



Dear Baylor Faculty,

Thank you, once again, for your diligence in observing and promoting Baylor's policies related to COVID-19 as we continue to work together as a campus community through the many details and unusual circumstances of teaching classes and mentoring our students during this fall semester. The well-being of every student and each member of our faculty and staff is our highest priority right now, and we are extending this commitment into our planning for 2021.

We have been on quite a journey. After swiftly moving all classes to online instruction in the spring with limited prior experience in that pedagogical modality, we invested significant resources and energy this summer into learning how best to achieve excellence in online instruction going forward. At the same, our planning during this summer for the fall semester was complicated by the push and pull of initial feedback from students and parents wanting as much in-person learning as possible and subsequent requests for the availability of online-only schedules following a surge of COVID-19 and concerns about returning to campus.

Navigating these rapid changes and competing concerns has been difficult. However, the result of our adaptability and shared work on many fronts has been the largest freshman class in the institution's history and the highest ever fall-to-fall undergraduate retention rate. Critics of higher education have said that colleges and universities are slow to change and insensitive to the needs of students. We have shown them this is not true.

The biggest task before us right now is continuing to maintain a significant face-to-face schedule. Early feedback from first-year students has reinforced how much they value in-person instruction. To date, we have no known cases of transmission in classrooms, and we are remaining vigilant in

monitoring any clusters of COVID-19 on campus to ensure that this assessment is both accurate and rigorous.

On Wednesday I shared with you our revised calendar for the spring semester, which establishes a framework for successfully completing the entire academic year with campus-based instruction. Today, I would like to provide a few more details regarding how the University is operationalizing this planned calendar. The following dates will serve as stepping-stones as we move forward in our operations.

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| September 18 | Office of the Registrar sends notification to departments to begin the process of creating the Schedule of Classes |
| October 1 | Deadline for faculty to request an all-online teaching schedule (through department chairs and deans) |
| October 26 | Schedule of Classes released |
| October 30 | Deadline for students to request an all-online schedule |
| November 9 | Early registration begins |

Note: the calendars for the Law School and online graduate professional programs have not changed.

In our planning for the spring semester, we are anticipating an approximate breakdown of 40% in person, 35% online, and 25% hybrid courses. Faculty members requesting all-online schedules should only be those who are at risk for complications from COVID-19 or are living with someone who is. In addition, students requesting all-online schedules should only be those who are living outside the Baylor neighborhood. The offering of in-person instruction on our campus remains our priority.

I recognize that many faculty members have found it challenging to have a portion of their students in the classroom while other students are simultaneously engaged in remote settings due to self-isolation or self-quarantine restrictions. To address this concern, we are asking that large courses and courses with multiple sections have a section that is completely online to accommodate students who have a need for all-online schedules. While this accommodation will not eliminate the challenge, we hope it will smooth out some of the wrinkles of this situation. In addition, we will be providing opportunities in November for Baylor faculty to learn from colleagues concerning measures they have taken to manage the complexity of having some students in the classroom and others who are remote. It is critically important that our students in self-isolation or self-quarantine are able to stay on track in their courses with timely access to recorded lectures and virtual access to faculty to ensure their academic success.

While I wish I could say that we can look forward to a more normal spring — and that the need for these exhausting pivots is over — I cannot do so. We simply do not know what the spring semester holds. While I am hopeful that inexpensive, rapid testing will become available and thus change the scenario for this spring for the better, there is no certainty right now. What I can say is that Baylor’s commitment to providing our students with a transformational education is unwavering. With your partnership in this effort, we will prevail.

Sincerely,

Nancy Brickhouse, Ph.D.

Provost

