



## Office of the President

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Date: April 24, 2020  
To: NMSU-Las Cruces Faculty and Staff  
From: John Floros  
Dan Arvizu, Ph.D.  
Subject: Planning for Fall 2020

Thank you for all the work you have undertaken over the past six weeks as we adapted our operations to deal with the coronavirus pandemic. Collectively, we have accomplished some great things, while protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of the Aggie Community as well as carrying out our mission. In the past six weeks, we learned that we can be nimble and we can quickly adjust to changing circumstances. It is time for us to do that again.

Now is the time to start formalizing plans for how to operate a research university under conditions where protecting the health of our community is as important of a priority as our Land-Grant University mission. By this memo, I am requesting that everybody on campus formally and collectively start planning a careful phased return to campus. Look for additional communication on this topic soon, but by the middle of May, we need to have a plan mostly complete. Plans need to have input from all staff and should be approved through your supervisory lines to deans, vice presidents, or equivalent.

As you think about these plans, consider how you will use tools to protect our community from Covid-19. Chief among these tools are social distancing to prevent transmission, testing to document infection, and tracing to understand extent of possible spread. We need to re-think how we can social distance in classrooms, labs, and workspaces. We must know who is present in our work and learning spaces so we can trace contacts when needed. Also, for now, let's assume that testing will be available.

We have already gained some useful knowledge. For example, in the past two months we have seen that social distancing works to lessen transmission. We also have some time to plan and time to test those plans. Our experience in March also taught us that we can quickly adapt to a different environment. And every day, we learn more about this virus and how to defeat it. I'm very proud of the role that NMSU experts have contributed to this knowledge.

In your discussion, I ask that you consider the following:

- What functions must absolutely take place on campus to support our mission? These are the functions that will need to come back first.
- Alternatively, what functions need not take place on campus? People involved in such equally important functions that can effectively support our mission from home, may continue doing so, to lower the density of people on campus.
- Plan to be flexible and to adapt to new circumstances. If we try something and it does not work, we need to be willing to reconsider.

I acknowledge that there is much uncertainty regarding what we will face in the Fall of 2020. However, if uncertainty is part of our new reality, we still need to be a fully functioning university in such a new and uncertain reality. Planning ahead, in an uncertain reality, with room for flexibility and change, will be our best defense in the difficult budgetary environment ahead.

Again, thank you for all the work you do at New Mexico State University.