



## UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

### *Office of the Provost*

June 8, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I continue to be so grateful for the many ways in which you have courageously faced the challenges of these last few months, and are preparing for the months to come. There is so much uncertainty about what the coming months hold and no predictive formula to rely on for overcoming the obstacles in our way. Fortunately, there is a high degree of the virtues of prudence, courage, and charity among our faculty and staff, and by the exercise of these and other virtues, we will prevail in providing an outstanding education to our students this fall semester.

I continue to work with President Hibbs, the Deans, and many others to determine the best adjustments to make to educate our students well this fall. This work is ongoing, but we have determined that at least the following adjustments will be in effect for the coming months.

#### **Academic Calendar Change**

In order to take advantage of the current diminishment in the incidence rate of infection by COVID-19 and to prevent the challenge of students returning after Thanksgiving from all parts of the U.S., I have decided to change the fall semester. Classes will begin on August 19<sup>th</sup>, rather than the 26<sup>th</sup>. Finals week will end the day before Thanksgiving, on November 25<sup>th</sup>. I did consider holding finals online after the Thanksgiving holiday, but after consulting with the Deans about the challenges we have faced with cheating in an online environment, have decided against an online finals week.

Please note that this adjusted academic calendar does not apply to Gupta COB graduate courses, or to the Rome program. It does apply to all other programs.

This change in the schedule does shorten the semester somewhat, though I have also tried to make as much instruction time available as possible. For example, we will for this Fall go back to the practice of holding classes on Labor Day. However, depending on the schedule of a particular class, there will be a need to make up, through additional work outside of regular class meetings, some instructional time that has been lost. In most cases, this will need to be equivalent to one or two class meetings. You will hear more from your Dean about the particular requirements for this make up work in the weeks to follow.

Two other adjustments motivated by the need to clear out the dorms include an online only Interterm that begins on Monday, November 30 and concludes on December 19, and an adjustment to the Spring semester schedule so that Spring Break, though not eliminated, is limited to two days to discourage travel. The full schedule will be posted soon on the

[Registrar's Academic Calendar](#). I know these adjustments may be inconvenient, but hopefully a much longer winter break can help balance out those inconveniences. In any event, these adjustments, after much discussion and review of recommendations from public and local health professionals, the CDC, and WHO, seem the most prudent way forward with respect to scheduling.

### **Safe Environment for Teaching**

Many of you have expressed concern about student health and your proximity to them in a classroom for extended periods of time. Assuming current CDC recommendations will still be in force in mid August, the following safety protocols will be implemented from the outset of the fall semester:

- Social distancing in the classrooms
- First row of desks will be moved to maintain 6 ft. from teacher
- Dry erase markers and erasers supplied to each faculty member for personal use
- Use of Meeting rooms and larger spaces as possible for classrooms, with the possibility that sections will need to be split, and faculty will need to offer both face-to-face and online options in order to preserve the health of the students and faculty
- Enhanced cleaning protocols overnight by Facilities
- Cleaning wipes provided to departments for employees to clean work areas
- Cleaning wipes available in classrooms for students to wipe down their desk/chair
- A UD face mask will be provided to each UD employee
- Signage across campus reminding all campus personnel, students, and visitors to use appropriate social distancing, sneeze & cough etiquette, and hand washing to prevent spread

Nota bene: If you are in a high risk category concerning COVID-19 (65 years or older, have a chronic disease, are immunocompromised, et cetera) and have a serious concern with teaching in the classroom for Fall 2020, please express this to your Dean (both Drs. Hicks *and* Andrews, in the case of Constantin) by **June 15** to see if there is an option for flexibility in the teaching schedule. If, after a conversation with your Dean, there remain scheduling difficulties, please request a *Request for Temporary Accommodation* from [benefits@udallas.edu](mailto:benefits@udallas.edu) for the Fall 2020 semester. Only in the event of the initial conversations with your Dean not arriving at a conclusion satisfactory to both sides will HR coordinate with you and try to grant an accommodation in conjunction with your Dean.

A further possibility, should you not be able to arrive at an arrangement with which you are comfortable, is that you could request a Leave for the Fall semester. The conversation about that should begin with your Dean before moving to me. If granted, such a Leave would be unpaid, though your benefits would continue.

Student Affairs has developed a COVID-19 policy for students with a reporting form allowing students to report if they are experiencing any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (this is similar to the procedure in place for all faculty and staff). The form also will gather information needed for contact tracing to notify other students or personnel that may have been exposed. The student policy also contains plans for isolating a sick student and quarantining those who have

been exposed. Classroom cameras are being installed so that students who are sick or immunocompromised do not have to come to class but can watch the recording. The goal is to ensure sick students do not come to class (just as employees have been asked to stay home if symptomatic).

I am sorry that so much is being asked of you to be ready for the Fall. The need to be “online ready,” should we have to close on-ground classes again, as well as the need to be able to accommodate students through some online features like recording classes when classrooms cannot accommodate all the students at once because of social distancing or if a student needs to be quarantined, are significant challenges. I am grateful to the ELearning team, led by Associate Provost Norris, in providing us much needed help to meet these challenges. Questions, concerns, and suggestions about ELearning training and preparation are most welcome, and are best sent directly to Dr. Norris.

I will relay more details on the measures that will be taken to ensure everyone’s safety while advancing our educative mission as they develop.

### **In Conclusion**

One can be tempted to think our efforts of little account when considering the trifecta of a global pandemic, economic collapse, and significant social upheaval. To be sure, this is an especially trying moment for us in our endeavor to provide a rigorous Catholic education dedicated to the lifelong pursuit of wisdom, truth, and virtue. I am convinced, however, that it is precisely our efforts that are needed now more than ever as we form the souls of our society’s future leaders.

Gratefully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan J. Sanford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jonathan" and last name "Sanford" clearly legible.

Jonathan J. Sanford, PhD  
Provost and Professor of Philosophy