

UT Southwestern Medical Center

Next Phase of Return to Campus

June 4, 2020

To the UT Southwestern Community:

I am writing in response to messages I have received from many of you over the past day, to expand upon comments I made during yesterday's weekly briefing session for the UT Southwestern community about the next phase of returning to campus. While I am pleased to hear from many of you that you are excited and eager to return, I have also appreciated hearing from those of you who have questions and concerns.

Let me begin by saying that the safety of our campus community and our patients is our paramount objective. It has been – and will continue to be – the primary driver of all institutional decisions about our response to COVID-19.

In recent weeks, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has increasingly become the Return to Operations Committee (ROC), as it focused on criteria for the safe return to campus of some of those working remotely in an orderly restoration of operations. On the basis of those criteria, as you know, in mid-May we progressed from phase one to phase two, and with that, out of our total 18,500 employees, 2,500 of the approximately 7,100 who were working from home have returned to campus. In determining criteria to guide decision-making about progressively opening up campus further (phase three), three measures were set: COVID-19 patient census at Clements University Hospital, PPE supply, and data on community spread.

Based on these metrics – and providing that they do not change significantly in the next week and a half – we believe that beginning Monday, June 15, the UT Southwestern campus can once again be open to all employees on a daily basis. We understand that implementation will be different for each team, and to be clear, **June 15 is not a deadline**. Managers and leaders must work with their teams to assess which employees to bring back in what order to ensure everyone's safety. Given the complexity of this change for many of our employees, we want to be flexible and provide time for you to make arrangements as needed for child care, transportation, and other pertinent issues, while still meeting institutional operational needs. Flexibility also extends to consideration for those at higher health risk. In our commitment to keeping the campus a safe working environment, we will continue to have precautions in place, including badge access to buildings and requirements for physical distancing, the use of face masks, surface and hand sanitizers, and frequent deep cleaning.

In some instances, managers may decide that the physical workspace or cubicle environment will not allow for safe distancing. This may necessitate that we modify the work environment or that employees continue to work remotely or on a modified and rotating schedule that limits the number of individuals in an office at any given time. Additionally, some colleagues may have special concerns about the risk of exposure, and so after consultation with their supervisors, it may be appropriate for them to continue to work remotely. In all cases, managers and leaders will guide employees on what is most effective and efficient for their teams. We also recognize that for many, remote work has been efficient and productive, and we will be reassessing our policy on telecommuting in the coming months.

I believe we have reached a point in the COVID-19 cycle where we can take the next step in the safe and orderly transition from the current state to more on-campus activities. I also want to thank you again for your cooperation, resilience, and productivity during this challenging period. Because of your efforts and commitment, UT Southwestern has been able to continue to fulfill its mission of promoting health and a healthy society for our own community and the population we serve.

As noted, the goal in initially sharing these plans has been to provide the opportunity to begin more detailed planning. At the same time, we will continue to closely monitor those factors that have been used to inform our plans, and if those indicators should change, we will adjust those plans as needed. As always, please send any questions to covid-19questions@utsouthwestern.edu, and we will answer them directly and post answers to most Frequently Asked Questions to the COVID-19 website next week.

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