Dear Faculty Members,

As you are aware, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Spring semester, the University transitioned in a very short amount of time to remote work and online learning. Thanks to your efforts, particularly considering the many challenges and the short time frame for transitioning, the move was remarkably successful.

The three-month period between now and the beginning of the fall semester affords us the opportunity to reflect on the challenges and lessons from the Spring semester and develop a detailed "return to campus" plan that addresses the health and safety of our students, faculty, staff, and other members of the university community. It also allows us time to make changes in the delivery of instruction to respond to challenging conditions. As you know from earlier communications from President Waldrop, a university committee with nine subcommittees is in the process of developing such a plan. As the plan is developed, we will be doing our best to communicate with you as you prepare for the fall semester. At this point, the Academic Subcommittee is developing a draft plan that will be ready to share soon.

Critically, it is important to understand that the academic plan will have an underlying theme of reducing density and enhancing social distancing on campus, including in the classroom. To address this, almost all courses currently listed in the course schedule as web-enhanced (that is delivered in traditional “face to face” instruction) will instead need to be taught in a hybrid (web-blended) format, that will include substantial online content. We will also, of course, continue to offer many other courses fully online, delivered asynchronously.

Note too, that after we open campus in the fall, all faculty must be ready to move back to remote work and fully online class delivery should conditions worsen later in the semester.

Regardless of which method of delivery that you will use in your courses, web-blended or fully online, a substantial amount of instruction will need to be delivered online this coming fall. The Innovation in Learning Center is poised to provide assistance as you prepare for teaching in the Fall semester. More details will follow in email communications and through your deans, but I wanted to get you all thinking about and planning for the fall. Once the academic plan for reopening fall semester is finalized, it will be published on the Academic Affairs website, and I will email you with the link to the plan.

All the best, stay safe, and thank you again for the amazing work you are doing.

G. David Johnson
Provost and Senior Vice President, Academic Affairs