

MEMORANDUM

June 24, 2020

- Remote work extended through at least **August 8, 2020**
- Fall semester to start **August 24, 2020**. Classes available through face-to-face, certified hybrid, approved synchronous remote, and quality designed fully online
- Face-to-face events canceled or postponed through at least **August 24, 2020**

Dear members of the university community:

COVID-19 has certainly changed how we live, study and work. A new normal is in sight, but there is so much that we still do not know about how to get things done safely and securely. And yet we know that we must press on ...

What we have accomplished together in recent months to adapt to this new environment pales in significance to what we will need to do in the next few months: We must safely complete summer terms B and C, virtually graduate in early August thousands of hard working students ready to transition to meaningful employment or graduate school (hopefully at FIU) and then welcome more students back at our campuses, sites and virtually a few weeks later as the Fall Semester begins.

We thank our dedicated and passionate faculty and staff, and our students, for enduring the uncertainties and discomforts that COVID-19 has brought us. We mourn the human loss caused by the virus and the difficulties fostered by a collapsed economy, unemployment and social dislocation. The national unrest driven by the tragic death of George Floyd and the growing urgency to end institutional racism serve as a dynamic context for our challenges ahead.

Caught between the mounting concerns for safety and the dramatic difficulties brought on by prolonged massive unemployment, state leadership has made it clear that we should repopulate the university for the Fall Semester to ensure student continuity, timely graduation, and an accelerated return to economic wellbeing. Thus, we will repopulate gradually and carefully as we responsibly seek solutions that are sensitive to our students, faculty and staff, their families, and the changing conditions in our community.

**Coming back to campus**

We have been doing the work necessary to be able to live and work with COVID-19 in the months ahead. Our Repopulating Task Force has designed a

plan that is dependent on every member of the university community acting responsibly and protecting each other. The plan is a living document that is flexible and continues to be updated as conditions change. We call this plan [Panthers Protecting Panthers](#) to emphasize personal responsibility. The plan calls for required face coverings, observance of physical distancing, and the use of an app we have designed to identify students, faculty and staff with possible COVID-19 exposure so that they can isolate and seek medical attention, as appropriate. The plan also includes installing signage to reinforce physical distancing and hand sanitizers on campus, updating cleaning protocols, getting our own labs certified to process COVID-19 tests and hiring our own contact tracers.

This plan is flexible and is subject to modification as we edge closer to our fall start date of **August 24, 2020**. We understand that one plan might not fit all members of our community, but we believe that what we have created is flexible and consistent with the times which require extreme elasticity and patience.

The plan has now been approved by the FIU Board of Trustees and the State University System Board of Governors. The goal is to provide a pathway for safe repopulation of our campuses and an orderly development and implementation of Fall studies that give students, in accordance with their individual circumstances, the broadest possible set of course options to safely continue their studies. While early versions of this plan identified “phases” of progressive campus opening, we are now focused on a more flexible approach to Fall learning that depends on a broad range of learning modalities intended to fit student needs — to be explained momentarily.

Thus, even while we continue and will complete the early Fall term (Summer B) and Summer C terms completely using remote teaching, you will see a gradual increase over the next months of more Panthers on campus, including faculty, staff and students associated with our Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, and our College of Law, some student athletes, many researchers, and staff members and vendors to support the increased activity on campus. All will be expected to physical distance, wear face coverings, wash hands frequently, and if sick, isolate to protect others. Indeed, we now expect all who enter campus to wear face coverings and to keep their physical distance consistent with the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and our own health experts.

## **Students**

We admire your tenacity and perseverance in the face of the current difficulties. We understand that many of you cannot attend traditional face-to-face classes because of family responsibilities or your own pre-existing conditions. Accordingly, we will offer four different learning modalities this fall — face-to-face, certified hybrid, approved synchronous remote, and quality designed fully online. All delivery modes will be encouraged to use Canvas for course content

and assignments and allow for a quick and seamless switch to remote (where relevant) should it be needed.

Currently, we expect a fraction of our fall classes to have a face-to-face component, either as fully in-person meetings or as hybrid meetings (part of the time on campus, part remote). The remainder of courses will be either synchronous remote or quality designed fully online. Changes to fall courses will be made the week of July 1st. Students will then be able to sign on to the student portal, see the modality that their classes are being taught in and make adjustments to their schedules. Advisors should be consulted to ensure timely progress toward graduation. We intend to provide additional support to students who may need to adjust their schedules because of the uncertain conditions under which we are operating. Note that a payment plan is possible given the difficult financial times as well.

Decreased classroom capacity and availability due to physical distancing policies means we can only offer about 25-33% of our courses face-to-face. Priority will be given to courses with no reasonable form of other instruction, courses which cannot be deferred to another term, introductory classes, gateway courses, and classes with high FTIC enrollment.

## **Faculty**

We are mindful that many of our faculty are confronted with threats to their health from COVID-19. We appreciate that over 700 faculty have taken our remote teaching badge to enable state of the art teaching and learning approaches to this extraordinary situation that grips us. Faculty have worked hard to provide a full range of course modalities for students this fall in collaboration with their department chairs and deans. Faculty assignment will be based on the instructional and research needs of the respective unit with a student-centered approach at the core of unit decision-making. Our priority is timely graduation for all our students. Faculty may work on campus or remotely, depending on student and research needs and in consultation with unit supervisors.

## **Staff**

Our professional staff, like students and our faculty, have significant family responsibilities that must be addressed. We thank our staff for their continuing ability to get much done under difficult circumstances. Most of the professional staff will continue to work remotely through at least **August 8, 2020**. We ask supervisors to work with their teams in the coming weeks to determine which members of the staff perform functions that will require their physical presence on campus this fall. Recommendations for staff to return should be submitted to their corresponding dean or vice president for approval. Those who can work from home should continue doing so. Supervisors are encouraged to accommodate those who self-disclose a health vulnerability associated with COVID-19 or who live with someone who has such a vulnerability, so that they can continue working remotely.

To facilitate this process, Provost Furton and Human Resources Vice President El pagnier Hudson are developing a new remote work policy. Please look for more details in the coming weeks. Also, please review the [COVID-19 Emergency Policy](#), which may be useful for faculty and staff challenged with leave balances.

## **Events**

On-campus and off-campus in-person events are canceled or postponed through at least **August 24, 2020**, unless they are mission critical to student success. Proposed in-person events must be linked to student learning and/or safety and health-related matters. Event approval requests must be submitted to the [Division of External Relations, Strategic Communications and Marketing](#).

This year, more than ever, I am proud of the spirit that has galvanized our work and with the collaboration that vibrates through our community. Our passion for student success and helping our community is real and every day more important to sustaining the moral and spiritual backbone that holds us together. To endure and prosper, we must stay calm, have clarity and intentionality, keep our flexibility and be even more creative. And these days, a good deal of patience is ever more necessary. Stay safe — undoubtedly more information will soon be upon us!

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark B. Rosenberg', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark B. Rosenberg