

Dear Baylor Faculty:

As we continue preparations for the start of the fall semester, I reflect on the many decisions that have been forced upon us by COVID-19. We have tackled transitioning to online instruction, teleworking away from campus, preserving budgetary resources, extending additional care and concern for our students, and maintaining our own personal health and well-being. Typically in higher education, such significant actions occur slowly, but thanks to your dedication and partnership, we have accomplished so much on behalf of Baylor and her students in a matter of months.

Our University stands resolved to begin on-campus instruction once again with the start of the fall semester on August 24. Like all of you, we continue to closely monitor the recent growth of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations related to the virus within the greater Waco area and across the state of Texas. One thing we have learned from COVID-19 since mid-March is that we must remain flexible and ready to respond in unforeseen, creative ways. And we certainly ask for the Lord's hand in our planning, as we keep our hearts and minds focused on the health and safety of our campus community.

I want to take this opportunity to address several areas of importance for all of you related to the fall semester. The following is not exhaustive of our entire planning efforts on behalf of Project 8.24 or the academic leadership, but rather a summation of common themes we are hearing from faculty. Also, please understand that our plans may become more or less restrictive over the next six weeks based on the progression of COVID-19 within the Waco area and across the state.

- **Ongoing professional development for Faculty** – All faculty teaching online for the fall semester should have a mentor and should be engaged in the professional development opportunities made

available through the Academy for Teaching and Learning, Library and Academic Technology Services, and Professional and Continuing Education. We are currently evaluating student feedback from Summer Session 1 to determine where we need to improve and modify our professional development accordingly. We also are planning for the implementation of professional development at scale should the University need to shift more of our courses online due to a worsening COVID-19 situation.

- **Welcome Kits** – Every student, faculty and staff member will receive a Family First Care Kit prior to the start of the fall semester. Each kit will contain a Baylor-branded face mask, hand-sanitizer, thermometer, water bottle and COVID-19 instructional materials to help keep our campus community healthy and safe. Additionally, we are developing a team of “ambassadors” who will provide masks and hand sanitizer at the entrances of well-trafficked buildings and classrooms for the first few weeks of the fall semester.
- **International students** – You may have seen that earlier this afternoon the federal government rescinded a rule that would have forced international students to leave the country if colleges and universities held fully online classes this fall due to COVID-19. While we expect our international student enrollment will be down for the fall semester, the University will continue our support for this important population in acquiring a Baylor education. We are grateful for our international students and believe they enrich our campus in many ways.
- **COVID-19 Student Testing** – In addition to testing symptomatic students, we are exploring enhancements to this testing strategy that will allow Baylor to manage a student population situated in a state with very significant community spread. As part of the University’s overall strategy, for example, we are engaging expert Baylor scientists to monitor the presence of COVID-19 in the sewage coming from students’ on-campus residences. Additionally, we are planning for a

data-based approach to testing in the fall that maximizes the wellness of our community.

- **Face coverings** – In addition to the summer months, face coverings (i.e., masks) will be required inside all Baylor buildings and outside on campus when social distancing is not possible this fall. The full policy will be posted on [Baylor's coronavirus website](#) later this week.
- **Students who present with COVID-19 within a class** – We are developing contact tracing protocols according to the latest guidance from the CDC and other public health entities. With the masking and social distancing measures we have instituted for the fall, only those in direct contact with a student would be subject to self-quarantine. In other words, classes and academic instruction would be able to safely proceed without interruption. Faculty can be a significant help with contact tracing by having seating charts with students sitting in the same seat for each class session. Canvas has great resources for helping construct these.
- **Faculty who present with COVID-19** – Last week I asked the Deans to develop back-up instructional plans in conjunction with their respective Department Chairs for each course in the unfortunate case of faculty illness or quarantine. Our plan is to only change a section from in-person to online instruction in a situation in which we have exhausted all other possibilities.
- **Student attendance policies and accommodations** – Over the next several weeks, the Registrar's Office will work to maximize the options for students who are ill, who cannot be on campus or who cannot wear a face covering. The staff will make an effort to assure there is at least one online section for courses with multiple sections. For single-section courses, they will work to assure that the courses are offered in classrooms with the technology needed to allow for remote student engagement.

- **Classroom Technology** – The equipment for the classroom technology upgrades has arrived and is currently being installed across campus. The updates to specific classrooms will be catalogued on the Library and Academic Technology Services website. Faculty are strongly encouraged to learn how to use this technology now; please do not wait until classes begin. You also are encouraged to test the technology while wearing a face covering so that you can determine which option is most comfortable for you to wear while teaching.
- **Student evaluations** – The evaluation tool used during the spring semester will be used again in the fall. The results will be provided to Department Chairs to be used in performance reviews. As always, we strongly encourage the use of multiple indicators when assessing the quality of teaching.
- **Childcare/caregiver concerns** – Even though local schools and many childcare providers have announced their plans for the fall, we recognize there continues to be significant concern regarding the growth of the virus within the community and the resulting uncertainty that causes. This continues to be a topic of discussion among the Deans and academic leadership, but be assured we intend to approach this situation with care and support. With that said, our priority for the fall continues to be on providing face-to-face instruction for students, thus as of now, our plan is to only change a section from in-person to online instruction in a situation in which we have exhausted all other possibilities.

President Livingstone [distributed an email to current and incoming students and their parents](#) last Wednesday that outlines additional information related to on-campus housing, health services and COVID-19 preventive measures.

Let me remind you that the situation regarding the virus continues to be highly fluid, and consequently, many of our decisions may be made and

communicated to you “just in time” for the start of the semester. We pledge to communicate with you as major decision points are reached.

The best things we can all do prior to August 24 is to social distance, wear face coverings, wash our hands and practice good hygiene, and avoid large gatherings. Again, thank you for your patience and understanding as we prepare for the fall semester in a period of great uncertainty.

Sincerely,

Nancy Brickhouse, Ph.D.

Provost