



## WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY COVID-19 UPDATE

May 6, 2020

### Update on reopening of the Wichita State campus

Dear Wichita State University community,

It has now been almost two months since we have asked all of you – students, faculty and staff – to pivot from what was expected to be a normal spring semester to a world of uncertainty and rapid, unprecedented change.

While the most drastic of changes seems to have slowed in recent days, we cannot overlook the enormity of all that we have accomplished. We have navigated our way through a complete shift to online learning, remote working, implementation of social distancing, stay-at-home orders and travel quarantines. We have asked each of you to make sacrifices, great and small, for the benefit of your fellows Shockers.

And we have remained committed to preserving the student experience while prioritizing the health, safety and well-being of our family, friends and entire community.

But while this new way of doing business seems now almost like a new normal, we know that it is not sustainable. We must learn to coexist with this virus – and do so safely – as we begin to resume life on campus.

Last week, Gov. Kelly unveiled her [“Ad Astra: A Plan to Reopen Kansas.”](#) This plan is a four-phased strategic approach to gradually reopening the state in accordance with public health guidance and best practices. In light of this announcement, we have heard from many of you inquiring as to the university’s plans both for the immediate and long-term future.

Our priority has always been – and remains – the health, safety, and well-being of our entire campus community. With that firmly in mind, the university has organized seven working groups, comprised of faculty, staff and students, each of which is charged with assessing different components of the university with an eye toward gradually – and safely – ramping up operations over the coming weeks.

These working groups provided their initial reports and recommendations last week, and we are working on compiling each of these individual reports to be combined into a larger campaign and initiative, which we are calling Shockers United.

While much is still unknown, Wichita State intends to begin its gradual reopening on May 26 with a goal of resuming in-person instruction, at least in part, this fall. Given that our summer classes will still be in an online and/or remote format, we understand that the most immediate impact of our gradual reopening will be felt by our employees.

While the Shockers United plan to phase back to campus is already under way, this does not mean all employees will be expected to return to work on May 26. During the summer term, departments should continue to look for ways to stagger work schedules and should continue to allow employees to work remotely unless it is essential that the employee report to campus.

We understand that each department's needs, business hours and remote work schedule may look different depending on the demands of the department and the needs of the employees in that department. We ask that all departments assess their operations while keeping in mind the health and safety of their employees. Employees who are concerned about returning to work should work with their supervisor and human resources on a plan that meets the needs of the department but also meets the health and safety needs of those in the department.

Every step we take and every decision we make will be dictated by health and safety concerns and current guidance from local and state public health officials. I know there is a strong desire for concrete answers, but we simply don't have those at this point. There is still a great deal of planning to do and risks and solutions to be addressed. We expect to announce our plans for the fall semester in the coming weeks, and we will continue to stay in touch through emails, town halls and campus-wide messaging as those plans take shape.

**For the more immediate future, I want to make you aware of a few general key points as we start down this path:**

1. Shockers United will be, at all times, governed by health and safety guidance issued by local and state public health officials and is modeled after the *Ad Astra* plan.
2. Summer classes will still be held exclusively in an online and/or remote format.
3. When on campus, there will be a strong emphasis on each person taking responsibility to protect themselves and others from coronavirus infection. That means daily wellness self-checks, social distancing, limited congregation, wearing face coverings (or masks as appropriate), disinfecting spaces and limiting non-essential travel.
4. All faculty will need to design flexibility into fall semester course delivery (e.g., hybrid, online, modified schedule, etc.) to limit disruption and assure quality learning outcomes if another stay-at-home period is needed.
5. Faculty and staff should continue to work to provide support to students through increased availability of grants, scholarships and campus employment opportunities.

6. Students and advisors should stay connected in order to ensure that all students stay on a path to graduation while taking into account financial needs.
7. University research activities and spaces will continue to be operational while taking into account health and safety guidelines.
8. The university will continue to work with its Innovation Campus partners in an effort to coordinate reopening plans.

I know you have many questions that are not addressed here. Please be assured that we will provide answers to those questions as soon as they are known.

We continue to ask for your patience and cooperation as we tackle all of these issues. We *all* share the desire to return to campus and return to campus life – whatever that may look like in this time of a “new normal” as we coexist with this virus. Thank you for all you have done and will continue to do. It is your hard work and dedication that will make our safe return to campus possible.

Take care,

Rick Muma, Provost

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