4. The changes to the Academic Calendar may not impact clinical rotations, practica, or field experiences or programs that traditionally operate on a different schedule (e.g., some programs in the health professions). Decisions about the fall schedule for these programs will be made at the college level.

Plan Contingencies

After reopening, the University will continually monitor the health of the campus population and the public health of our region. The campus will be poised to move back to remote work, if conditions warrant, to protect the health of students and employees. In this event, faculty should be prepared to quickly move all courses to the online environment.

University Wide Actions to Limit Infection in the USA community

The University will take actions to mitigate the risk of transmission of infection, including screening the university population for the risk of COVID-19 infections prior to re-opening, testing as indicated, isolation of students and employees who test positive for COVID-19 or are pending testing or receipt of test results, contact tracing, and encouraging or requiring flu shots to mitigate the impact of influenza on the local health care system, to reduce the need for COVID-19 testing because of similar presenting symptoms, and to reduce risk of comorbidity with COVID-19. Faculty, staff, and students will also be required to participate in online health/safety training prior to returning to campus. The UCRC will develop these protocols.

Social Distancing in Classrooms

For all classes held on campus, social distancing must be practiced by all students, faculty and other employees. All persons must maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from one another at all times. This will require reconfiguration of the usual classroom environment. Each academic unit should survey its classrooms and develop a plan that addresses maximum occupancy for each classroom under its purview. Facilities Management and Safety and Environmental Compliance are available for consultation and to review these plans. These plans must be approved by the respective dean.

Masks/Face Coverings Required in On-campus Facilities

Students, faculty, and staff will be required to wear approved masks/face coverings in all indoor settings, including in the classroom, except when an individual is alone in a private office or lab.
Masks will also be required in outdoor settings when social distancing is not possible. In limited circumstances, the University may allow exceptions to this policy when wearing a mask is not deemed necessary by the University. In such circumstances, the University will clearly communicate the exception to those impacted.

Students who request a reasonable accommodation to the masking requirement based upon a legally protected status should be directed to the Office of Student Disability Services. Employee requests should be directed to the Office of Human Resources.

Employees who are not compliant with these guidelines will be subject to disciplinary action. Students who are not compliant with these guidelines in academic settings will be referred to the Student Conduct Administrator through the Academic Disruption Policy. Students who are not compliant with these guidelines in other settings may be referred under the Code of Student Conduct.

Temperature Screenings May Be Required

Screening questions and the use of infrared thermometers at building entrances may be required to gain entrance. In these cases, persons whose response to screening questions indicate potential exposure or those with a temperature above a level recommended by USA Health will not be allowed to enter and will be asked to contact their personal health care provider or, if they are a student, Student Health and to self-quarantine if directed to do so by a health care provider. Guidelines for temperature screening will be determined by the UCRC, consistent with public health authority guidance. Employees who are not compliant with these guidelines will be subject to disciplinary action. Students who are not compliant with these guidelines in academic settings will be referred to the Student Conduct Administrator through the Academic Disruption Policy. Students who are not compliant with these guidelines in other settings may be referred under the Code of Student Conduct.

Methods of Instruction: Web-Blended

The fall schedule of classes lists classes as offered in one of three modalities: Web-Enhanced, which is largely delivered in traditional face-to-face instruction; Web-Blended, a mixture of synchronous instruction (which is typically face-to-face) and on-line delivery; and Web-Online, where at least 85% of instruction is delivered in an asynchronous, online format. In synchronous instruction, students and faculty meet together at scheduled times. Asynchronous instruction is not scheduled and faculty and students may participate online at any time.

In almost all cases during fall semester, classes will be delivered either in a web-blended format (sometimes also called a hybrid format) or web-online. Most classes listed in the fall schedule as web-enhanced will actually be delivered in the web-blended format. Because registration for classes has already begun, the schedule of classes will continue to list these classes as web-enhanced, but the overwhelming majority of these classes will nonetheless be delivered in the web-blended format.
For all courses taught as web-blended, some portion of instruction will generally be offered face-to-face while adhering to social distancing guidelines. In addition, due to the impact of social distancing on study sessions, group tutoring, and other learning activities, faculty for all web-blended courses should ensure that they create a substantial online presence that allows students to effectively engage with course materials (e.g., recorded lectures, assignments, and discussions.) In most web-blended courses, testing will need to be completed virtually. With the potential for all courses to have to move online again this fall, it is a good idea for all faculty to create a substantial online presence for all courses.

With approval of their respective chair and dean, faculty at elevated risk for COVID 19, or who co-reside with such individuals, may opt to deliver all or part of the synchronous portion of a web-blended course online rather than face-to-face. Courses that have more than a 15% synchronous component, whether face-to-face or online, should be delivered as web-blended rather than as fully online (web-online).

For classes that maintain face-to-face components, class attendance in each face-to-face meeting must be limited to the appropriate size based on the assigned room and social distancing guidelines according to the classroom occupancy plan developed for the respective academic unit (e.g., MWF class might be divided into three cohorts attending face-to-face once per week).

Methods of Instruction: Fully Online Courses (Web-Online: WO)

All fully online courses listed as such in the class schedule as Web-Online (WO) must be delivered at least 85% asynchronously and any synchronous component must be listed in the course schedule during registration as per policy.

Methods of Instruction: Web-Enhanced (Face-to-Face)

Small classes (with low enrollment relative to classroom size) that allow for social distancing and comply with the academic unit classroom occupancy plan may be held fully face-to-face. All other classes will be reconfigured to reduce density and allow for social distancing. Note that, in most cases, restructuring existing larger classes into multiple smaller sections will not be a viable option. Changes to the fall semester schedule that reduce course caps and changes that divide larger sections will require the approval of the dean.

Faculty Encouraged to Allow for Distance Learning When Practical

Faculty teaching on-campus courses are encouraged to develop these courses such that students who need to complete the course at a distance can do so online. In courses for which this is available, students may be asked to designate at the beginning of the term their intention (on-campus or online) for planning purposes. It is also possible that students may become ill or have to self-quarantine during the term such that they would have to miss a
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significant amount of class time. Accordingly, it is prudent for faculty to design courses so that required coursework can be completed remotely.

Support for Faculty to Develop Online Learning Resources

Because the large majority of courses will be offered in a web-blended or web-online format this fall, faculty will need to develop learning resources for the online environment. The Innovation in Learning Center (ILC) will provide substantial training and offer assistance in helping faculty develop high-quality online course materials. The ILC will also develop and maintain webpages with resources for instructors identifying best practice design strategies and examples for the web-blended environment that allow for social distancing while facilitating the achievement of student learning outcomes.

Final Examination Policies

For the fall semester, exceptions to the Final Examination Policy (Faculty Handbook, 6.6.8) will not require approval. Faculty are encouraged to consider the use of alternative means of assessment to reduce the need for synchronous final examinations.

Laboratory Classes

In many cases, class laboratory experiences will be converted into virtual laboratories. Some lab courses may be converted to a hybrid model in which physical labs are interspersed during the term with virtual labs. This hybrid laboratory model will allow for reduced class size for the physical lab experiences to allow for social distancing. In any case, all laboratory experiences that are held in physical laboratories must be designed to allow for social distancing. Plans are being developed within each relevant academic unit to address social distancing in labs.

Virtual Office Hours

Faculty will be required to establish virtual office hours rather than in-person office hours, so they remain available to students while also social distancing. If in-person office hours are also held, social distancing must be practiced.

USA Simulation and Standardized Patient Training

USA Simulation will continue to provide simulated clinical training to students. Delivery of this instruction will be organized with consideration for social distancing and/or other appropriate protective equipment and practices. Standardized patient training will be delivered virtually until the public health situation permits in-person experiences.
Field Experiences, Offsite Clinical Training, Practica, Internships and Student Teaching

Field experiences, e.g., clinical training, practica, internships, and student teaching, will be allowed. Programs should organize these experiences such that appropriate measures are taken to protect the health of students and should coordinate with placement sites to ensure compliance with site-specific guidelines.

Music and Theater Instruction and Performance

Faculty and administrators responsible for performance-based courses and activities (e.g. Band, Music, Theater) should follow all relevant guidelines on social distancing for meetings, practices, and performances. Plans are being developed within each relevant unit to address social distancing for performance-based courses and activities.

Student Research

Student research experiences will be allowed, provided that social distancing is practiced, and other appropriate protections are in place.

Computer Laboratories

Each academic unit will need to develop a plan for the use of computer labs as applicable. Some required computer lab experiences may be converted to virtual experiences to reduce the need for physical computer lab access. Computer lab use should be structured to allow for social distancing. In addition, a cleaning routine for each computer lab should be developed and coordinated with Housekeeping as appropriate.

Study Spaces

Academic units should work to identify any necessary study spaces for students and should reconfigure these spaces as needed to adhere to social distancing guidelines. A cleaning routine for these study spaces should be developed and coordinated with Housekeeping as appropriate.

Reducing Risk in Hallways, Common Areas, Elevators and Stairwells

Departments should, when practicable, coordinate class start and end times for classes in close proximity of one another to reduce traffic in halls and through common areas. Classes also may need to be released by row or small group to reduce traffic flow and allow for social distancing. Elevators should be restricted to use only by persons with disabilities, and, where feasible, may be restricted to one passenger at a time. Stairways, when possible, should be converted to one-way only traffic during class changes except for emergency building evacuation.

Allowances for Remote Instruction When COVID 19 Risk is Elevated for Faculty
Faculty who have an elevated risk for medical complications from a COVID-19 infection as determined by the CDC, or who reside with such persons, may request to teach virtually for fall 2020. These requests should be directed to the appropriate department chair and will require the approval of the dean. This instruction can be delivered asynchronously for courses listed as fully online. It is also allowable for these faculty to teach in the web-blended modality, with synchronous instruction occurring virtually during scheduled class hours. If the unit can support it, it may also be possible for graduate assistants, or other appropriate personnel, to deliver face-to-face instructional components. In all cases where the course format differs from that listed in the schedule, faculty should clearly communicate the changes and expectations to enrolled students prior to the beginning of the term.

**Size of Gatherings May Be Limited**

Large gatherings on campus may be limited by policy, with the maximum number set by the UCRC and may change dependent upon current public health conditions.

**USA Libraries**

The University Libraries will maintain online chat, Zoom, and email reference and research assistance. Librarians will provide instruction for classes within Canvas and through Zoom.

As research indicates that the COVID-19 virus survives on materials that are prevalent in libraries, access to the University Libraries’ physical collections will be restricted to library employees who will pull materials for pick up and for patron use. Employees engaging in pulling, checking out, and delivering materials will be required to wear masks and gloves and to sanitize bins, bags, and other delivery devices. Returned materials will be quarantined per best practices developed to address COVID-19 issues by the Institute for Museum and Library Services and the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) through the Reopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums (REALM) Project. The University Libraries will copy and electronically deliver journal articles and book chapters from the print collections held in Marx Library, the Charles M. Baugh Biomedical Library, and the MCOB Learning Resource Center in accordance with copyright provisions.

**Study Spaces in USA Libraries**

The University Libraries will open selected spaces for student study when fall classes begin August 17, 2020, with the Charles M. Baugh Biomedical Library opening when College of Medicine classes resume August 3, 2020. University health/safety protocols and controls as directed by the UCRC such as building capacity advisories for the pandemic, requiring social distancing, and wearing of masks/face coverings, will be maintained and enforced. Spaces opened for patron use will be reconfigured to maintain social distancing and to include furnishings and equipment that can be properly cleaned/sanitized without incurring damage. Areas, furnishings, and equipment made available for patron use, will be cleaned and sanitized in accordance with UCRC guidelines and the availability of supplies. When classes begin:
- Marx Library Learning Commons will be open to all USA students, faculty, and staff. As needed, additional space in Marx Library will be reconfigured for use by USA students, faculty, and staff, with access to physical collections restricted to library employees, who will pull requested materials for patrons. Returned materials will be quarantined. Campus guidelines for use of stairs, rest rooms, and limited use of elevators will be followed.

- McCall Library will make individual appointments for USA students, faculty, and staff to use its collections. Materials used by patrons will be quarantined after use. Campus guidelines for use of stairs, rest rooms, and limited use of elevators will be followed.

- The MCOB Learning Resources Center will be open to all USA students, faculty, and staff, with access to physical collections restricted to library employees, who will pull requested materials for patrons. Returned materials will be quarantined.

- The Charles M. Biomedical Library will open when College of Medicine classes resume August 3, 2020. The Baugh Biomedical Library will be open only to students in the USA College of Medicine, College of Allied Health, and College of Nursing. Regardless of their academic affiliation, USA student veterans may use the John F. Gray Student Bunker located in the Baugh Biomedical Library. Access to physical collections will be restricted to library employees, who will pull requested materials for patrons. Returned materials will be quarantined. Campus guidelines for use of stairs, rest rooms, and limited use of elevators will be followed. The Baugh Biomedical Library will work with the College of Medicine to make arrangements for the use of the testing center.

- Exterior seating with access to wifi will be maintained at Marx Library and the Baugh Biomedical Library.

- Furnishings from Marx Library and the Baugh Biomedical Library have been identified and are available for loan to other campus buildings to expand study space.

Contingencies for USA Libraries

If an employee or patron who has used a library facility tests positive for COVID-19, the building will be closed until proper cleaning and disinfecting has been performed in accordance with UCRC guidelines. Appropriate University healthcare personnel will be notified immediately and provided with all relevant, available data to facilitate containment and contact tracing.

Meetings of Faculty, Administration and Staff

Departments and other administrative units will be required to reduce density and enhance social distancing in meetings and other gatherings. Generally, faculty meetings, committee meetings, college meetings, etc. will be held virtually for the fall semester. The UCRC will set and manage criteria such as meeting size.
Commencement Planning

The Commencement Committee will review options for Fall 2020 Commencement as well as for a ceremony for Spring 2020 graduates. These options will have to be consistent with applicable crowd size and social distancing restrictions.