

To: NKU Faculty, Staff, and Students

From: President Ashish Vaidya

Date: July 31, 2020

Subject: NKU Moving Forward: Fall 2020

Dear Campus Community,

Throughout our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been incredibly proud of the way you have worked together to meet the profound challenge of transitioning to a virtual campus. Now, as we enter the Fall semester, we must not look at this as simply returning to normal operations. The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented environment that provides a rare opportunity to re-examine everything we do – from orientation to graduation to alumni engagement – while enhancing a community of belonging. This is an opportunity to accelerate the change our university needs to become a more student-ready, regionally engaged institution.

Our plan for returning to campus is named [NKU Moving Forward](#). The plan is consistent with our Success by Design (SBD) strategic framework. It is a flexible, evolving response to the pandemic and the need to develop creative options for NKU going forward. Your active participation in sharing feedback has helped ensure that this plan reflects the needs of all campus constituents.

In developing the plan for Fall 2020, we have created a new initiative – Healthy@NKU – with familiar partners like St. Elizabeth Healthcare, Gravity Diagnostics, and the Northern Kentucky Health Department. The partnership enables COVID-19 testing for individuals with symptoms and contact-tracing for those who test positive. The partnership also informs our decisions and incorporates the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Commonwealth of Kentucky’s guidelines to help everyone on our campus stay healthy. It is our hope that Healthy@NKU evolves and embodies one of SBD’s key objectives of enhancing the culture of service-orientation that respects the realities of our students’ lives and provides consistent, responsive care and support across all areas of the university.

We also carefully considered the unique perspective of NKU’s Class of 2024. Many of them had their final months of high school disrupted by the virus. As they join NKU, we look to create a common experience that reflects what makes NKU special and different, while building on our legacy of being stewards of place.

This fall, our campus will be open with measures taken to manage and prevent the spread of the virus. There are options for students, faculty, and staff to support their needs and comfort levels. More details are below.

Fall Courses in Various Formats

NKU will resume in-person class meetings in Fall 2020. There will be a combination of offerings that include both face-to-face and online/remote elements. To achieve appropriate social distancing, small classes will be moved to larger classrooms, and large classes will either be reduced in size or relocated to large rooms in the Student Union (SU) or other campus facilities. Some in-person classes will be simultaneously delivered face-to-face and online/remotely, while others will be designed to allow for a combination of in-person and online participation. Steely Library will be open with a number of [health and social distancing protocols](#) in place. Other spaces on campus (“Zoom rooms”) will also be made available to accommodate students enrolled in both online and in-person classes, and IT is currently working on an app for students to reserve study rooms across campus.

The Fall 2020 class schedule in myNKU has been adjusted to reflect the following four types of course deliveries:

- in-person (delivered face-to-face via regular meetings at a specific site and time)
- online (delivered fully online, with no scheduled class meetings)
- hybrid (delivered both online and in-person, with scheduled in-person meetings at a specific site and time)
- online synchronous (delivered fully online, but with scheduled virtual online class meetings)

Prior to the start of classes on August 17, 2020, students should review their Fall class schedules for any room changes or other adjustments. As always, students can make changes within myNKU and should consult their advisors for assistance in ensuring that their schedule meets their needs.

Course offerings have been designed to ensure that students continue to progress in reaching their educational goals and are meaningfully engaged with each other and their faculty. Courses with in-person elements will include those for first-year students, labs, studio-based courses, and capstone/seminar courses.

As previously noted, undergraduate tuition for the 2020-21 academic year will remain unchanged. In addition, because of the changes in course offerings due to COVID-19, the university will not charge students the usual online fee for the fall semester.

Fall 2020 Academic Calendar

Classes will begin on August 17, 2020, as scheduled. Fall convocations and our new student convocation will be held virtually at dates and times to be announced. In-person and hybrid classes will move to fully online/remote delivery after Thanksgiving break, including final exam week. In-person instruction will not take place after Thanksgiving break, although buildings and offices will remain open. Students will complete the last week of the semester and final exam week online/remotely. This precaution is being taken to avoid a potential spike in COVID-19 infection rates after students, faculty, and staff return from the travel often associated with school breaks. Fall Break will take place in October as planned. Information about fall commencement will be forthcoming. The [timeline with the phases of reopening](#) and the [Fall 2020 academic calendar](#) provide summaries of all these important dates.

Student Financial and Support Services

Student financial and support services will be offered both online/remotely and in-person. Using NKU's [Student Success Hub](#), students can access academic support services both in-person in the University Center and online/remotely. Student advising will also be done both in-person and online/remotely. Admissions, Financial Assistance, Student Employment, Registrar, and Veteran Certification can be conveniently accessed via [OneStop](#), located in Lucas Administrative Center 301 and online/remotely.

Faculty/Staff Professional Development

NKU is providing a range of professional development offerings for faculty and staff to enhance course development, online instruction, and community health and wellbeing. The Center for Innovation and Technology in Education and the Center for Teaching and Learning will offer opportunities to faculty that will assist them in strengthening online course design and delivery. Human Resources will offer both personal and professional development opportunities to all faculty and staff, providing resources and tools for resiliency, managing stress, dealing with change, and supporting one another. IT will be offering a full array of training and services to support students, faculty, and staff. These opportunities will be offered through a series of virtual workshops, webinars, and clinics.

During these unprecedented times, NKU is recommitting and proactively building plans to address [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#). Therefore, diversity and cultural competence training will be included and emphasized throughout this professional development.

Healthy@NKU

Healthy@NKU is a critical part of our Moving Forward plan. As discussed below, it includes several elements that are designed to help every member of the campus community prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

The [Norse Nine](#) is an easy-to-remember list of things you can do to help keep everyone on campus healthier. Here are a few highlights of the Norse Nine:

- **NKU students, faculty, staff, and visitors are required to wear facial coverings and observe social distancing criteria on campus for as long as CDC and Kentucky health guidelines advise.** For additional information, including qualifications for limited accommodations, please see [NKU's facial coverings FAQ](#).
- **On the days that students, faculty, and staff plan on being on-campus, they will need to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms using the Healthy@NKU app.** This app is available through myNKU and through the NKU mobile app. Students living in on-campus housing will self-screen every day. To protect others, please follow the instructions within the Healthy@NKU app. For individuals with health insurance, St. Elizabeth Healthcare can test those with symptoms at its new location on Nunn Drive. For students without health insurance, NKU will provide testing at no cost through NKU's [Health, Counseling, and Student Wellness \(HCSW\)](#) office (please call 859-572-5650 to schedule an appointment). Additional testing sites in the region can be found on the [Northern Kentucky Health Department's website](#). Northern Kentucky Health Department will engage in contact-tracing for those who test positive.
- **The furniture in campus spaces is being rearranged to maintain adequate social distancing.** Enhanced cleaning protocols are being used in all spaces, and NKU will provide approved disinfectants for individual use in offices and classrooms.
- **A brief Healthy@NKU training video will be required for all student workers, faculty, and staff to view before returning to campus.** Faculty/staff can access the video through [Safe Colleges](#), and student workers can access it through [Canvas](#). The video covers actions to take to promote a healthier environment and help prevent the spread of COVID-19 at NKU.
- **[NKU Health, Counseling, and Student Wellness \(HCSW\)](#) will be open for in-person and virtual visits.** For in-person visits to [Health Services](#), appointments will be required so that they can be staggered to allow for

physical distancing in the waiting room. [Counseling Services](#) will be available to all students. Sessions will continue to be offered via telehealth (phone/video), as well as in-person sessions by appointment as appropriate. In the event of a crisis/urgent matter, a counseling clinician will be available both during regular business hours, as well as after hours. [Additional online resources](#) for health and mental health concerns can be found on the HCSW website.

Campus Recreation

Campus Recreation will reopen on August 3, 2020. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, Campus Recreation will follow guidelines based on recommendations from the CDC, Kentucky's "Healthy at Work" standards, and national collegiate campus recreational facility guidelines. As health and safety are primary driving factors for the reopening of the facility, Campus Recreation is developing a robust operational plan that will highlight hours of operations, equipment sanitization strategies, and general information regarding socially distant fitness activities, online services, and intramural programs. The operational plan will also provide guidance and direction for locker room usage, bathrooms and showers, offline areas for academic space, and aquatic and pool guidelines. More information will be provided on the [Campus Recreation website](#) as it becomes available.

Residential Housing

NKU will offer on-campus housing in Fall 2020. In order to reduce the risk of infection and enable social distancing, a limited residency model will be used based on CDC recommendations and national University Housing and Residence Life guidelines. All residential buildings in the Dr. Leon E. Boothe and East Residential Village will open at reduced occupancy. Some areas will be reserved for quarantine purposes. With the proposed limited residency model that will house just over 1,000 students, University Housing will prioritize room assignments for nonlocal students, students with extenuating life circumstances, and first year students required to live on campus as outlined in the First Year Student Residency Requirement. Students will be notified as soon as possible of any changes in housing assignments, and University Housing will strive to accommodate student housing needs and assist in finding alternative housing arrangements in the local area if needed. The Fall semester move-in process will take place over a series of days to accommodate physical distancing. More information will be provided on the [University Housing website](#) as it becomes available.

On-Campus Dining/Food Service

Residential dining services will begin on First Year Student Move In Day (Monday, August 10, 2020). In order to be able to implement practices that minimize the risk of infection and promote social distancing, the Student Union Food Court and other a la carte dining locations will offer a reduced number of options with limited hours beginning Monday, August 17, 2020. There will be continuous service at the Village Café in Norse Commons, enhanced strategies regarding cleaning and social distancing, and limited point-of-service interaction. Most food service will be carry-out, as seating areas will be reduced to accommodate social distancing. Dining services will offer contact-free payment options, including all credit card and NKU ID transactions at all dining locations; a mobile ordering app is currently under construction. The plans will be designed to adapt to the changing situation, and updates (including more detailed information about Chartwells' – NKU's food service contractor – pandemic protocols) will be provided as available on the [University Dining website](#).

Intercollegiate Athletics

NKU will resume athletic practices and intercollegiate competitions when it is safe to do so. Our Norse are eager to practice and compete. The NKU COVID-19 Preparedness Team approved the NKU Athletics Phase 1 plan in June; this phase allowed NKU student-athletes to resume voluntary activities in the strength and conditioning area. Student-athletes are required to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms via the Healthy@NKU app each day that they report to campus. Student-athletes also have their temperatures checked upon entrance to the facilities and must follow the University's social distancing and facial covering requirements.

On July 20, 2020, Athletics moved to Phase 1A (approved by the NKU COVID-19 Preparedness Team), which allows for the return of basketball student-athletes for NCAA-approved activities. Basketball student-athletes are allowed to participate in shooting and individual instruction activities within NCAA hour limitations on a weekly basis. Similar to the voluntary activities approved in June, all basketball student-athletes must complete the daily self-screen through the Healthy@NKU app, must have their temperatures checked upon arrival to the facility, and must follow the University's social distancing and facial covering requirements.

Fall 2020 competition has been delayed until October 1, 2020, based on Horizon League guidelines. It is possible that athletic events may be reduced in number, delayed by additional weeks or even months, conducted without spectators, or canceled entirely. The safety and well-being of student-athletes, coaches, and staff

will be at the forefront of all decisions, and all phases of the Athletics return to campus plans are submitted to and approved by the NKU COVID-19 Preparedness Team. Additional information will be provided on the [Norse Athletics website](#) as it becomes available.

Faculty and Staff Return to Campus

NKU will take a hybrid, phased approach to opening the campus with restrictions. This approach will be flexible and adjustable to meet the needs of those we serve and based on constant monitoring of the local, regional, national, and international COVID-19 situation.

Beginning July 6, 2020: NKU began a gradual return to on-campus operations. To prepare the campus for the Fall 2020 semester, approved departments have begun to return to campus with a gradual increase in staffing. During this time, most faculty and staff continue to work remotely.

Beginning August 3, 2020: NKU's campus will open with a blended, flexible environment that includes some in-person interaction with modifications that minimize risk for all NKU constituents and follows the guidelines available on the [CDC](#) and [Commonwealth of Kentucky's](#) COVID-19 websites. Departments will maintain minimum staffing levels necessary to have their on-campus locations open to serve faculty, staff, and students on campus. Some offices will need to have extended hours to serve post-traditional students. Those not needed for on-campus coverage will continue to work remotely.

Faculty and staff with health conditions that may impact their ability to return to campus-based work should contact Human Resources (HRCOVID@nku.edu) to determine if accommodations are appropriate. As always, individuals' health information will be protected as required by law. For more information about returning to work, view the [Employee Information and Resources](#) or visit the [Human Resources](#) COVID-19 page.

Meetings, Events, and Activities

Academic and administrative units and faculty, staff, and student organizations are still strongly advised to conduct meetings, events, and activities online/remotely whenever possible. Beginning August 3, on-campus events and meetings will be permitted if they can meet certain guidelines and will require formal approval. These events and meetings must follow the Norse Nine guidelines and all other Healthy@NKU parameters. Meeting and event requests must be formally submitted at least seven days in advance via NKU's [Room](#)

[Request website](#). All event requests will be reviewed to ensure that they can meet COVID-19 specific requirements before they are approved. Events with any external attendees (not current NKU students or employees) will be subject to review by a central events committee. Please refer to the [COVID-19 Event Protocols](#) for more information on meetings and events.

If expectations and guidelines for in-person meetings cannot be met, please proceed with a virtual event or meeting. More information about virtual meeting software can be found on the [IT website](#).

Travel

University-sponsored travel will remain suspended at least through the end of the Fall semester. Recognizing that some travel is essential, exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be approved through the regular approval process. Depending on their destination, travelers may be expected to meet certain requirements before returning to campus, such as a 14-day self-quarantine or COVID-19 testing. More specific guidelines will be announced as they become available.

Future Updates

The COVID-19 Preparedness Team will continue to monitor the environment to determine if we need to make adjustments to the plan. As we move through the fall and into the winter, we will share regular updates with the campus. We also must take time to thank all the members of the [COVID-19 Preparedness Team](#). Many long hours have led to the creation of our NKU Moving Forward plan. This document is essential to ensure that we can return to campus operations in a safe and healthy manner. If you have questions, please visit [NKU's COVID-19 Preparedness website](#) or email covid19@nku.edu.

The true strength of an organization can be witnessed when a crisis descends upon it. To say that we are in the midst of a crisis is an understatement. During the Spring forum, I shared that the pandemic exposed major fissures in our society and global economy – from income inequality, disparities in healthcare, impact on vulnerable populations, and susceptible supply chains. The unjust killings of African Americans have amplified the calls for an end to structural racism and a renewed effort towards economic and social justice.

As a steward of place, we are working hard to build our organizational capacity for a more equitable, inclusive, and just society. It is in these challenging times that we must serve as a beacon of hope and set an example through our leadership. NKU

prides itself on being agile, so this is our opportunity to implement new ways to empower diverse learners for economic and social mobility and help our region not only restart, but reset with an equity lens. Becoming a student-ready, regionally engaged institution is as crucial an imperative as ever. That is how we lead while moving forward.

Thank you for all that you do for the university and its campus community.

Sincerely,

Ashish Vaidya