



## **Guidance on reopening of KU campuses in the era of COVID-19**

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With the spring semester having come to a close, we take notice of the work accomplished this academic year and look forward with heads held high as we strive to pursue our mission of academic and research excellence in uncertain times. We will pause to celebrate the campus community as we've worked together and rallied to endure a health pandemic and budget trials. **We have adapted** – finishing the last semester with the academic curriculum offered exclusively remotely. **We have adjusted** – with over 90% of our employees working remotely. **We have persevered** – with labs maintaining critical research under staffing constraints. Now it is time to begin to think of the next steps for the fall semester.

The COVID-19 pandemic spread quickly across the entire globe, in many cases overwhelming health care systems, exceeding ICU capacity and requiring the opening of emergency hospitals. In the US the first cases were seen in Seattle and New York but quickly appeared across the country. New York hospitals, like those in China, Spain, Italy and other countries, were quickly overwhelmed, requiring drastic measures. Kansas, seeing the devastation in New York, acted fairly quickly to limit the spread of the virus in order to prevent overutilization and stress on our health system. On March 11, KU announced a week-long extension of Spring Break and the shift to online learning. On March 12, the Governor of Kansas announced a state of emergency in response to COVID-19. On March 17, the KBOR institutions made the difficult decision to extend remote classes through the semester, limit on-campus presence, and close residence halls for the remainder of the semester. Thereafter, Governor Kelly issued a Stay-at-Home order that began on March 30 and expired on May 1, 2020.

The goal of these extreme measures was never to stop the COVID-19 virus spread, but rather to slow the spread from happening so fast that our hospitals would be overwhelmed with the seriously ill. Now in the tenth week since the state of emergency declaration, we can demonstrate the success of these measures in our state. While the number of COVID-19 cases continue to rise (due to more widely available testing and clusters), we do not see a concurrent rise in the number of seriously ill patients being admitted to our hospitals. The number of new-patient hospital admissions for COVID-19 has been flat to declining over the past three weeks in eastern Kansas. We HAVE successfully slowed the spread of the virus to a pace that our health systems can handle.

### **Guiding Principles for Reopening Campuses**

Now with the expiration of the Governor's stay at home order, state and county health officials are starting to allow for the reopening of the state's economy in a measured stepwise fashion. We must also look to reopening the operations of the University of Kansas in a measured stepwise fashion. The reality is, however, that such a plan must remain flexible to adapt to any changes that may arise as the pandemic continues to impact our state, counties, and campuses. With that in mind, and before addressing the initial steps that we are proposing, it is important to note some underlying principles and understandings that will guide our decision making.

1. The mission of the university – to lift students and society by educating leaders, building healthy communities and making discoveries that change the world – *is critical and essential* to the State of Kansas and cannot be successfully accomplished with excellence in a remote-only manner.
2. We will be dealing with the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic until there is either a reliable and widely available vaccine or at least two thirds of the population have suffered and recovered from the disease. Current estimates for the development and deployment of a reliable vaccine is 18-24 months.
3. Even with measured precautions, it is not possible to eliminate the risk of infection with COVID-19 for those in our Jayhawk community. Therefore, KU will work in conjunction with our partners at the University of Kansas Health System, Lawrence Health and our county health officials to be as informed by science and as safe as reasonably possible while moving forward to achieve the mission of our institution, given the essential nature of our work.
4. Attention will be given to individuals identified by health authorities as “high-risk” to COVID-19, and reasonable accommodations may be offered to the extent possible consistent with our teaching, service, and research obligations.
5. As a baseline, the University of Kansas will operate in accordance with the requirements and recommendations of state and county health officials, and our reopening will be coordinated with these officials.
6. According to the guidance below, campuses must develop plans and provide documentation of plans to reasonably promote safety, minimize risk, monitor activity, and ensure adequate communication to campus leaders responsible for coordinating with state and local public health officials.
7. Each of our campuses is diverse – in population, geographic location, and missional focus – and given this, COVID-19 will impact our campuses differently. To the extent uniformity in plans, protocols, and policies in dealing with COVID-19 make sense for our diverse campuses, we will address them collectively. We will, however, remain flexible to allow for each campus to respond to changes unique to their locale.
8. We will repopulate our campuses in a stepwise fashion, with those activities that require a campus presence beginning first. *Where people can effectively work remotely, they should continue to do so until the final steps of the reopening process.*
9. Each member of the KU community who is present on any KU campus must appreciate that they play a role in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and that acting in ways contrary to the University’s required mitigation efforts puts themselves and others at risk. In this unprecedented scenario we must understand our actions unquestionably affect the health and well-being of others in our campus community and we must work together to protect those with whom we work, teach, socialize, and spectate. To that end, the University, with guidance from health officials and emerging best practices, has and will continue to put in place policies, procedures and recommendations that seek to mitigate COVID-19’s spread. Any person who does not follow these safety and mitigation measures puts our

community at unnecessary risk and, for the sake of each and every community member, we cannot abide by these lapses in compliance. While understanding such non-compliance may have its own unique facts and circumstances, any person who does not follow such required policies and procedures may forfeit the right to be on campus until they comply.

## **Reopening Campuses**

The steps for reopening our campuses will need to be consistent with, but not faster than, the phases outlined by the State, each campus' respective county officials, and each campuses' emergency planning authority. Thus, we can expect these steps to evolve over the course of the summer and fall, and we will need to adjust as the circumstances warrant.

The following five steps will be followed in succession, and each campus will clearly communicate the current step(s) for their campus, recognizing that some steps may overlap:

- Step 1 – Reopen research operations
- Step 2 – Ramp up limited on-campus administration and student services (each campus to establish success milestones before moving onto Step 3)
- Step 3 – Student re-population (campuses successfully provide classes in a blended and flexible format)
- Step 4 – Resumption of extra-curricular activities (campus-specific rollout of activities should take into account the size of the gatherings and mitigating health risk factors)
- Step 5 – Full re-population. Employees working effectively from home may return to work on campus.

## **Risk Mitigation**

Best practices to avoid spread of the COVID-19 virus continue to evolve as public health officials learn more with every day of treating the disease in the US, and by learning from the experiences in other countries. Personal hygiene (hand washing and using hand sanitizer), social distancing, wearing a mask, and regular cleaning of high touch environments remain the mainstays to prevention at the moment. Thus, these principles will be built into our operating procedures at each step of reopening.

Where practical, campuses may consider utilizing individual regular screening through questionnaires and health screening. Protocols for testing may be developed in collaboration with each campuses' county public health officials or clinical partners. Contact tracing and rapid testing results will be critical for adequate virus tracking and the use of self-quarantine where indicated. As reliable serum tests indicating acute infection as well as prior infection and therefore immunity becomes available, these protocols will need to be revised. Additionally, as a vaccine becomes available, they will need to be revised again.

Appropriate policies, procedures, and recommended guidelines will be created/amended at each Step to outline requirements, procedural expectations and/or recommended guidance for faculty, staff, students, and visitors. Decisions on whether a position of the university constitutes a required policy or procedure, or recommended guidance will be made by weighing multiple factors including the time, place, anticipated

attendance, and manner of the activity being regulated. For example, faculty and staff in Steps 1-3 may be required by policy to wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (i.e. surgical masks or masks provided by the university) when social distancing is not possible or when the health and well-being of certain vulnerable populations may be impacted; however, visitors in Step 4 may be provided recommended guidance, but not required, to wear a cloth mask during a sporting or performing arts event. In all cases, the University will be guided by the recommendations of federal, state, and local health officials and the overall goal of protecting the health and safety, as much as practicable, of the various constituents on our campus.

## **Implementation Planning**

The implementation of these principles may vary somewhat and be easier to implement in certain environments as listed below:

### ***Facilities***

Each facility will undergo evaluation for how to implement best practice prevention and social distancing measures. Efforts will be made to monitor entry; to minimize large groups by creating one-way travel patterns and limiting furniture in common areas; making hand sanitizer stations readily available; and placing high profile signage throughout the buildings. Masks will be required in certain environments.

### ***Research***

Research takes place in many forms and many locations on campus but typically in more small group settings than in classroom settings, and therefore more straightforward to control personnel interaction. In coordination with other leadership, the Vice Chancellor of Research for each campus will design a process for stepwise re-entry of researchers to research spaces on campus. Requiring the use of PPE will be necessary in many settings. Scheduling staggered shifts to minimize overlap of personnel may be required. Specific guidance will be forthcoming from each campus' Safety Committee.

Prior to, and as a pre-requisite for, re-opening of research space, each lab director must provide to the Vice Chancellor for Research a risk-mitigation plan that prioritizes the health and safety of all research lab members, in accordance with regulations of governing bodies and accrediting agencies as appropriate. In all cases, plans should outline requirements for testing and monitoring, provision of personal protective equipment, requirements for safety training with specific COVID19 content, with plans and contact information for communication of exposure and infection. Directors must work with campus safety planning teams to ensure requirements align to campus standards.

### ***Administration***

Only required administrative personnel should return to campus until further notice. Some settings may require rotating who comes into the office, enforcing social distancing, and the use of PPE where appropriate. Those with public facing roles may need additional protection such as plastic screening. Specific guidance will be forthcoming from each campus' Safety Committee.

### ***Housing***

On campus housing presents a risk due to the high density of students, but it also presents the opportunity to provide a more controlled and less risky environment relative to off campus housing for many of our students. The presence of Resident Advisors, the use of dining services, control of the cleaning protocols for common areas and the relative ease of contact tracing in the residence halls all create a lower risk environment than less controlled settings. Thus, it makes sense to accommodate as many students into student housing as is manageable.

Students and their families should be fully aware of our measures to minimize risk in student housing and the expectations and the responsibility of the students themselves to help maintain a healthy environment. That said, we must anticipate and create plans for self-quarantine of students who test positive or are exposed and awaiting test results. It is also possible that entire floors or wings may have to undergo self-quarantine while testing occurs. Should there be a major outbreak in the region that requires the County or State to order another *stay at home* mandate, students in on-campus housing may need to shelter in place on-campus with plans for dining operations to accommodate this transition.

We will work with our partners in the Greek system to develop similar approaches.

### ***Learning Spaces***

Under the leadership of the EVC at KU Med Center, and the Provost at KU-Lawrence and Edwards, Deans and Department Chairs and Directors will work in close coordination with Vice Provosts and other campus leaders to design syllabi and plans to offer courses that can be implemented under any eventuality for the Fall semester, including on-campus, online, and hybrid programs, recognizing that some of our students, as well as our faculty, may be in situations that will not allow them to return to classes on-campus.

Under any scenario and in every case, class experiences must be of high standard and highly engaging to students. This will require a strong commitment on the part of faculty to interact with students in new ways, ongoing professional development for faculty in learning to use new technologies for teaching and learning, and the continued improvement in the design and implementation of course syllabi.

Working together, Deans, Chairs/Directors, Vice Provosts and other campus leaders must evaluate courses to be delivered in fall to ensure that all offerings meet state, county and campus requirements for public health and safety, including social distancing, use of masks, and testing and contact tracing when necessary – and that our instructors are meeting our educational standards. In some cases, changes in section size, location, time of course and other modifications will be necessary to achieve compliance. It is also expected that some sections will be merged or eliminated in order to ensure the most effective and efficient use of classroom time and space, given public safety requirements.

### ***Clinical/experiential learning environments***

Clinical experiences, field placement, and off-campus experiential activities and service learning are a critical part of many degree programs. The university must support the practicum experience and students' continued engagement in practicum, to the extent possible, and work to allow practicums to continue if the practicum setting is operating and is allowing student attendance, remotely or in-person.

As with learning spaces, all planning and decisions regarding off-campus learning experiences should be closely coordinated between Provost/EVC, Deans, Chairs/Directors and campus leaders, as well as with the leadership of agencies and programs where our students learn and work.

The health and safety of our students and of the personnel at those locations where our students receive their off campus training must be considered when making decisions regarding off-campus learning experiences. Further, consideration should be given to the potential risks associated with sending students to field placement agencies, and where appropriate ensure consistency of policy between on-campus and off-campus environments as appropriate.

Each school or unit that provides off-campus learning experiences must provide to the Provost/EVC a plan of action for exposure and contingency planning for students with health issues that would put them at high risk for field work, in accordance with regulations of governing bodies and accrediting agencies as appropriate. In all cases, plans should outline requirements for testing and monitoring, provision of personal protective equipment, requirements for safety training with specific COVID19 content, with plans and contact information for cross-agency communication of student exposure and infection. Deans must work with campus safety planning teams to ensure requirements align to campus standards.

Considering all scenarios, plans should also outline policy and procedure in the eventuality that there are massive practicum disruptions (due to student illness or agency discontinuation) that are coordinated with accreditor requirements and that to clarify handling of incompletes, use of course fees and re-enrollment.

### *Event spaces*

Campus events bring great richness and energy to the life of the university. We seek to have events on campus to the greatest extent possible while providing for the health and safety of participants and complying with all state and local public health regulations.

As with other spaces and activities on each campus, all planning and decisions regarding events should be closely coordinated with campus leadership, as well as with external groups that host events on campus.

Each unit that manages event spaces must provide to EVC/Provost Office a plan of action for exposure and contingency planning for events and space usage, as appropriate. In all cases, plans should outline requirements for testing and monitoring, provision of personal protective equipment, requirements for safety training with specific COVID19 content, with plans and contact information for communication of participant exposure and infection. Event leaders must work with their respective campus safety planning teams to ensure requirements align to specific campus standards.