



July 8, 2020

Dear TSU Students and the University Community:

As we face the current COVID-19 crisis and the uncertainty that surrounds it, I hope you are safe, healthy, and taking care of yourselves. I want to update you on the plan for this Fall 2020 semester. We appreciate your patience while we have developed and finalized our plan to return to campus. First and foremost, your safety is our top priority. We continue to monitor local, state, and national public health alerts and seek guidance from health care experts.

In March, we established a TSU Pandemic Task Force that meets daily to make decisions about our campus and to respond to this unprecedented crisis. This planning has been coordinated with other state institutions and guided by recommendations of the Governor's Office, Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), Tennessee State Department of Health, and the City of Nashville. As such, decisions have been made regarding Fall 2020. These decisions are guided by 1) prioritizing the health and safety of every member of the University community; 2) protecting and supporting the educational and research mission to maintain academic excellence; and 3) providing accurate and transparent information to stakeholders.

#### **FALL 2020 OPENING – OPTION OF ONLINE OR IN-PERSON LEARNING**

**The semester will begin in August and end by Thanksgiving. Final examinations will be completed by Wednesday, November 25 and commencement will be held on Saturday, November 28. We have implemented numerous health and safety guidelines for students and employees.**

**Classes will begin on Monday, August 17, 2020. The first two weeks of class will be online. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be both in-person and online instruction in the fall semester. We will allow students the option of taking classes online or in-person.**

**In view of the financial hardships that impacted our students during this pandemic,**

- **TSU will not increase tuition for the Fall or Spring semesters.**
- **In addition to that decision, TSU is further discounting tuition for the students who take all online courses by doing the following:**
  - (1) **We will provide a 15% discount to in-state, undergraduate students who do not reside on campus.**
  - (2) **We will allow the e-rate for out-of-state students.**
  - (3) **Students choosing to take all online classes will be allowed to cancel their housing and receive a full refund of their housing deposit.**

**I am pleased that these discounts will result in significant savings for our students during these challenging times.**

## **FALL INSTRUCTION**

We are working with faculty to enhance and create new and engaging curricula to maximize student learning and development. We are also assisting students in need by offering laptops and technology devices for the fall. In anticipation of this unique fall semester, every course in the catalog has an eLearn shell and is ready for online delivery. Again, all instruction for the first two weeks will be online.

For the health and protection of students, we are implementing a 14-day “safer in place” policy upon arrival for all students in residence halls. The “safer in place” concept requires students to stay in their places of residence unless they need to perform essential activities, e.g. get food, go to medical appointments, go to a predefined essential function, etc.

## **HOUSING, RESIDENCE LIFE, and FOOD SERVICES**

For students in the residence halls, the campus will open August 11. As mentioned above, we are implementing a 14-day “safer in place” policy upon arrival for all students in residence halls; and their first two weeks of class will be online. In-person instruction will begin on August 31<sup>st</sup> (following the first two weeks online).

A residential experience is an important component of the collegiate experience. We are working closely with public health experts including the Metro Public Health Department and Tennessee Department of Health for crucial information that will help with the housing plan.

Residential spaces will be set aside for isolation and quarantining, if needed. Extensive procedures are also being implemented for the safety and health of Residence Life, housekeeping, and facilities staff.

**Dining Services:** Food will be delivered to students for the first two weeks of the semester while they are taking all classes online. Dining halls will open on August 31 with reduced seating capacity, carry-out options, and physical distancing.

**Mental Health and Wellness:** The Student Health Center and the Counseling Center will be open for in-person medical assistance and counseling, as well as online options for support.

**Common Area Spaces:** The Floyd-Payne Student Center and other community gathering places will reopen with appropriate health and safety measures in place. Co-curricular programming will emphasize outdoor and virtual activities.

## **HEALTH and SAFETY PROTOCOLS**

TSU is taking important steps to ensure the health and safety of our students. These include but are not limited to:

- Face coverings are required to be worn at all times when in a public place.
- Face coverings will be distributed to students, faculty, and staff.
- Social distancing will be implemented at all times.
- Temperature checks will be conducted as persons enter the campus, and also randomly throughout the campus.
- Students and employees are encouraged to wash their hands throughout the day.

- Students will be encouraged to keep their electronic devices in wipeable covers, and to apply disinfectant wipes to their devices often throughout the day.
- Desk shields have been ordered for areas that have been identified as at-risk.
- Shields are being installed at service areas throughout the campus to provide a safe communication space.
- Stations will be located throughout the campus to allow persons to frequently sanitize their hands.
- Classrooms are being assessed to determine the number of students that can occupy the room, based on CDC guidelines.
- Computer labs are being marked to determine the number of persons allowed to use the lab at the same time.
- All buildings are being regularly cleaned and sanitized.
- Thorough ongoing cleaning of all campus facilities including residence halls, student apartments, dining halls, and all buildings.
- Appropriate cleaning and disinfecting of desks and high-touch surfaces will occur throughout the day for classes, labs, and public areas between usage.
- Social distancing stickers are being placed throughout the campus to identify the required six-foot distance.
- Shuttle services are being modified to accommodate the ability to transport fewer passengers.
- Technology will be expanded to provide greater services through utilization of technology.
- Flu shots will be strongly recommended for all students.
- A non-emergency COVID-19 phone line (615) 963-6888 and email ([COVID-19@tnstate.edu](mailto:COVID-19@tnstate.edu)) have been established for reporting concerns.

## COMPONENTS FOR CAMPUS OPERATIONS

We will implement a multifaceted and integrated plan for COVID-19 surveillance, testing, and early warning. This includes 5 key components that will allow us to reopen and operate the campus, with early identification of virus cases as a critical element to limit outbreaks.

- (1) We will conduct daily monitoring and reporting of temperature and any onset of symptoms by all faculty, staff, and students who are on campus. We also strongly encourage self-monitoring and will provide temperature gauges. Additionally, the Office of Emergency Management and the Student Health Center will implement a system for electronic reporting and will include safeguards to protect personal data and privacy. If there are symptoms, diagnostic testing will be required. If the test is positive, consultation with a health care provider and isolation will be mandatory.
- (2) Testing must be performed at the time a student checks into the residence halls. We will make population surveillance testing to ascertain the baseline infection rate on campus a top priority. Our goal is to make this testing available to all students, faculty, and staff who wish to be tested.
- (3) We will continue to work closely with the Tennessee Department of Health for contact tracing. For any positive diagnostic test results, we will operationalize the protocols in place, and will follow the state reporting guidelines. A contact tracing team will be in place to identify potential secondary cases to limit the spread of infection. We have also established our own early contract tracing.

- (4) The campus family will be a part of comprehensive environmental monitoring. We are asking all employees to monitor wastewater, air, and high-touch surfaces in campus buildings. This early warning system can help identify areas of concern to help prevent additional outbreaks.
- (5) Behavioral changes are vital to ensure the safety and well-being of the campus family. These behavioral changes include wearing a face covering at all times, staying 6 feet apart from others, frequent handwashing, and staying at home when sick.

## **INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS**

Athletics has a comprehensive plan to safely return to training, practice, competition, and work that complies with public health guidelines as well as NCAA and the OVC requirements. While we cannot predict what will happen as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic, this plan would allow us to salvage as much of the football season as possible. Our current plans may be adjusted depending on whether the trajectory of the pandemic and guidance from health officials.

- We will delay opening the football season until the end of September - we will not play the first three games of the season.
- After consulting with NCAA and Ohio Valley Conference officials, the current plan is to open the 2020 football season on Saturday, September 26, 2020 against Jacksonville State University.
- The amended schedule includes the elimination of the annual John Merritt Classic for the first time.
- This plan could change if pandemic numbers steadily increase as the start of the amended season approaches.
- We are still reviewing information pertaining to the Homecoming game on October 10.
- We believe this was the best scenario that would allow our athletes to have a season and a championship experience with conference play, with as many teams as possible.

## **IN SUMMARY**

This innovative and comprehensive plan for fall 2020 was developed in consultation with TSU stakeholders and public health officials. It is important that we remain vigilant as the course of the pandemic continues to evolve. As a result, our plans are subject to change. TSU is putting into place the personnel, organizational structures, and protocols to minimizing risks by integrating health and safety protocols with our academic requirements. For continued updates please see [www.tnstate.edu/covid19](http://www.tnstate.edu/covid19).

TSU is committed to providing world class instruction. As a campus community we are built on a foundation of excellence in response to crisis. In this, we will build a stronger campus community and develop innovative strategies to prepare and educate the nation's future leaders. This pandemic is unlike any challenge we have ever faced. All decisions have been made with the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff as the top priority.

I commend your adjustment to the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Together, we will overcome these difficulties and ensure that your education will not be interrupted. I extend my thanks to each of you for your support and commitment to TSU.

President Glenda Glover