

Update to the University Community from President Carlos Vargas

Dear University Community,

As the spring semester winds down and the previously announced end date for our telework period is nearing, I want to thank each of you for the ways in which you have seamlessly continued to operate and serve our students during this unusually difficult and uncertain period of time. I am so proud of all you have continued to do in support of Southeast Missouri State University.

With spring classes coming to an end this week, I want to provide you an update on plans for reopening our institution. I have reconvened the Emergency Operations Committee (EOC), and this group has begun meeting weekly for the foreseeable future to discuss transitioning back from telework, our summer and fall operations, and other related items.

Transitioning from Telework

As you may recall, in April, I extended the University's telework period through May 17 and asked that employees return to our campuses May 18. In preparation for this move, I have asked Executive Staff to work with their Divisions to formulate individual plans based on specific situations for departments and employees in their areas to begin returning to campus during Phase I of our reopening starting May 18. Your supervisor will be in contact with you to discuss the specific schedule for you and your department. Essential student employees also may begin working on campus beginning May 18, and I ask supervisors to work with these students on scheduling their return.

Please also adjust your calendars to note that on May 18, the University will begin observing summer office hours of 8 a.m.-4 p.m. through Aug. 14, as originally planned.

Over the past several weeks, we have been closely monitoring Governor Mike Parson's "Show Me Strong Recovery" Plan for the state of Missouri and the recommendations and guidance of the Cape Girardeau County Public Health Center concerning reopening of businesses both locally and across the state. In keeping with this guidance, Executive Staff will be working with individual departments on our transition from telework, and we will slowly ease back into our positions over a span of weeks. During this measured and phased process, Executive Staff will work with individual departments to assess physical workspaces on campus and specific needs so appropriate adjustments, such as the installation of sneeze guards and office spacing, can be made to accommodate health concerns and social distancing guidelines for both our employees and customers. While many of us are ready to quickly return to our physical work spaces on our campuses and pick up where we left off in March, I urge you to be patient with us as we proceed with a cautious and deliberate approach.

This phased transition may look different for each department, depending on work responsibilities and the needs of individual offices. I encourage employees to continue to conduct meetings remotely, whenever possible, and to continue to use remote business processes to deliver services. Your safety and well-being are our top priority, and we are doing everything we

can to work through a plan that is fluid, flexible, thoughtful and careful to put measures in place to help protect the health and well-being of our faculty, staff and students as we continue to cope with the impacts of COVID-19.

Safety Precautions

While Executive Staff is working on plans that assess physical workspaces to ensure they can accommodate appropriate social distancing, we are also cognizant of employees who may perform their job duties within less than six feet of a co-worker. With this in mind, the University will be implementing enhanced precautionary measures to mitigate the risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19. I am asking supervisors to discuss specific social distancing plans with their respective departments. Also, please know the University is procuring and purchasing masks, hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies that will be provided to departments and employees to help keep everyone safe in their work spaces.

Leave Policies

I remind you that personnel policies have been updated and are in place to accommodate expanded Family Medical Leave for employees unable to return to work/telework due to exposure to COVID-19, high risk concerns or the need to stay home with children due to the COVID-19 interruption. These policies are posted on the University's COVID-19 page at <https://semo.edu/sealerts/covid19/employee.html>. I am asking supervisors to work with the director of Human Resources in these cases.

Summer Classes, Events, On-Campus Housing

As previously communicated, all summer courses beginning prior to June 29 will be delivered online or remotely. At this time, courses beginning June 30 through Aug. 7 will be taught both in-person and online, with courses to be conducted in the mode of delivery as they were originally scheduled. All University events on and off campus remain canceled through June 30.

Beginning next week, Towers South will be open and will accommodate a limited number of students who have made arrangements for on-campus summer housing. Slowly, I expect the campus to begin adjusting to our "new normal" so we are prepared to welcome our freshman class in August.

Travel

In an abundance of caution and with concern for the health of our University, existing work-related travel restrictions will remain in place. I know some of you may be considering your summer plans and personal travel. While some areas of the country are reopening, I urge you to continue to follow the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-in-the-us.html>.

Sanitation

Our practices as we return from telework should be much like those we practiced before telework began. I ask that you continue with frequent handwashing and proper cough and sneeze

etiquette. Being aware of your personal health, including chronic conditions, allergies and new illnesses, keeps the community healthy. Morning home temperature screening is the best early identification of illness. If you feel ill, especially with a temperature of 100.4 degrees, please stay at home.

Also, know that as we transition back to our work spaces, our Facilities Management staff will resume its daily cleaning schedule and will perform daily high-touch area cleaning as well. We also will be providing departments with disinfectant so they can perform their own intermittent cleaning of high-touch areas such as public counters, copier touch screens, queuing system touch screens, keyboards, phones, etc.

We all should do part so our campus remains healthy.

Our plan is to offer our students a high-quality in-person academic experience this fall. Our new students are telling us they are eager to spread their wings at Southeast, and our returners are very anxious to get back to Cape Girardeau! While there are many uncertainties in the months ahead and students and their parents naturally want to feel comfortable about our plans for this fall, one thing is certain -- we will all rise to the challenge and exceed their expectations! I am very confident our gradual and measured approach to reopening will serve us well. As our Emergency Operations Center outlines additional plans and details for the summer and fall terms, of which there will be many, I will keep you updated.

Thank you again for all you do for Southeast, and I look forward to seeing you on campus later this month!

Carlos Vargas
President