

UT Martin Soaring Forward Reentry Task Force Recommendation

May 29, 2020

Recommendation:

The UT Martin Soaring Forward Reentry Task Force unanimously supports proceeding this fall with a hybrid model of learning where some learning will occur on campus and other learning will occur remotely. To that end, five subgroups provide specific recommendations regarding how we soar forward. The reports are offered in alphabetical order and include the following topics:

1. Employee Safety
2. Research
3. Residence Halls and Extracurricular Activities
4. Teaching/Student Success
5. Visitors

Committee Members:

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Abbreviations:

The following

CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

COVID-19 – Coronavirus Disease 2019

COE – Center of Excellence for Experimental Learning in the Agricultural Sciences

FMLA – Family and Medical Leave Act

PPE – Personal Protective Equipment

ROED – Office of Research, Outreach, and Economic Development

RT-PCR – Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction

SARS-CoV-2 – The novel coronavirus which is the causative agent for COVID-19

Employee Safety

Context:

The employee safety committee recognizes that UTM Reintegration Plan describes the phases in which employees will return to the office. Currently, the campus is in phase one of the transition. There are no dates specified for the phases because the transition will depend upon the local pandemic. The transition back to work plan is a guiding document for our path forward. In a hybrid scenario, employees could be in phase one, two, or three. When students return with a full-time, on-campus presence, employees will likely be transitioning to phase three. The transition back to work may occur on a different timetable for our centers depending upon the local pandemic conditions.

Employee guidelines, including the transition to work phases, should be considered inclusive of student employees. Other employers who are working on our campuses should follow the phased re-entry to the extent possible.

Recommendations:

UTM Reintegration Plan

1. Utilize the UTM Reintegration Plan as a guiding document.

Personal Protective Equipment

1. Require recommended fabric face covering as defined by CDC guidelines.
2. Provide departments with individual disinfectant supplies such as disinfectant sprays and wipes to encourage disinfecting and cleaning between regular custodial shifts.
3. Ensure faculty, staff, and student employees know where to find PPE and are taught how to use and dispose of PPE.

Physical Environment

1. Encourage adequate student and faculty spacing in classrooms.
2. Employ plexiglass shields in place at front desks/public service areas that deal with a high volume of customers.
3. Develop one-way traffic patterns in specific offices.
4. Develop appropriate signage for traffic, entrance and exits, room capacity, room-specific safety etc.
5. Promote the use of hand sanitizer and washing hands before entering classrooms, offices, and meeting areas.
6. Eliminate paperwork where able; sanitize hands before and after touching paperwork, packaging, devices, etc.
7. Sanitize rooms.
 8. Throughout the Day: Cleaning and sanitizing supplies will be provided to faculty/staff/students to clean individual areas in offices, classrooms, labs, etc.
 9. Nightly: Deep cleaning and disinfecting performed by Physical Plant Staff
10. Post schedules regarding cleaning and sanitization.
11. Equip all bathrooms and kitchens with hands-free paper towels, soap, and warm water.
12. Review and modify work environments continually based on emerging guidance from government and health officials.

New Normal Work Environment

1. Telecommute where able. Encourage employees with increased risk to work remotely.
2. Provide Zoom and Teams training for faculty, staff, and students (maybe UTM-branded online videos for beginners).
3. Encourage flexible and adaptive scheduling for face-to-face operations.
4. Prepare for transition to remote work if situation arises.
5. Encourage cross-training of duties.
6. Require training and provide education.
7. Require mandatory brief training for return to work.
8. Require mandatory training for supervisors.
9. Provide bullet point listing of safety tips for being on campus that can be shared campus-wide and posted within offices and areas.

Mental Health and Well-being

1. Verify employees have the technology that they need to be successful.
2. Invest in hotspots, microphones, etc.
3. Ask supervisors to check-in with all employees
4. Ensure awareness of expanded federal benefits related to paid time off (FMLA).
5. Provide mental health support to the entire campus community.
6. Offer Human Resources Zoom conferencing to discuss options during transitional periods for the university.
7. Emphasize the importance of all employees keeping up to date on flu shots and vaccinations.

Research

Context:

To protect the health and well-being of our employees, students, and the general public while fulfilling our critical educational and research mission during a national pandemic, effective May 11, 2020, the University of Tennessee at Martin via the Office of Research, Outreach, and Economic Development (ROED) has adopted the following guidance concerning Research and other Scholarly Activities.

Recommendations:

Laboratory Research and Other Scholarly Activities Inside Buildings

1. Priorities of this policy are: 1) health and well-being of the students, faculty, and staff, 2) care for animals and plants grown under certain conditions (e.g., greenhouses), and 3) supporting essential/critical research.
2. All facilities are closed to all external visitors, with the exception of deliveries of packages, supplies, and janitorial services, until further notice.
3. Access to facilities by faculty, students, program staff, and affiliated organizations to perform critical operations will require prior approval from department chairs, college deans, or the executive director of ROED.
4. Upon arrival to laboratories, studios, or related facilities, immediately implement social distancing and sanitation practices that are suitable for the location. Normally, social or physical distancing would mean one person per every 144 square feet. Masks or related face coverings are required when more than one person is in a room.

External Research Sites

1. Faculty should coordinate and manage student and staff travel to the external sites to ensure the most current rules and policies are followed. department chairs, deans, or the executive director of ROED should be contacted prior to travel to external sites to discuss planned work.
2. Limit working group size to less than ten people while practicing social distancing. At the same time keep in mind that many of the activities conducted in laboratories, studios, and/or related facilities are safer when at least two people work together.
3. If possible, consider traveling to and from each external or field site with a maximum of two people per vehicle utilizing PPE or in separate vehicles; vehicle surfaces should be disinfected, and use of PPE, hand sanitizer, and other recommended safety practices is expected.

UT Martin Center for Excellence for Experimental Learning in the Agricultural Sciences.

1. Guidance for accessing and utilizing the UT Martin Center of Excellence for Experimental Learning in the Agricultural Sciences (COE) Facilities, which includes the following:
 - a. Veterinary Technology Buildings (Henderson Headquarters and associated buildings)
 - b. Ray and Wilma Smith Livestock Merchandising Center
 - c. Beef Cattle Teaching Center
 - d. Sheep & Goat Center
 - e. Graves Stables
 - f. Plant Science Laboratory & Greenhouse
 - g. Indoor and outdoor Aquaculture facilities

- h. Rhodes Golf Center
 - i. Field crop research plots
 - j. Livestock Containment and Apiaries
 - k. Tyson Broiler Production Facility
 - l. Kennel & Additional Swine Buildings
 - m. Renewable Energy Facility
 - n. Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory
 - o. Brehm Hall
2. The following guidance policy will be implemented concerning access to the COE and the UTM Teaching Farm by faculty, staff, students, and external constituents.
 3. COE priorities are: 1) health and well-being of the students, faculty, and staff, 2) care for livestock and plants grown under certain conditions (e.g., greenhouses), and 3) supporting essential/critical research.
 4. The COE facilities are closed to all external visitors, with the exception of deliveries of packages, supplies, and janitorial services, until further notice.
 5. Access to COE and the Teaching Farm by faculty, students, program staff, and affiliated organizations to perform critical operations will require prior approval from the COE director, farm manager, or their designee.
 6. Upon arrival to the COE or Farm, immediately implement social distancing and sanitation practices that are suitable for the location. Normally, social or physical distancing would mean one person per every 144 square feet. Masks or related face coverings are required when more than one person is in a room.
 7. In addition, Farm and Research faculty and staff are directed to implement staff social distancing practices immediately. This includes, but is not limited to, operating in shifts, practicing separation during breaks, implementing flexible work schedules, and employing working remotely where possible.
 8. Faculty should coordinate and manage student and staff travel to the COE facilities or the UTM Teaching Farm to ensure the most current rules and policies are followed.
 9. Limit working group size to less than ten people while practicing social distancing. At the same time keep in mind that many of the activities conducted at COE facilities are safer when at least two people work together. If possible, consider traveling to and from each COE location and/or field site with a maximum of two people per vehicle utilizing PPE or in separate vehicles; vehicle surfaces should be disinfected, and use of PPE, hand sanitizer, and other recommended safety practices is expected.

Residence Halls and Extracurricular Activities Sub-Group

Context:

Returning students to campus for fall 2020 will inherently increase the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission on campus and in the community. Athletics and student support services will need to begin a complete review of all policies and procedures to ensure compliance with current CDC, state, and local group gathering guidelines. We believe the recommendations will be the foundation needed to help mitigate some of that risk. Student support services will need to focus heavily on educating students on their personal responsibility for protecting the health of the campus and community. While campus life will be dramatically different, we believe we can still provide our students with a positive campus experience in uncertain times.

Our guiding principle is to ensure the safety of our students and community while striving to provide them with a balanced co-curricular education. We acknowledge that returning students to the campus in any form increases the risk of transmission. The following recommendations are meant to mitigate the risk as much as possible while allowing the university to continue to conduct its mission and develop strategies to support the following areas of the strategic plan:

1. Implement high-impact educational experiences in and out of the classroom.
2. Prioritize our students' development of essential life skills.
3. Amplify the collegiate experience through co-curricular programs and activities that increase student engagement in campus life.
4. Educate responsible citizens for careers, professions, service, and personal well-being.
5. Elevate support and visibility of the Office of Student Life and Multicultural Affairs.
6. Demonstrate commitment to the richness of UTM's diversity and inclusiveness through more spaces for students, faculty, and staff to gather around their interests while respecting the free speech rights of students and faculty.
7. Prioritize critical facilities growth and improvements that advance our strategic goals.

Assumptions

1. The public health risks associated with COVID-19 will be unchanged by the start of the Fall 2020 semester.
2. The institution's obligation will be to provide education, policies, and best practices to the campus community. Persons choosing to engage in activity on campus acknowledge the potential health risks associated with COVID-19 and bear the responsibility of implementing policies and best practices put forth by the institution.
3. Auxiliary units are unable to absorb another financial loss as seen in the spring 2020 semester.
4. Auxiliary units, athletics, and student support services are a critical component to the enrollment decision of students.
5. Offering any kind of in-person courses in fall 2020 will require student support services on campus.

Goals

1. UTM student support services will provide students with resources for academic support and the ability to participate in campus experiences utilizing a variety of virtual and social distancing delivery methods.
2. Students will understand the campus changes and personal expectations that will be required of them prior to the start of the fall 2020 semester.

Recommendations:

Residence Halls

1. Develop a staggered move-in process for August 8-21 with all freshmen being required to return to campus for FYI starting on Thursday, August 22.
 - a. Residents may opt to move in and return later.
 - b. Guests for move-in will be restricted to a certain number.
2. All students returning to the campus for fall 2020 will be required to sign a SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic Contract Addendum and Acknowledgement that will be developed in coordination with the UT System, Student Health, and UT Legal.
3. Develop signage and material as part of a broader resident education initiative for fall 2020.
4. Flexibility will be given for housing exemptions requested based on COVID-19 concerns should other exemption criteria not be available to the student.
5. Evaluate the testing capacity available and possible requirement of testing for students who show symptoms or have been in contact with others who have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2.
6. Evaluate a possible immunization requirement for the flu and SARS-CoV-2 vaccinations.
7. Reserve spaces and develop procedures in conjunction with Student Health for students who require self-isolation.
8. Require students to have a thermometer, face coverings, and additional supplies prior to checking in for fall 2020.
9. Require the wearing of a face covering inside all public areas of the residence halls.
10. Develop PPE procedures for staff when interacting with residents.
11. Review residence hall rules and regulations pertaining to visitation hours, number of guests, and areas of access.
12. Cancel all large-scale programming/events and create programs that can be implemented virtually, with small group social distancing, or a hybrid of both.

Athletics

1. All student-athletes will be required to undergo a physical before they return to campus; any medical concerns that would deem them at-risk or indicates exposure to SARS-CoV-2 must be remedied or discussed before returning to campus.
 - a. Coaches will be required to provide flexibility and avoid negative repercussions for any student-athletes that are not able to return to campus immediately due to an above-listed issue.
2. All student-athletes must sign a SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic Contract Addendum and Acknowledgement that will be developed in coordination with the UT System, Student Health, and UT Legal that is specific to athletics participation.
3. Athletics will develop cleaning policies and procedures that will be utilized between uses of facilities and overnight
 - a. Emphasis on locker rooms, training room, weight rooms, etc.
4. Each student-athlete will be required to have their temperature taken before entry into weight rooms and training rooms.
5. Student-athletes, coaches, and staff will be required to wear protective gear when using training rooms, weight rooms, and other common spaces.
6. Locker rooms will be closed until CDC recommendations indicate they can safely be used
7. Abide by all applicable UT Martin, OVC, NCAA, state, and local recommendations regarding best practices for gatherings and athletics participation.
 - a. This applies specifically for capacity on group gatherings.

Extra-Curricular Activities

1. Participants in any type of in-person activity must sign a SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic Contract Addendum and Acknowledgement that will be developed in coordination with the UT System, Student Health, and UT Legal.
 - a. In-person activities will require students to RSVP in Runway to limit attendees to social distancing maximum set ups.
2. Attendance records/sign-in sheets for all in-person activities must be kept to assist public health officials with contact tracing in the event an attendee becomes SARS-CoV-2 positive.
3. Travel study and travel abroad suspended until further notice. Will follow U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories.
4. Day field trips and overnight trips associated with academic courses will be evaluated and approved in consultation with the appropriate chair/supervisor. Current UTM policies regarding health and safety guidelines (face coverings, social distancing, etc.) must be followed. When applicable, self-isolation (per UTM and/or CDC policies) upon return must be practiced.
5. Gatherings and Large Group Activities:
 - a. Assess all activities expected to draw large gatherings (I.e. Move-In Block Party). Any face to face activity/program will be limited to current CDC and local State group gathering guidelines.
 - b. All registered student/Greek organizations and campus departments will submit a request for consideration of large group gatherings at least 30 days in advance of an event until further notice. Definition of a large group gathering will be adjusted as we move through the Return to Work Plan Phases, current CDC and local state group gathering guidelines. A review committee will need to be established to provide recommendations on such requests.
 - c. Develop safety plan that includes practices and guidelines to mitigate the spread of SARS-CoV-2 for all group gatherings.
6. Students and staff participating in any extracurricular programs and activities will follow all safety and hygiene measures as per UTM's Return to Work Plan.
7. Will provide online/virtual programming.
8. Student Rec Center and related programs:
 - a. SRC will follow state and CDC operating guidelines.
 - b. SRC/Elam Center will only serve students, and community memberships will be suspended until further notice.
 - c. No intramural activities until further notice.
 - d. All basketball and racquet ball courts will be closed until further notice
 - e. Locker rooms and common areas will remain closed to prevent gatherings
9. Provide training for all student organizations on prevention and mitigation practices and university guidelines/policies pertaining to COVID-19.
10. Create a comprehensive university communication plan regarding prevention and mitigation practices and university guidelines/policies.
11. University Center will develop guidelines for room usage for maximum occupancy with social distance set up.

Teaching/Student Success

Context:

Guiding Principles: Our first priority is to ensure the safety of the students and faculty. We acknowledge that opening the university in any form increases the risk of transmission. The following recommendations are meant to mitigate the risk as much as possible while allowing the university to continue conducting its mission.

Goals:

1. Protecting the UTM community (student, faculty and staff), and communities which UTM resides within, by minimizing the rate of SARS-CoV-2 transmission.
2. Providing the necessary PPE and safety protocols for face-to-face instruction.
3. Providing faculty and students the necessary tools for effective remote learning. These include hardware and software, plus training on how to effectively use these tools.
4. Academic honesty is critical. Faculty must have the ability, if needed, to require that students are monitored during exams or other situations without being assessed additional fees. Any academic honesty policy should not increase the risk of contracting SARS-CoV-2.

Assumptions.

1. The public health risk of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic will be unchanged by the start of fall 2020 semester.
2. Testing capacity will be limited by the start, and during, the fall 2020 semester.

Recommendations:

1. Faculty members and students who have underlying health issues, are caring for or live with someone with underlying health issues or are otherwise uncomfortable being in proximity to others during the pandemic must be able to teach and enroll in classes remotely even if the course is mainly face-to-face.
2. Faculty and students who present with flu or cold-like symptoms must quarantine at their residence or other facility designated on campus for such purposes for a minimum of two to three weeks or until it is determined by an RT-PCR test that the faculty member or student is not infected with SARS-CoV-2.

During this period faculty should have the obligation to deliver instruction remotely and students should have the option to receive instruction remotely.

3. When an outbreak of confirmed cases occurs on campus (multiple confirmed infections) all instruction must be moved to a remote learning format for a two to three-week period.
4. Because of stipulations 1, 2, and 3 all courses must be prepared with a remote learning option.
5. Classes that cannot be delivered 100% remotely should be planned to be offered in hybrid format. Instruction which can only be delivered face-to-face is executed on campus, and everything else is delivered remotely. Any face-to-face delivery of instruction must abide by social distancing protocols (six feet apart and face masks). The delivery method for each

individual course requiring face-to-face instruction needs to be reviewed and approved by the department, college and by upper administration to ensure it meets safety guidelines.

6. The following are models of hybrid instruction for fall 2020 to be determined on a course by course basis in coordination between faculty members and department chairs:
 - a. Large classes should be moved to remote learning only format. Optional face-to face instruction can exist where smaller groups of students can meet with the course instructor while respecting social distancing. For example, a class of 40 students can be divided into 4 groups of 10 with optional designated weekly face-to-face instruction in an appropriate space which allows for social distancing.
 - b. If a course requires face-to-face instruction, then faculty and their department must have preexisting remote instruction options in place for these courses if requirements of stipulations 1, 2, and 3 are triggered. The following will decrease the rate of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and must be considered when designing a hybrid course:
 - i. Decreasing the frequency of face-to-face instruction.
 - ii. Decreasing the size of the groups during each face-to-face session.
 - iii. Decreasing the time spent during face-to-face sessions.
 - c. Because of stipulations 1, 2, and 3, all courses that cannot be taught remotely should be dropped from the fall 2020 schedule.
 - d. Since there is no “one size fits all” model for teaching and learning even under normal circumstances, academic departments should be as creative and flexible as possible in their approaches to scheduling and modes of instruction while adhering to the principles outlined above.
7. The decision to move a course to remote learning only should be made as soon as possible.
 - a. The department should notify the appropriate administration offices and the assigned classroom for that course can then be reallocated.
 - b. An appropriate designation should be added to Banner for such courses to allow students to make an informed decision.
 - c. Chairs, deans and the university administration should monitor enrollments in courses moved to remote delivery, consult recommendations for best practices in their areas regarding maximum enrollments in online courses, and assign overload pay to instructors whose total enrollments add up to an extra section if budgetary feasible.
8. All faculty shall be strongly encouraged to participate in professional development during the summer semester 2020 to become familiar with best practices in online and other remote teaching modalities.
9. A relaxed attendance policy should be in place for the duration of the pandemic. Students should be encouraged to self-quarantine at their residence if they have flu or cold-like symptoms without the need to show a “doctor’s note.”

10. The university should shorten the length of face-to-face operations of the fall semester by starting a week early on August 17, holding classes on Labor Day and fall break, and ending all course work before Thanksgiving. Exams should be conducted online after Thanksgiving.
11. The university must clearly designate on the outside and inside of each classroom the maximum occupancy allowed to respect social distancing. Once the maximum occupancy is determined for each classroom, all desks not needed for that capacity should be cordoned off or labeled to ensure they are left vacant. Desks to be used should be spaced for appropriate distancing and bolted in place if possible.
12. Mandatory training for proper use of PPE and protective practices, which lower transmission rates, should be required of all faculty and students.
13. The risks associated with COVID-19 must be communicated to all members of the UTM community. It should be clearly communicated to faculty and students that regardless of any efforts undertaken by the university to lower transmission rates that the risk of infection still exists and is significantly higher than working remotely.
14. All recommendations above for the teaching and learning environment apply to areas of student support as well; face-to-face services are available only where social distancing is possible. Otherwise, all services are offered online.

Visitors

Recommendations:

SOAR (First Priority Visitors)

1. The Visitor's subgroup supports in-person SOAR with limiting groups to 25 or less as a first step to reopening with full face-to-face classes or a hybrid online/in-person class model.
2. No in-person meals will happen at SOAR. Participants will receive boxed lunches to go.
3. SOAR plans will be presented to Chancellor's Cabinet on Monday, May 18 for a final decision. (Since this time, the Chancellor's Cabinet decided to move the SOAR visits online.)

Campus Tours (First Priority Visitors)

1. Continue doing only virtual tours until we enter Phase 3 of the UTM Reintegration Plan.
2. When we enter Phase 3 of the UTM Reintegration Plan, start on-campus tours in small groups (3-4 families per tour time).
3. When we enter Phase 4 of the UTM Reintegration Plan, we will bring campus tour numbers to 10 families per tour time.

FYI/Welcome Weekend (First Priority Visitors)

1. If classes start in person in the fall, FYI should happen following CDC guidelines and social distancing guidelines.
2. If classes start online, have an online/virtual FYI component in August. Then when classes come back in October (or even January), have in-person activities following social distancing/CDC guidelines.

Outside Visitors Renting Space (Second Priority Visitors)

1. Allow outside visitors to start coming back to campus during Phase 3 of the UTM Reintegration Plan following CDC guidelines.

Other Considerations

1. PPE should be provided to all faculty, staff, and visitors.