MEMORANDUM

To: PSLT, Academic Deans
From: Charles F. Zukoski
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Date: May 21, 2021
Subject: Updated Planning Guidelines and Expectations for Fall

With federal, state, and county public health restrictions gradually relaxing, we are refining plans for how we will resume teaching, learning, and living at our university. This week of commencements showed once again the joy and excitement of being on campus together. Thank you for your participation in what was truly an amazing effort by so many.

We will continue to ensure the health and safety of our faculty, staff, students, and community. As you are aware, we will require vaccinations of all faculty, staff, and students, unless declinations are filed through MySHR.

In-person activities. We fully expect to return to in-person activities in the Fall, assuming public health conditions remain safe to do so. Faculty are expected to participate in on-campus activities unless explicitly exempted. Faculty accommodation will be provided as appropriate through Deans of Faculty or HR Partners. Please see the appendix to this memo for the latest guidelines we are following. We will, of course, continue to update you on changes that could affect our plans.

We want to recognize that there are many different modalities for teaching students and interacting with colleagues. We encourage that creativity while also understanding the scale of our programs and the time required to develop innovative teaching techniques.

We also must consider our commitment to maximizing the continuity of education for those students whose ability to come to campus remains disrupted. This will require flexibility of faculty and programs. Please let me know how you plan to accommodate these students in teaching restart plans by June 25, 2021. See the appendix below for more information about restart reports.

Discretionary Spending/Travel. The university will continue to restrain discretionary spending. To ensure the safety of our community, last year we suspended all university work- and study-related travel, in-person gatherings and entertainment. An added benefit was a significant decrease in our expenses in these areas: we saved almost $150 million in discretionary expenditures including $50 million from reduced travel costs. Beginning June 1, schools and units may resume travel for university-related work and study, hosting events, and paying for other discretionary activities, but should continue to cut back when appropriate. We will, of course, follow public health guidelines for travel and discretionary activities; please note that non-essential travel is currently discouraged by health authorities.
Hiring. This same judicious decision making applies to hiring. In the last year we saw careful planning for the replacement and expansion of the number of faculty in our programs and going forward we will maintain this same rigor. As we consider new hires, a point of particular emphasis lies in our commitment to diversify our faculty. The Provost’s diversity fund represents a joint effort by my office and the schools to support faculty recruitment and retention and it has been used effectively for those efforts; that will continue.

We look forward to working together to emerge from the pandemic with renewed energy and ambition. I appreciate all that you do and I look forward to a smooth opening together.

Appendix

With Los Angeles County moving into the less restrictive Yellow Tier, USC has now transitioned into Phase 4 of its Restart plan. The Phase 4 guidelines, which align with the latest guidance provided by the Los Angeles Department of Public Health (LADPH) have been posted here. Because we expect a new set of even less restrictive LADPH guidelines to be issued ahead of the Fall, the following changes are expected to remain in place for the summer:

- Screenings: required for faculty, staff, students and visitors to enter buildings, workspaces, and other campus activities
- In-person, indoor instruction: 50% capacity up to full capacity with distancing for labs, music, studios, etc.
- In-person student activities / gatherings: conduct virtually when possible – or 100 ppl max outdoors; 50% capacity or 50 ppl max indoors (campus tours continue to be permitted, 10 ppl max)
- Housing: may increase residency – prioritize vaccinated and must put unvaccinated in single rooms only
- Private events: 400 ppl max outdoor if all verified vaccinated or test negative; 200 max otherwise. Indoor events permitted only if verified vaccinated or test negative; up to 200 ppl max
- Performance events: up to 67% capacity outdoor, and up to 50% capacity indoor (if all vaccinated or test negative)
- Summer camp programs: day camps permitted
- Fitness centers: 50% capacity

In order to prepare for Fall, it is essential that you develop School-wide restart plans. These can build on the plans that were completed and approved in anticipation of last year. We recently simplified the Restart approval process, particularly for lower risk activities. This approval process is effective immediately.

Moving forward, deans will be responsible for verifying that restart and activity/event plans are compliant with all relevant guidelines. Within the university administration, department heads will be responsible for those plans. Once verified, plans will come to the Provost’s office at uscprovost@usc.edu (or relevant Senior Vice President) for final approval.

Plans that involve higher risk activities will continue to be submitted for CPMC review (in all cases, the CPMC remains available for consultation). Higher risk activities include:
• In-person instruction involving close contact or aerosols (such as performing arts or clinical education)
• Individual or group travel to areas with a CDC or DOS Level 4 travel warning in place
• Residential youth camps
• Indoor events, meetings, receptions or conferences involving more than 200 participants

Note that all Phase 4 plans should include step back plans – in case conditions change.

Please contact Chris Toomey at ctoomey@usc.edu if there are any questions about any of the above.