

MEMO

To: College of Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty and Staff

From: Dean Jeff Braden

Date: July 20, 2020

Subject: Dean's Update: Coronavirus and Our College 7/20/20

Dear colleagues,

There's much to share — and much more yet to be decided. I appreciate that uncertainty creates challenges, and that making one decision (e.g., requiring faculty, staff and students to wear masks when on campus) often creates more uncertainty (e.g., how the policy will be enforced, how we'll provide masks, etc.). I will do my best to share what I do know, and how we will continue to make decisions at the college, campus, system and state levels.

I also want to acknowledge that the pandemic is not the only major challenge before us. I am acutely aware that recent events have called each of us to question how racism affects us — and how we may wittingly or unwittingly sustain it. I am committed to taking action to identify and eliminate racism throughout our college. I will share our plans for that shortly after we begin the semester.

Here is some of what we're doing to ensure we are ready when the semester begins.

Faculty planning for how we're going to teach: My deepest thanks to faculty for your patience and diligence in working through fall scheduling processes, and in particular, your hard work in preparing for a number of different scenarios. I know it takes more work to prepare courses to accommodate student absences, possible shifts in delivery conditions (e.g., face-to-face, hybrid, online) and changes in our academic calendar. I appreciate your work to ensure students are engaged in learning, and that they are assessed appropriately, all while maintaining the health and safety of our community. I also want to thank Associate Dean of Academic Affairs Deanna Dannels for her leadership within the college and across the campus in building faculty capacity to deal with the challenges ahead.

Faculty representation and engagement: I appreciate that the chaos of the spring semester extended into the summer, wreaking havoc on our university's customary mechanisms for faculty governance and input. Our typical approach would be to defer decisions until the fall when faculty are back at work, and then work with Faculty (and Staff) Senate representatives. But we are not in typical times. When the chancellor created ten task forces to plan for how we will teach, research and fulfill our other missions this fall, he needed their reports in early June. Moreover, subsequent implementation decisions cannot wait until faculty are back at work. As a

result, most of you are not aware of who is making decisions and how they are making them (nor have you had the opportunity to participate in the decision making process) .

Understandably, a number of faculty in our college and elsewhere have written letters to the editor or developed petitions to ensure their concerns are heard. Although I may not fully agree with (or have influence over) the specific points they raise, I deeply respect — and share — their overarching concern that we do what is best for all of our students, staff and faculty. Professor of English Hans Kellner, who chairs the Faculty Senate, has been extremely active in reminding all of us in campus leadership of the need for faculty input. I can say that, in the (many) meetings I've been in, decision-makers are actively seeking and using input from experts (e.g., the CDC), government (e.g., DHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen and Gov. Roy Cooper), other universities, and our own on-campus authorities to guide reopening.

The budget: Although the legislature has yet to discuss higher education funding for this fiscal year (which began 1 July), here's what I do know. First, it is highly unlikely that there will be a single, omnibus budget bill. Instead, the legislature is likely to pass separate bills for specific purposes (including funding for the UNC System). Second, and as news outlets are reporting, it is very likely the UNC System (and therefore, NC State) will have a reduction in state appropriations, since revenue projections are down due to the economic impact of the pandemic. Revenue projections are down due to the economic impact of the pandemic. Therefore, I have asked all of our units to prepare for a reduction in state appropriations effective this fiscal year. Because we do not yet know how much the reduction might be, or even when we will know, the leadership in the college agreed to postpone any commitments that are not essential to our operation. For example, we have suspended travel on state-appropriated funds, which the governor has largely banned for state employees anyway. Likewise, the System has placed a freeze on non-essential new hires and pay increases. We plan to continue the travel restrictions and the freeze until we know our budget and have confidence we have the funds to meet our obligations. Other steps may be necessary, but until we know what our budget will be, we are postponing financial commitments other than those needed to sustain our core functions (e.g., teaching, paying employees, purchasing PPE).

Who returns to campus, when that happens, what it looks like: At the risk of sounding repetitive, I do not know exactly what the future holds. None of us do. Currently, we are planning to have students move in beginning soon and starting classes (face-to-face, hybrid, and online) on 10 August. However, that plan can change at any time. Major decisions (e.g., whether to go entirely online, hold athletic events, open or close dormitories) will be made at levels above my pay grade. However, we have some influence over our own destinies; towards that end, here's what we're doing in the college:

- Every unit supervisor in the college (i.e., deans, directors, and department heads) will work with their employees to develop a plan to start the fall semester August 10. Each unit must have a plan in place by August 3. All plans should:
 - Consult university resources and unit employees (i.e., instructors, advisors, staff, graduate assistants) to consider how best to meet core unit functions in a way

that maximizes the health, welfare and safety of all while also honoring System and university guidelines and policies.

- Determine how to staff public-facing offices during regular working hours with the least number of employees possible to meet needs.
- Whenever possible, to continue to hold meetings and conduct business via remote technologies (e.g., Zoom, electronic form approval).
- Consider employees' caregiving and health needs when developing work schedules.
- Ensure all employees have access to masks, hand sanitizer, and other PPE (e.g., sneeze guards, cleaning materials) prior to opening the office.
- The campus [Protect the Pack](#) site is updated often. There you'll find policies, procedures, videos and recommendations for staying safe and healthy. The [Resources for Faculty and Staff section](#) is geared specifically to our questions, as is the [FAQs](#) section.
- Building liaisons and units housed in college buildings will resolve entry, exit, traffic flow and other issues (e.g., seating in classrooms and public areas) to ensure physical distancing so building plans reflect the needs of the units and employees therein.

Finally, I want to emphasize that everything I've listed are to *plan*, not *act*. At this time, we are still on restricted campus access; only mandatory employees (of which there are about a dozen in our college) should be on campus, and even then, we should keep our visits to the absolute minimum amount of time needed to complete on-site tasks. These restrictions not only protect you, they also protect others such as facilities, housekeeping, and other employees who must work on campus. I've asked each unit to develop their plans so that, when we do return to campus, we can do so in a way that best maintains the safety, welfare and security of our college community. Once we hear these restrictions are lifted, departments can move to implementing plans based on any further guidance we receive.

Once again, I thank you for your continued commitment to our college. Please stay safe, be well, and let me know how the college can help you be successful in your work.