



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

COMMERCE



**Fall Return Plan**

## Contents

Preparation for Fall Semester 2020 .....	1
Designated COVID-19 Response Department .....	1
Face Coverings .....	1
Physical Distancing.....	2
Flu Shots.....	2
Employees Returning for the Fall Semester .....	2
Employee and Student Self-Certification.....	2
Self-Monitoring Checklist.....	3
Mental and Emotional Well-being.....	3
Facilities .....	3
Transportation .....	4
Enhanced Sanitization.....	4
Supplies .....	4
Before First Class Day.....	5
Postings, Signage, and Communication .....	5
Guidance .....	5
Classes.....	5
Classroom Technology .....	6
Return of University Assets.....	6
Food Service.....	6
Events.....	6
Residence Halls .....	7
Student Health Services (SHS).....	7
Athletics .....	7
Travel .....	8
Use of Facilities by Outside Groups .....	8
Visitors to Campus .....	8
Testing, Monitoring, Tracing, Exposure Controls.....	9
COVID-19 Task Force.....	9
COVID-19 Testing.....	9
Monitoring Efforts.....	9
Temperature Monitoring .....	10

Contact Tracing ..... 10

Coordination of COVID-19 On-Site Exposure Controls ..... 10

Metrics ..... 11

## Preparation for Fall Semester 2020

This document provides information on the university's plan for the Fall 2020 semester in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. Any requirements or guidance in this document may be changed at any time by President Mark Rudin as may be needed due to updates in recommended public health guidelines issued by the federal, state or local governments. Any changes to this document will be communicated to students, faculty and staff by email and by being posted on the Stay Healthy Lions website.

### Designated COVID-19 Response Department

Students, faculty, and staff who need information, or have concerns related to our university's response to COVID-19, should contact the university Emergency Operation Center (EOC) at [EOC@tamuc.edu](mailto:EOC@tamuc.edu) or call 903-468-3091. For concerns or situations arising after normal business hours, contact 903-259-0906.

### Face Coverings

A&M-Commerce requires the use of face coverings in the following areas:

- All instructional and research classrooms/labs on campus (exceptions may be made by the faculty in charge of that area);
- Locations that provide health care and counseling (exceptions may be made by the professional staff at these locations);
- Areas where physical distancing is not feasible;
- On the campus shuttle and other campus transportation; and
- Other areas as determined by the Dean, Director, or other applicable senior leadership for that specific location. These areas will have proper posting of any requirement and will provide advance notice when appropriate.

If a student refuses to wear a face covering when required in any of the above areas, that student may be reported to the Office of Students' Rights and Responsibilities and will be subject to discipline in accordance with the Code of Conduct. If an employee refuses to wear a face covering when required, that employee's refusal should be reported to his or her supervisor and the employee will be subject to appropriate discipline in accordance with the university's human resources regulations and policies.

**A&M-Commerce recommends that all students, faculty, staff, contractors, and visitors wear face coverings while in public areas.**

The university will provide all faculty, staff, and students with one initial cloth face covering. However, it is the responsibility of each individual (faculty, staff, and student) to provide any additional face coverings. Best practices – as outlined by the Center for Disease Control and the Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM) – recommend that an individual maintain at least three face coverings in order to have a clean one at all times. If any student has challenges with additional face coverings, please contact the EOC.

In addition to the provided face covering, the university will have a limited stock of disposable face coverings. Departments in need of a small supply of disposable face coverings should contact the EOC at [EOC@tamuc.edu](mailto:EOC@tamuc.edu)

## Removal of Your Face Covering

- Remove face coverings by the straps and move it gently away from your face. Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing.
- If your face covering is disposable, then promptly throw it away in a waste container.
- If you have a reusable cloth face covering, make sure you wash it after use.

For additional tips and care recommendations related to face coverings, please visit the [Stay Healthy Lions](#) website.

## Physical Distancing

Physical distancing practices should be used in all university classrooms, residence halls, academic offices, research laboratories, and other shared spaces (6-foot interpersonal physical separation). The university has conducted detailed studies of classroom, conference, and event spaces to identify the capacity needed to keep students, faculty, and staff as safe as possible. Notification of approved capacity will be posted at the entrance to each classroom, conference and event space.

## Flu Shots

All students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to obtain a flu shot. Faculty and staff should contact their primary care physician for guidance and recommendations. Students are encouraged to contact the Student Health Services for availability, guidance, and recommendations.

## Employees Returning for the Fall Semester

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has determined that certain individuals may be at greater risk for negative health outcomes if they contract COVID-19. Employees who are in a category deemed to be at higher risk should talk with their supervisor about preventative measures that may be taken, including working from an alternative work location, or other options that may be available. Any employee with questions or concerns about what may be options for their employment should contact Human Resources at [hr@tamuc.edu](mailto:hr@tamuc.edu).

## Employee and Student Self-Certification

A&M-Commerce will require students and employees, prior to returning in August and again in January 2021, to self-certify that the person:

- Has not been determined to be actively infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19;
- Does not have a fever, cough, or other symptoms of COVID-19 as listed on the CDC's website;
- Has not been in close contact with anyone known or suspected to have tested positive for COVID-19 in the previous 14 days; and
- Has not returned from travel or traveled through an area with state or local travel restrictions that mandate quarantine upon arrival home in the previous 14 days.

If an employee fails to meet any of these criteria, that person is required to notify their supervisor, should not report to their workplace, should follow current CDC guidance regarding self-isolation or self-quarantining, and will only be allowed to return to their workplace if cleared to return by their healthcare provider and in accordance with CDC guidance.

If a student fails to meet any of these criteria, that student should contact Student Health Services, should not attend classes in person, should follow current CDC guidance regarding self-isolation or self-quarantining, and will only be allowed to return to class in-person if cleared to return by Student Health Services or their healthcare provider and in accordance with CDC guidance.

This self-certification will include a continuing duty on the part of the employee or student to notify the applicable university official if the above self-certification changes. Employees and students will be subject to disciplinary action for providing false information or not complying with the terms of the self-certification. The certification process will be available through TrainTraq for employees, the external gateway for contractors, and through the students' MyLeo portal.

The courses providing the above training for employees are:

- "Protocol and Certification for System Member Employees" (course 2114130) in TrainTraq.
- "Safe Practices for Returning to the Office During the COVID-19 Pandemic" (course 2114131) in TrainTraq.

Upon course completion, all employees are required to forward the notification of completion to their supervisor. Supervisors must ensure their direct reports have completed the training prior to return.

The applicable training for students is currently being developed and students will be notified via the MyLeo portal when it is available.

## **Self-Monitoring Checklist**

Upon arrival to campus, the university has provided a Self-Monitoring Checklist to monitor symptoms and instructions on actions to follow should symptoms develop. These are located at the university's [Stay Healthy Lions](#) website for all students, faculty, and staff, who should review the Self-Monitoring Checklist daily to determine whether they are exhibiting any symptoms.

## **Mental and Emotional Well-being**

Employee assistance is available for all employees and retirees through Guidance Resources, which includes consultations with clinicians. You can access this service by calling 1-800-697-0353, through their website [guidanceresources.com](http://guidanceresources.com), or through the GuidanceNow app. The Web ID is TAMUS.

Students may contact the Counseling Center on campus to schedule an appointment. The Counseling Center is offering virtual appointments and can be reached by calling 903-886-5145.

## **Facilities**

Each classroom and instructional space on campus has been assessed for maximum occupancy with the current COVID-19 physical distancing guidance from public health authorities. The adjusted numbers will be provided to allow for proper planning and course scheduling. The adjusted numbers will also be posted at each location.

All locations will be assessed to identify areas that could use a barrier if proper physical distancing is not attainable. Southeast Service Corporation (SSC) is the third-party vendor to the university that provides custodial services, maintains the university's grounds, and performs all maintenance and renovation work for the university. SSC has already produced an initial stock of plexiglass barriers to have ready

should a location require one. Departments should contact the EOC to request a physical barrier by emailing [EOC@tamuc.edu](mailto:EOC@tamuc.edu).

Efforts are underway to explore additional ways to reduce the chances of viral exposure in university buildings, including modification of existing heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, increasing filter changes, and replacing existing filters to ones with better filtration capability.

During the period the campus was under a significant occupancy reduction, SSC performed routine checks at restrooms, water fountains, and water supply areas to verify proper water flow continued and ensure all water systems remained safe.

## **Transportation**

Campus shuttles will be sanitized routinely and cleaned throughout the day. All passengers will be required to wear face coverings while on the shuttle. Physical distancing will be enforced, thus the seating will be limited. The transportation office will be adjusting all bus routes in order to maintain proper physical distancing and occupant limitations, while continuing to meet the transportation needs of our university community.

The same protocols apply for campus automobiles, golf carts, and utility carts. Two-seater golf carts and utility vehicles should be limited to one person, when possible. If this is not an option, face coverings will be required. For all automobiles, multi-passenger carts, and utility vehicles, proper physical distancing should be followed. In situations where this is not attainable, face coverings will be required.

## **Enhanced Sanitization**

SSC will provide additional sanitization to all instructional spaces, high traffic locations, and restrooms. SSC will sanitize these spaces at least twice a day using sanitization products that meet the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) criteria for use against the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Any concerns or questions about the frequency or lack of attention to sanitization in an area should be directed to the EOC at [EOC@tamuc.edu](mailto:EOC@tamuc.edu).

## **Supplies**

In order to support the additional sanitization efforts needed to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, the university has procured a limited amount of product and supplies that meet the EPA's criteria to use against the SARS-CoV-2 virus to be available for students and employees. The university will continue to procure supplies throughout the semester to maintain the additional sanitization efforts. Departments requesting additional product or supplies can contact [EOC@tamuc.edu](mailto:EOC@tamuc.edu).

The additional product and supplies include:

- Disinfectant spray
- Disinfectant wipes
- Hand sanitizer
- Hand sanitizer stations
- Paper Towels
- Plexiglass barriers

Classrooms will have either disinfectant spray and paper towels or disinfectant wipes for students to clean their own spaces before and after use.

## **Before First Class Day**

Historically, the return to campus in the Fall has been a phased process. The goal for the campus is to be operational with an on-site presence on August 1 for faculty and staff. Residents will arrive in a phased process as well, with early move-ins followed by freshmen arriving next on scheduled days to move into residence halls. This is followed by upper division students arriving in the days leading up to the first day of classes, at which time all members of the university community are present on campus. The Residential Living and Learning staff will inform students of the dates they will be assigned to move into residence halls.

Similarly, return to campus in January 2021 will be structured carefully to maximize physical distancing.

Students at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 will be advised to consider their risk before deciding whether to return to campus. The decision will solely be that of the student, although the university may advise such students to remain at their permanent residence to take courses remotely. Faculty and staff at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 will be guided by existing system/university/agency policies and rules and guidance from public health officials.

Each student will need to access their MyLeo account and complete the required COVID-19 training and certification modules prior to move in or attending their first class, whichever occurs first. A message prompt will appear following a student's logging into their account until the training and certification have been completed.

## **Postings, Signage, and Communication**

The CDC and Texas Department of State Health Services require proper posting of COVID-19 related information that includes symptom identification, face covering recommendations, and educational material.

Currently, there are postings across campus in buildings and exterior signage. Additional postings will be in place before August 1 and will include updated information, traffic redirection, and floor decals.

## **Guidance**

### **Classes**

The Fall schedule will remain with the previously approved start and end dates. Faculty members will have wide latitude to determine individual course calendars and modalities of content delivery within the overall academic calendar. For example, if a faculty member has a blended or hyflex course, he or she may determine that the face-to-face portion of the class will last until Thanksgiving Break while the rest of the course will take place online until the end of the semester. Students should be informed as to any special arrangements made by faculty members regarding their individual course calendars prior to the commencement of the Fall semester. In addition, any particular arrangements should be included in course syllabi.

Preparations have been made by each academic unit to be ready to transition to online instruction should the COVID-19 situation change.



To assist with any necessary contact tracing efforts, faculty are encouraged to implement attendance-tracking methods and assigned seating options. In addition, faculty are encouraged to report any unusual or excessive absenteeism trends to the appropriate Dean or VP for review.

Students should be encouraged to leave the building between classes when possible to avoid congregating in hallways and lobbies. Faculty should remind students prior to dismissal if possible.

Additional communication will be provided by the university throughout the semester by means of postings or email providing reminders of health and safety precautions.

## **Classroom Technology**

The University is planning what the technology will be in the learning environments that are used for face-to-face instruction in the Fall. This will include video, audio, and in some cases touchscreens for annotating. Along with these devices, document cameras will also be an option to use in most of the learning environments. This retrofit will allow the environments to utilize virtual conferencing tools (eg. YouSeeU, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams) that will accommodate a dual modality approach. Depending on the conferencing tool used, the ability to record lectures may be a possibility.

## **Return of University Assets**

Employees who moved university assets to their alternative work location for remote work must ensure they return all university equipment and furniture to the office. If an “out of office” online form was completed for taking the asset off campus, an “out of office” [online form](#) will need to be completed for the return of the item(s) to campus.

Any loaner laptops or IT equipment should be returned and can be coordinated by contacting the CITE helpdesk for additional instructions.

## **Food Service**

Campus dining will operate under a reduced occupancy based on the guidelines and industry regulations, as those may be updated from time to time. All dining staff will receive COVID-19 training and will be required to implement similar methods of COVID-19 training and awareness as the university requires.

Efforts will be made to provide enhanced dining options that include additional take-away menus, barrier control, and outside dining options.

## **Events**

All events on campus will be required to follow current State of Texas, System, and local public health guidance related to physical distancing, group size, and health and safety regulations. If an event is scheduled in an indoor venue for more than ten (10) minutes and physical distancing is not possible, face coverings will be required. If additional health and safety requirements are required for a particular event, those requirements will be included in all advertisements for the event and posted at the entrance of the event's venue.

It is encouraged to implement additional safe practices such as a virtual or no-touch sign in process.

Activities such as clubs, lectures, fraternities/sororities, study sessions, intramurals, etc. that occur face-to-face will observe the limitations on the size of gatherings based on university guidance and the space

used. Physical distancing practices will be used during all co-curricular activities (6 feet of physical separation).

Activities that will involve university-sponsored student travel will have guidance issued no later than July 31. University-sponsored student travel should be limited to mission critical functions to assure the continued safety of the campus. See additional information in the "Travel" section of this document.

## **Residence Halls**

Common spaces in the residence halls such as restroom facilities, lobbies, shared kitchens, etc. will have reduced or designated furnishings to encourage physical distancing, and will have enhanced sanitization.

Students living in the residence halls will be prohibited from day or overnight visitors. Residential students and staff are encouraged to wear face coverings when not in their personal rooms. Residential students will also be discouraged from leaving the university for the duration of the semester to limit exposure to those they visit elsewhere and to limit the exposure they may bring back to the residence hall. If a student does leave the residence hall and suspect they have been exposed to COVID-19, the student will be required to report this exposure to Student Health Services on campus within twenty-four (24) hours of the suspected exposure.

## **Student Health Services (SHS)**

Students are advised to call before coming to the SHS center for an in-person visit or to utilize telemedicine or telehealth visits when appropriate.

SHS has prepared for students to return to campus by:

- Conducting an inventory of their PPE, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, and medical supplies for screening and treatment of COVID-19;
- Preparing the clinic for in-person visits in accordance with the current guidance from the CDC;
- Training clinical staff on COVID-19 and relevant clinical protocols;
- Reconfiguring the space to promote physical distancing and developing protocols for clinic cleaning and decontamination;
- Updating screening forms to include COVID-19 symptoms; and
- Posting signage at the clinic that provides guidance on the safety precautions in effect.

## **Athletics**

The university supports the resumption of athletics in the 2020-2021 academic year, although timing and format will depend on an ongoing evaluation of conditions and direction from the Lone Star Conference, NCAA, System and local guidance.

Lion Athletics will provide continued guidance, plans, and communications related to the efforts to support a safe return for the fall sports season. Such guidance will follow current CDC, State of Texas, System, and local procedures, with an emphasis on policies created and Executive Orders issued by the Governor's Office.

Lion Athletics will continue to plan and monitor appropriate game day protocols for both external guests and teams. Updated safety and health guidance will be posted at the entrances to Lion Athletics events.

## **Travel**

*Students:* System guidance regarding fall semester university-sponsored student travel will be issued no later than July 31. University-sponsored student travel should be limited to mission critical functions to ensure the continued safety of the campus. If students travel and suspect they have been exposed to COVID-19, the student will be required to report this exposure to the Student Health Services on campus and may be required to place themselves in self-isolation for a period of time in accordance with CDC guidance.

*Employees:* International travel is not permitted and will not be approved by the Texas A&M University System. Domestic business travel should be limited to mission critical functions to ensure the continued safety of the university community. Employees engaged in business-related and personal travel who suspect they have been exposed to COVID-19 while away from the university are required to notify their supervisor and place themselves in self-isolation for a period of time in accordance with CDC guidance. Domestic business travel is subject to approval by the Vice President for Research and Economic Development and the employee's supervisor.

No more than one person is allowed in a vehicle for student or employee travel, unless the other passenger(s) are members of a student's or employee's household.

## **Use of Facilities by Outside Groups**

Use of university facilities by outside groups must follow the most up-to-date process used to reserve and request university space. The approval process will be revised as needed to fully consider the safety of the students, faculty, staff, and third parties, and will be updated on the applicable webpage related to the facility on the university's website. Use of facilities by outside groups should only be approved if the use advances the mission of the university.

Safety requirements and recommendations established by local health authorities and university policy in effect at the time of the event should be observed (e.g., gathering size, physical distancing, face coverings, etc.). All outside group members will certify they have not been determined to be COVID-19 positive, do not have COVID-19 symptoms, and have not been in the presence of anyone they knew to be COVID-19 positive in the last 14 days.

All individuals coming to campus to use A&M-Commerce facilities must complete the certification form and the event organizer is responsible for collecting and maintaining all forms. The template for the certification form will be located on the [Stay Healthy Lions](#) website.

## **Visitors to Campus**

For purposes of this guidance, visitor refers to any external guest to the campus. A&M-Commerce will limit external guests to those considered critical to the mission of the university as approved by the appropriate division's Vice President or designee. All visitors will be expected to observe safety requirements and recommendations established by local health authorities and university policies in effect at the time of the visit (e.g., meeting size, physical distancing, face coverings, etc.). Signage will be posted to notify everyone on campus, including visitors, that by being on campus, all visitors are agreeing they have not been determined to be COVID-19 positive, do not have COVID-19 symptoms, and have not been in the presence of anyone they knew to be COVID-19 positive in the last 14 days. Students, faculty and staff who invite an external guest to campus are expected to inform the guest of

this policy prior to their visit, and it is recommended that if the visitor expresses that he or she cannot or will not agree to this that the student, faculty or staff member find a virtual method of meeting with the guest, either by telephone or Internet.

## **Testing, Monitoring, Tracing, Exposure Controls**

### **COVID-19 Task Force**

The university will have a COVID-19 task force consisting of representatives from Student Health Services, faculty, staff, and local medical professionals that will develop testing, monitoring, tracing, and exposure control procedures. The task force will provide regular updates to executive leadership.

### **COVID-19 Testing**

Testing will be administered strategically throughout the semester.

The university plans to offer testing, primarily for students, faculty and staff who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19. Those testing positive will be directed to their healthcare provider or SHS to receive appropriate treatment and will be required to place themselves in self-isolation. This will be conducted in conjunction with local medical and public health professionals.

Where possible, those testing positive for COVID-19 will complete their self-isolation at their permanent residence. Where self-isolation at a student's permanent residence is not feasible or poses risk of transmission to others, the university will coordinate with the student and local health authorities to locate an appropriate location for self-isolation. The university has several locations on campus available for student self-isolation needs. Medical professionals will treat students requiring more extensive medical care, as appropriate. Students may only return to engagement in the university community if cleared to return by their healthcare provider and consistent with CDC guidance.

Faculty and staff will predominantly obtain testing through their healthcare providers. Faculty and staff who test positive for COVID-19 will be required to work remotely or take sick or another appropriate leave in accordance with System policies and regulations. They will place themselves in self-isolation as determined by local health officials at the time of testing, returning to campus only after cleared to return by their health care provider and consistent with CDC guidance.

### **Monitoring Efforts**

The A&M-Commerce COVID-19 task force, in coordination with local public health authorities, will monitor data and information correlated with the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff. Options that may be considered include but are not limited to:

- Temperature monitoring
- Targeted sampling of individuals testing for COVID-19 at various times during the semester
- Classroom attendance
- Employee absenteeism
- Local health/illness trends as communicated by the local county health department
- Other approaches that may emerge as effective over the course of the intervening time

## Temperature Monitoring

Temperature monitoring can only identify the few individuals who are experiencing fever as a symptom and will not detect asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic individuals. These symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus, according to the CDC. This is an additional layer of assurance and is only to supplement the use of physical distancing on campus. A few select areas that require additional screening have been identified to perform temperature monitoring on individuals entering their area of operations. Supervisors and event coordinators may elect to require temperature monitoring, in the following areas, as well as others on campus as may be needed:

- Student Health Services
- University Police Department
- Children's Learning Center
- Counseling Center
- Nursing
- Athletics
- Student Disability Resources and Services
- The Welcome Center

The person using the device should strictly follow the manufacturer's guidelines and instructions for use for the specific non-contact infrared thermometer (NCIT) being used.

The EOC has thermometers available for departments to use throughout the semester. Contact [EOC@tamuc.edu](mailto:EOC@tamuc.edu) to schedule a time for delivery of the thermometer and procedures.

## Contact Tracing

Currently, the Hunt County Health Department in coordination with the Texas Department of State Health Services conducts contact tracing for Hunt County. The A&M-Commerce COVID-19 Task Force will work with local health care providers and the Texas A&M System Health Science Center to create a process for enhanced contact tracing.

As this process unfolds, the university will provide future updates as they become available.

## Coordination of COVID-19 On-Site Exposure Controls

In the event a faculty, staff, or student is possibly exposed to SARS-CoV-2 while on campus, notifications will be made to the applicable individuals in accordance with then-current guidelines from the Texas Department of State Health Services and the A&M-Commerce COVID-19 Task Force.

The contact tracing effort could result in one or all of the following:

- Requirement of self-isolation
- Short-term closure of campus locations to provide opportunity for cleaning and disinfecting
- Class suspension based on recommendations of medical professionals and the task force

Additional guidance is being developed for dormitory and team sport exposure controls. This plan will be updated as these become available.

## **Metrics**

Mitigation efforts may need to change in response to these conditions. The university is working with local health care providers and state officials to develop a set of metrics that will be used to determine when it may be necessary to change the university's mitigation efforts.

This plan will be updated as this effort evolves.