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## Important Information Regarding the Bisons Return to Campus Plan

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Office of the President <lupresident@lipscomb.edu>

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To: universityfaculty@u-b-lstsr1.lipscomb.edu, universitystaff@u-b-lstsr1.lipscomb.edu



Dear Lipscomb University Community:

It's hard to believe that it has been more than 12 weeks since we asked students to stay home after spring break and the Lipscomb community began the remote work format. The entire Lipscomb community worked diligently to finish the spring semester strong for our students, is continuing to serve our students with online summer courses and is hard at work scattered across Middle Tennessee but united in our common mission. Congratulations to everyone on the success you have accomplished! Since February, we have had an interdisciplinary team focused on the changing environment we have found ourselves in with the emergence and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. This team has been working consistently over the last several months to make our community safe for students and employees. More recently, this team has been working on our staged return to campus and a schedule for the fall semester as well as new protocols to make the Lipscomb community as safe as possible for everyone.

**After weeks of quarantine, we are now beginning our return to campus plans and we are excited to look ahead to the fall semester!** We are making deliberate plans to open safely this fall. It will take all of us working together to take precautions to protect our health as well as the health of others in our community. This fall will not be a "normal" semester, but it will be a wonderful experience! We are confident that each of us is willing to do whatever we need to do to bring our community back to campus this fall.

While the medical community continues to learn more about this evolving pandemic situation, we are committed to maintaining a fluid decision process that continually reviews decisions and adjusts and pivots as needed based on new information and guidance from medical experts. We will make the best informed decisions along the way and when we see a better path or roadmap, we will adjust our course accordingly. This means that some decisions may be held until we know a bit more while other decisions are required sooner -- even before all the desired information is fully available. But in all cases, you can be assured that our goal is first and foremost to protect the health and wellbeing of our community while providing a great on-campus experience for all!

Below is some basic information about Lipscomb's return to campus plans as of now that we hope you find helpful. For more detailed information, please review the [attached FAQ document](#) or review the [Return to Campus](#) website. We will continue to review this information and as time moves forward and new information is available, we will continue to update you and the website. We know this information may not answer every question you have and we plan to have the next layer of details and decisions no later than July 15. If you have other questions you think would be good to add to this list, please email your question to [COVIDquestions@lipscomb.edu](mailto:COVIDquestions@lipscomb.edu). We appreciate your patience as we deliberately and thoughtfully move through this new environment of the COVID pandemic and make plans for our safe return to campus this fall.

Even with all these changes, we are planning for an exceptional on-campus student experience this fall! Will things be a bit different? Yes. But, the student life team as well as several students are hard at work to create new and different events, programs and opportunities for our community that are tailored to our new expectations. And, faculty are creating classroom teaching experiences to meet the needs of a flexible learning environment. We will share more about these new experiences as we near the beginning of school.

We are eager to welcome everyone back to campus! Our students' academic progress and learning are of utmost importance to us and we are committed to creating an environment where we are all contributing to their success.

Blessings,  
L. Randolph Lowry

## Guidelines

We are following local, state and federal guidelines as well as higher education specific guidance to create a safe campus environment for students and employees. Guidelines we are following include:

- Mayor John Cooper's [Roadmap to Reopening Nashville](#),
- Gov. Bill Lee's [Tennessee Pledge: Reopening Tennessee Responsibly Plan](#),
- Tennessee's [Access Guidelines for Higher Education](#),
- [American College Health Association Guidelines: Considerations for Reopening Institutions of Higher Education in the COVID-19 Era](#), and
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

In addition, we are fortunate to have **Dr. Kevin Eidson**, director of health and wellness, advising on all community health protocols. Dr. Eidson has been instrumental in creating our plans for and operating in the safest way possible so that we can all enjoy being a part of a healthy campus.

## Academic Calendar

We are excited to welcome students back in the fall! **The fall calendar is the same as originally published with fall classes beginning August 24 and the last day of finals on December 16.** We anticipate and are committed to providing a full semester of academic coursework so you can continue your academic career path. Here are some specific dates and other information about the fall semester that may be helpful.

- **On-Campus Classes.** Undergraduate programs and most graduate programs will begin on-campus classes for the fall semester on August 24. A few graduate programs, such as pharmacy, will begin on campus fall classes on August 17, with new student orientations on August 12 and 14.
- **New Student Move-in Dates.** To allow for proper physical distancing, move-in for new students is scheduled over three days this year—August 14-16. Stay tuned for more details from Housing and Residence Life about other information regarding dorm move in.
- **New Student Orientation.** New undergraduate students will have New Student Orientation and Quest Week August 17-23.
- **Remote Option After Thanksgiving.** The fall semester will continue with on-campus classes until Thanksgiving break. In an effort to be both mindful of additional travel expenses and individual student health concerns, students will have the option of staying home after Thanksgiving break and completing the last week of classes and finals remotely.
- **Fall Graduation.** Fall graduation is still currently planned for an on-campus event on December 19. We will monitor the regional guidelines to determine if this date and in-person event can be held in the best interest of our community.
- **Global Learning.** Global learning is a vibrant and important part of our community. As we often say “Some of your best days at Lipscomb will be spent miles away.” Our global studies program has active semester-long programs in Costa Rica, England, Austria and Italy. **Unfortunately, given the continuing health concerns and travel restrictions surrounding international travel, we have made the difficult decision to cancel the fall global learning programs.** Even with that sad news, we are moving ahead with investment in our global learning program and on-campus activities for students interested in future international travel opportunities. In the next few weeks, we will finalize the purchase of the Florence villa that has served our global students so well for the last few years. This is a significant investment in our global learning program and is made possible by a generous donation from a donor committed to the exceptional learning experience that a study abroad opportunity provides. In addition, our global learning team will plan and offer chapels and other gathering opportunities during the semester for students who plan to go on future global learning experiences. For students who were planning to participate in a fall global learning experience, we have a dedicated team working with these students to register them for fall classes and reserve appropriate dorm space, if needed. Also, these students will have priority reservation status on future global learning experiences once we can resume international travel.

## Classroom and Teaching Plans

Faculty are excited to welcome students back to class on campus! We have been working this summer to create classes with a remote option to continue learning for students who have health concerns that limit their in-person class time and in the event of a second COVID wave. Our students' academic progress and learning are important and we are committed to helping them achieve their academic goals this semester!

- **Classroom Reviews.** Our commitment is to provide an outstanding learning environment with the flexibility needed to serve remote students. So, a team has been hard at work reviewing over 100 classroom spaces and creating a plan for adding the appropriate enhanced technology to enable remote learning. This technology alone is just over \$300,000 to equip the classroom spaces with remote teaching and learning capabilities. This team has also prepared an appropriate physically distanced plan for each classroom which reduces the number of students in the physical space as well as reviewed with our service operations team the daily enhanced cleaning protocols. All of these efforts are investments we are making now to ensure not only that we are ready for students to return in the fall but also that they have an exceptional learning experience.
- **LipscombFlex.** During the summer months campus personnel are working to create a unique course delivery model we are calling LipscombFlex. **LipscombFlex** will offer faculty and students a flexible means to adjust the mode of teaching classes that includes both in-person and remote/online learning opportunities. How each class incorporates LipscombFlex will be dependent on the class content, room design, student and faculty safety needs, and learning modality best suited for the topic.

## General Health Protocols

These protocols are in place for the health, safety and wellbeing of our community. Following health protocols is everyone's responsibility and creates a caring environment where we are all doing our part to help keep our community healthy. Upon return to campus, you will notice these changes to create a healthy and safe environment for everyone: Enhanced Sanitization. Through our excellent Service Operations team, we will have more frequent and enhanced sanitization of public spaces and frequently touched surfaces including both an increase in cleaning frequency and use of enriched cleaning products and enhanced cleaning procedures.

- **Physical Distancing.** You will see some new signage around campus reminding us all of the physical distancing protocol and other best practices. Physical distancing may be the hardest change we all have to make. It is so natural for us in this community to reach out for a welcoming hug, hearty handshake, pat on the arm or back or some other greeting that requires close proximity. That's just who we are! Well, in the post-COVID-19 world, those welcome greetings and other close proximity activities are discouraged. The CDC encourages keeping at least 6 feet of space between yourself and other people as well as not gathering in groups, crowds, or mass gatherings. Physical distancing is especially important with individuals who are at high risk for the COVID-19 illness.
- **Hand Washing.** We are encouraging all members of the Lipscomb community to frequently wash their hands with soap and water. We have also installed numerous hand sanitizer stations at the entrance to most buildings. Please feel free to use these stations frequently.
- **Mask/Face Covering.** This may be the most controversial and disliked change. Masks can be difficult to wear, uncomfortable, hot and conceal facial expressions. And, in some cases, are seen as a political statement. However, the CDC and medical experts advise that wearing face coverings is a primary safety measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This is because many individuals who are infected with COVID-19 are asymptomatic but are still highly contagious. And, they unknowingly infect those around them. The CDC recommends the wearing of cloth face coverings among students, faculty, and staff as feasible and notes that they are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. So, yes, at times, masks or face coverings will be required when wearing one is in the best health interest of our entire community such as any situation where physical distancing is not possible or where a known health risk to an individual exists, such as in a meeting or in a classroom where a student and/or employee is in a high risk category. If we approach this from the Golden Rule perspective knowing that the wearing of a mask is to protect others -- not just the mask wearer -- then we believe our community members will wear one at appropriate times to protect others and help us avoid campus closure.
- **Daily Screening.** One of the most important factors in limiting a COVID outbreak is early detection of the virus in the community. Daily temperature checks may not be a favorite thing to do, but this activity alone has proven to identify the early existence of the virus. And, daily monitoring of all COVID symptoms is a "best practice" from both the CDC and the state of Tennessee's Higher Education guidelines.

## Employees

We are excited to return to a safe campus environment. To that end, we have put in place a staged approach to gradually increase the number of faculty and staff on campus as business operations increase and we move toward the opening of the fall semester.

**Staged Plan of Return.** The goal of the staged plan to return to campus is for our community to return to a safe work environment. The stages will be implemented as our regional guidelines allow that are consistent with the guidelines in the Mayor's phased plan. **At this time, we anticipate that by the end of July all employees will be back on campus for some portion, if not all, of their work duties.** The stages are:

- **Stage 1 (pre-June 15):** Only essential employees allowed on campus.
- **Stage 2 (begins week of June 15):** Limited staff within critical administrative and business operations return to campus for the purpose of assessing offices, classrooms, residence halls and other key areas for the purpose of developing strategies in those areas for physical distancing and other safety measures to be prepared for the return of employees and students in subsequent stages.
- **Stage 3 (anticipated to begin July 1):** Staff in other administrative, business, academic and student support operations return to campus. In this stage, we are carefully bringing back additional personnel to increase unit capacity and functionality as needed to prepare for the start of fall semester.
- **Stage 4 (anticipated to begin July 15):** In this stage, all faculty and staff return to campus under the post-COVID-19 protocols. Even in this stage with full faculty and staff on campus, we will continue to make use of remote work, staggered scheduling, and other measures to maintain physical distancing and flexibility.
- **Stage 5 (begins August 14):** Students return while implementing new guidelines and measures to maintain physical distancing and flexibility that are congruent with a successful learning and living environment.
- **Stage 6: Continuous evaluation.** Our staged return depends on the current conditions in our community. Employees will be informed at least one week in advance of expected return dates to campus.

**Changes to the Work Environment.** Following best practices, each work environment will be evaluated for appropriate changes needed for the health and safety of our community members. These changes may include:

- Physical distancing
- Disinfecting work spaces
- Staggering employee work times or days
- Changing in office layout of furniture and flow of traffic
- Continuing to use remote meeting options when possible.
- Wearing face coverings when meeting in person and when physical distancing is not possible
- Adding other protective measures, such as plexiglass dividers
- Adding signage as reminders

**Request Accommodations.** Employees in a high risk category should contact the Office of Human Resources to request an accommodation. You can email [hr@lipscomb.edu](mailto:hr@lipscomb.edu) or contact **Lynn Chappin** at 615-966-7015. Once your accommodation is approved by human resources, a human resources staff member will notify your supervisor of the approved accommodation and you and your supervisor will create a viable work plan for you.