Dear Faculty Colleagues,

I hope you have found time during the past couple of weeks to rest and recharge from our challenging spring semester. I remain so grateful for your resilience and flexibility, your commitment to educational excellence, your perseverance in the face of so many changes, and your overwhelming care for and dedication to our students. These qualities were on display each and every day during the spring semester and I ask you to again call upon them as we move forward into the summer and fall reopening of Kent State University.

I know you are eager to know more specifics about the remainder of summer and the plans for reopening. Although there are still a lot of unknowns, I want to share where we currently are and ask for your assistance in furthering the plans for a successful fall semester.

Last Monday (June 1st), you received a message from Interim Associate Provost, Manfred van Dulmen with Initial Guidance for Return to Campuses. Manfred is serving as the Chair of the Reopening Steering Committee and you will continue to receive emails from him as we work through the specifics of our return to campus. The Initial Guidance presents our phased approach (also available here) for returning to campus. In all phases of our return, everyone on a Kent State campus must adhere to the Flashes Safe Seven principles to create the safest environment possible.

Before I go further, I want you to know **we are committed to providing a safe workplace for all faculty members, students, and staff**. For those of you who will be on campus, you will have face coverings available, as well as materials for ensuring a clean environment. Some of you may be unable or unwilling to return to campus because of health and safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please discuss any challenges you may face with your academic unit administrator (e.g., campus dean, department chair, school director) as soon as possible, so that both you and your academic unit will have the flexibility to plan for our future reopening in a manner consistent with meeting all needs.

When Can I Go Back to Campus?

Beginning June 22nd, faculty may return to their offices **upon approval from their academic unit administrator**. Academic unit administrators will work with Facilities Management and Procurement to ensure face coverings, cleaning supplies, and signage are available for faculty upon their arrival. This timeline will give academic units sufficient time to develop a plan and ensure resources are in place for a safe work environment. More information and a checklist for Employees and Managers is found here. Please note that at the

bottom of the checklist, you are required to sign a statement acknowledging that you read, understand, and agree to follow the guidelines before returning.

For those researchers and artists wishing to return to campus, you must follow the guidelines for requesting to return to research/creative activities by filling out the *Request to Return to Research* form. Faculty who have been approved by the Division of Research and Sponsored Programs (RASP) could return to campus as soon as this week. It is important to make sure your academic unit administrator or RASP knows of your presence so that we can ensure that face coverings are available, cleaning supplies are in place, and spaces are cleaned after use.

Summer Classes

Summer I and II classes will all be delivered through remote instruction. The large majority of Summer III classes will be delivered through remote instruction, as well, although a few classes will be offered in-person. We are currently working through the Summer III course schedule to determine which courses should be delivered in-person. If your Summer III class has been identified as one that potentially could be offered in-person, your academic unit administrator will discuss your option for delivery method with you.

Fall Semester

The results of a Faculty Senate survey that more than 650 of you completed last week showed that around 40% of you prefer to teach on campus in the fall and 54% prefer to teach remotely (6% reported no preference). Our goal is to facilitate these preferences as much as possible. In a first review, we identified spaces that should accommodate roughly 25% of our course sections being taught in-person. We are currently working to identify further spaces on campus in which to hold classes so that we can increase this number. Yet, it is important for you to know that we will not be able to have as many face-to-face classes as we might like. In fact, **we estimate that the majority of our classes will need to be delivered through remote instruction.**

The first step in considering which classes will be offered in-person, is to understand our space options. With physical distancing guidelines, our classrooms will only hold about a quarter of the number of students typically scheduled at full capacity. For that reason, **all classes of 50 or more registered students must be taught remotely**. Even our largest classrooms will not accommodate more than 50 students at a time while adhering to physical distancing guidelines.

The second step is to consider the pedagogical requirements of courses. Some courses can only be taught in-person. We asked academic unit administrators to work with programs to identify which courses **must** be taught in-person. So far, we have identified 1,447 sections of 532 different courses on the Kent Campus that will meet fully or partially in-person. We are currently working with the University Registrar to make sure those courses have an appropriate classroom to be offered in-person this fall.

Then, once we understand the classroom capacity remaining after scheduling those courses that must be taught in-person (on all campuses), we will begin

scheduling courses that programs identified as benefiting from in-person delivery.

We will continue to schedule in-person classes as long as we have the space available to deliver them. In looking at available space for instruction, we will consider all spaces on campus, including ones that are not traditionally designated as a classroom space.

Of course, we may be called upon to move all courses again to remote delivery. Therefore, it is important that if you are scheduled to teach in-person, or teach remotely from your faculty office, you are ready to transition to remote delivery off-campus at any point in the semester. As you prepare your remote courses for the fall, please consider how you will maintain a significant and appropriate level of instructor presence through meaningful asynchronous or synchronous interaction and feedback.

The fall semester will look different than any semester we have experienced, but it will remain the same at its core delivery of excellent educational instruction. Our courses, regardless of delivery method, will be challenging, engaging, enlightening, and transformative. Like they always are.

Fall Calendar

As planned, classes will begin Thursday, August 27th for our fall semester. To minimize student travel away from and back to campus, which will reduce the potential spread of the virus, we will **cancel Fall Break**. Fall Break was created to provide opportunity for students to catch up and take care of themselves, as the stress of the semester reaches highs around midterm time. We know these stresses will still be present, so we will enhance our student mental health services during this time (see the Step Up and Speak Out Initiative for resources) and throughout the fall semester.

Also to minimize student travel away from and back to campus, thereby reducing the likelihood of spread of the virus, we will **extend the Thanksgiving Break** to include the entire week of November 23rd. Students will leave campus the weekend prior and not return for the rest of the semester. ***The remaining two weeks of instruction after the Thanksgiving Break will be conducted remotely. Final exams (beginning December 14th) will also be conducted remotely.***

Technology

We are working to equip classrooms with technology that will allow faculty to deliver instruction in ways that are beneficial to them as well as students. You may choose to use the technology to prerecord lectures, to deliver instruction in real time, or to teach in dual modes—both to those students in-person, as well as those who are remote. The classroom technology will allow faculty to have flexibility around the class structure as well as provide a way to accommodate students who may have underlying health conditions. Our goal is to make sure faculty who want the technology, have access to it.

Another result of the Faculty Senate survey that I mentioned previously showed that many of you (34%) may have technology needs to work effectively from your remote locations. Whether it is devices (e.g., tablets,

computer camera, headphones), internet access, support, or training, we want to know what you will need. In partnership with Information Technology, we will create a workflow that will allow you to request items or supports that are necessary to delivering your courses remotely. Stay tuned to learn more about how to make these requests.

Flashes Forge Ahead

That is where we are to date. We do not have all the answers right now, but our Reopening Committees are working every single day to guide our campuses in moving forward and we are making excellent progress. You will continue to receive regular messages from me, Manfred, and Reopening Committees as we have more information to share. But if you have questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or your academic unit administrator. We are all committed to supporting you as you deliver our core mission—to transform lives and communities through the power of discovery, learning, and creative expression in an inclusive environment.

Together, we will forge ahead with strength, resilience, kindness, and purpose. Thank you for all you are doing!

My best,

Melody Tankersley
Interim Senior Vice President and Provost
Kent State University