Dear Towson University Community –

As the collective response to the global coronavirus pandemic continues, the series of actions taken by our TU community in response to these challenges has been nothing short of extraordinary.

Now as we begin the process of reopening the campus, we must call upon the spirit of determination shown by our community over the first months of this pandemic. Planning and navigating a reopening in this dynamic environment requires certain assumptions, even as we know that circumstances can and will quickly change. We have and will continue to closely follow local, state, and federal directives to guide our planning, decision-making and implementation.

With the health and safety of our campus community as its top priority, the Return to TU Task Force has developed a public health and operations framework for Towson University that charts a path to the safe reopening of campus and return to classes for the 2020–21 academic year. The framework provides guiding principles that will inform all decisions, the conditions that must be met in order to advance through three phases of the reopening, and finally the implementation teams that will take action. We remain committed to shared governance and transparency throughout the process of reopening. Ultimately, the framework’s effectiveness and success relies on adherence to public health directives and the cooperation and vigilance of every member of the TU community.

As I’ve said before, our incredible faculty and staff are TU’s greatest resource and asset, driving the leadership and implementation of our return. When our state and nation called upon us for research, expertise and support in these extraordinary times, our community quickly answered the call with compassion and an unwavering commitment to serve. Towson University’s important role as an anchor institution for Greater Baltimore is evident now more than ever.

I continue to be inspired by the resilience and resolve at TU. I have no doubt that TU and its incredible people, will emerge from this crisis stronger than ever.

There’s much to be proud of at Towson University, and working together, there are indeed great things ahead.

Kim Schatzel, Ph.D.
President
**GUARDING PRINCIPLES FOR ALL DECISIONS**

In planning a safe return to campus for students, faculty and staff, Towson University is keeping the following principles at the center of all decision-making. The Return to TU Task Force has developed a measured and phased approach framed first and foremost by the health and safety of our TU community, guided by our commitment to shared governance, along with our core mission of academic excellence.

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<th><strong>A commitment to health and safety.</strong> TU values the health and safety of our community above all else. We will use science and data to make decisions, following guidance of the University System of Maryland and local, state and federal authorities, including the Centers for Disease Control and the Maryland Department of Health. As conditions change, so too will our campus practices, flexibly adapting to the changing environment while maintaining the highest levels of health and safety.</th>
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<td><strong>A commitment to excellence and shared governance.</strong> Students, staff and faculty expect and deserve excellence at Towson University. We will continue to provide exceptional instruction and experiences inside and outside the classroom, no matter the format. TU is committed to delivering to students a robust higher education experience full of outstanding mentorship, research opportunities and creative activities.</td>
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<td><strong>A commitment to student success.</strong> All decisions will promote student success and achievement. This includes healthy intellectual growth, personal development and emotional well-being. We commit to ensuring students have the opportunity to graduate on time and with personal and professional preparation. All student support services will be fully available for all students.</td>
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<td><strong>A commitment to inclusion and equity.</strong> TU values diverse, inclusive and equitable decision-making. We appreciate that members of our community may have differing needs and that these needs may change over time. We also understand that the changing learning environment may pose new challenges for some students, and we will work to address all concerns for the most equitable educational experience. All decisions will reflect our deeply held values of inclusion and empathy, with considerations for every member of the TU community.</td>
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<td><strong>A commitment to fiscal responsibility.</strong> Ensuring the long-term health of TU as an institution requires maintaining fiscal oversight and acting with prudence as we adjust to the new realities. In pursuing fiscal responsibility, however, health and safety, academic excellence and the fulfilling of our mission will never be compromised.</td>
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TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

With the guiding principles in mind, the Return to TU Task Force makes the following recommendations, with full understanding that these broad recommendations will require refinement and further detail to address specific instances and needs throughout our community.

1. Establish a measured and phased reopening of campus with social/physical distancing as a requirement, and with consideration of a modified academic calendar. Transitioning between phases will be determined by data and guidance from health authorities and may move forward or backward depending on evolving circumstances.

2. Proceed in a fiscally responsible manner that prioritizes health and safety alongside the attainment of the institutional mission.

3. Communicate fully and transparently with the entire TU community, seeking input from a wide variety of constituencies throughout. A complete communications plan and website should be created and adapted to clearly inform all constituents.

4. Empower the Return to TU Task Force and its workgroups to move to action as the Return to TU Implementation Team to oversee and manage all aspects of campus and classroom preparedness.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR RECOMMENDATIONS

TU will begin in-person classes one week earlier for the 2020-21 Academic Year, on Monday, August 24.

Students will not return to campus after the Thanksgiving break, and will resume learning remotely for the remainder of the fall term.
PLAN
PHASES

**PHASE 1  LIMITED RETURN TO CAMPUS**

Phase One begins when both the State of Maryland and Baltimore County lift travel/work restrictions to allow for limited physical presence on campus. Strict physical distancing and masking in effect. Ability to test and contact trace employees and students.

- During this initial phase, the task force recommends low-density activities on campus may begin, with an expectation that the majority of employees continue to telework. The university will remain open, and all courses will continue in a remote learning format with potential exceptions for low enrollment graduate sections in laboratories, internships, research and clinical education—provided those activities can maintain strict physical distancing.

- The campus will use this phase to begin preparing for the shift to Phase Two by readying the physical campus, establishing appropriate health and safety protocols for employees and visitors, identifying the positions/employees necessary to provide essential and core services and training faculty to deliver high quality academic programming in an online and hybrid environment.

**PHASE 2  MODERATE RETURN TO CAMPUS**

Phase Two begins with the ability to test and contact trace consistent with public health guidance. Physical distancing and masking remains in effect; ability to isolate symptomatic residential students is required.

- During this phase, an increased number of employees and students can return to campus, though at a lower density. Physical distancing and masking continue to be required. Teleworking and remote learning formats remain an option, with the expectation that all facilities—including academic buildings, residence halls and dining facilities—will be prepared to operate in a low-density environment with proper health and safety accommodations.

**PHASE 3  FULL RETURN TO CAMPUS**

Phase Three begins upon availability of a vaccine, effective therapeutics or substantial immunity amongst community. Consensus of health experts is required.

- During this phase, the campus returns to full capacity in classrooms, residence halls and dining facilities, and all employees return to work. All events and activities may resume without concern for physical distancing.
IMPLEMENTATION TEAMS

RETURN TO CAMPUS

Co-Chairs: Steve Jones, Associate Vice President for Human Resources, and Sara Slaff, General Counsel and Vice President for Legal Affairs

The Return to Campus working groups have primary responsibility for identifying strategies and steps for procuring PPE and other materials to support the return of low density activities on campus. Additionally, working groups will attend to educational training on public health issues related to COVID-19, and will develop protocols and guidelines for the campus community.

Facilities
Task Leader: Kevin Petersen, Associate Vice President, Facilities Management
Primary responsibility is identifying strategies and steps for preparing and maintaining physical assets for a healthy return to campus.

- **Academic:** Recommend appropriate density levels, necessary PPE and other safety materials needed in the classroom or for conducting research, and cleaning protocols for all academic spaces, with attention to the varying needs based on the specific activities in each space.

- **Residential:** Recommend appropriate density levels, necessary PPE and other safety materials, cleaning protocols, and hygiene supports for all residential spaces.

- **Administrative:** Recommend appropriate density levels, necessary PPE and other safety materials, and cleaning protocols for all administrative buildings, with attention to varied activities in each.

- **Auxiliary:** Recommend appropriate density levels, necessary PPE and other safety materials, and cleaning protocols for all auxiliary spaces, including dining halls, outdoor spaces, and event spaces.

- **Transportation:** Recommend appropriate density levels, necessary PPE and other safety materials, and cleaning protocols for all transportation vehicles owned or operated by the University. Additionally, will develop a plan for parking and transportation consistent with the objective of lowering the density of campus activities.

Health and Safety
Task Leader: Joe Herring, Director of Public Safety and Chief of Police
Primary responsibility is to provide overall guidance on best health and safety practices to facilitate a healthy and safe return to campus.

- **PPE/Testing/Tracing:** Develop practices and protocols regarding use of appropriate PPE, testing, and contact tracing. Will procure appropriate materials and identify sources in the community and at USM to assist.

- **Public Health Education/Training:** Develop online training modules for students, staff, and faculty on University norms for physical distancing, mask wearing, hand washing and other public health steps in advance of a Phase Two opening. Will update educational materials as needed based on guidance from health authorities continues to evolve.

- **Protocols/Exposure:** Develop protocols for a COVID-19 Response Team consistent with health and safety considerations, to respond to and address any reports of possible incidents of COVID-19 or potential exposure, including but not limited to quarantine, sanitization, and use of PPE.
IMPLEMENTATION TEAMS

**RETURN TO CAMPUS CONTINUED**

**Legal Considerations & Risk Management:**
*Task Leader: Bruce Griffin, Chief Compliance and Risk Officer, Office of General Counsel*
Primary responsibility is to identify and address any legal, risk or compliance issues related to all phases of the return to campus.

**Risk Management:** Identify, assess and advise on mitigation steps for any potential risks related to all return to campus actions, to the extent feasible.

**Legal Considerations:** Work closely and collaboratively with all working groups to coordinate policy modifications, protocols or procedures needed to facilitate a healthy and safe return to campus.

**Budget**
*Task Leader: Brandon Cohen, Associate Vice President of Administration and Finance*
Primary responsibility will be to oversee budget and identify sufficient resources related to a return to campus.

**Policies / Personnel**
*Task Leader: Nate Barker, Employee & Labor Relations Manager, Human Resources*
Primary responsibility will be to review and modify, as needed, personnel policies, practices and procedures to reflect and support the current learning environment.

**Teleworking:** Develop policies regarding teleworking for employees

**Employee Training:** Develop non-health related training for employees to prepare for the low density environment

**Policies/ Practices:** Review all relevant policies and practices and will recommend temporary or permanent adjustments based on efficient and effective overall support for the learning environment and regulatory compliance.
IMPLEMENTATION TEAMS

RETURN TO CLASSES
Co-Chairs: Vernon Hurte, Vice President for Student Affairs, and Melanie Perreault, Provost and Executive Vice President

The Return to Classes working groups have primary responsibility for preparing the student experience both inside and outside the classroom with its commitment to excellence in learning and teaching. Embedded in this work is an adaptable approach that allows high flexibility to shift modalities as conditions change and as individual faculty, students, and staff have differing needs.

Academics
Task Leaders: Lisa Plowfield, Dean, College of Health Professions; Jennifer Ballengee, Professor, English and Chair, Academic Senate; Harald Beck, Professor, Biological Sciences
Primary responsibility is to oversee development of high-quality, high-flexibility educational experience.

Technology: Identify and procure technology required to deliver high-flexibility education to allow teaching and learning to take place in multiple environments.

Distance Education Training: Identify, prepare, and deliver summer training for faculty to be prepared to teach in multiple environments.

Research: Identify protocols and policies to support continued faculty and student research.

Academic Policies: Review academic policies, including but not limited to PTRM, academic integrity, and grading and recommend any temporary or permanent changes reflecting the current environment.

Diversity and Inclusion
Task Leader: Leah Cox, Vice President of Inclusion and Institutional Equity
Primary responsibility is to serve as a resource and oversight for all other working groups to ensure that commitment to diversity and inclusion is maintained.

Housing/Residence Life
Task Leader: Kelly Hoover, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs for Housing & Residence Life
Primary responsibility is to prepare and coordinate management of all residence halls and programming for residential students.

Community Planning: Identify strategies to engagement residential students in community-building and development activities.
IMPLEMENTATION 
TEAMS

RETURN TO CLASSES
CONTINUED

Student Support Services
Task Leader: Anthony Skevakis, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students
Primary responsibility is to provide high-quality student support in multiple modalities.

- **Academic**: Identify strategies to ensure that academic support services such as Advising, Writing Center, Tutoring Services, and the Math Center can operate in multiple modalities.
- **Health and Wellness**: Identify strategies to offer programs in health and wellness in multiple modalities, including those in the Counseling Center, Health Center, and Recreation.
- **Special Populations**: Identify segments of the TU community who may need special accommodations, including but not limited to veterans and students with disabilities, and to recommend policies to ensure equitable treatment.

Campus Life/Programming
Task Leader: Matt Lenno, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs for Campus Life
Primary responsibility is to identify strategies to safely engage students in campus-wide programming leadership development opportunities, and support for student organizations.

- **Athletics**: Recommends decisions on athletics in accordance with CAA and NCAA guidelines in coordination with public health guidelines.

Experiential Learning
Task Leader: Lorie Logan-Bennett, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs for Career Services
Primary responsibility is to oversee student experience in internships and career exploration.

- **Career Services**: Identify and implement strategies to continue full Career Services activity in multiple modalities.
- **Internships**: Provide guidance on policies regarding internships and will seek to identify internship opportunities in multiple modalities.
The following sources are a sampling of the reference materials that will help guide the readiness and reopening of the TU campus and classroom experiences.

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**
cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/

**Maryland Department of Health**
health.maryland.gov/

**JHU Bloomberg School of Public Health — Center for Health Security:**
centerforhealthsecurity.org/

**American College Health Association**
Considerations for Reopening Institutions of Higher Education in the COVID-19 Era:
bit.ly/3d09TYM

**Association of College and University Housing Officers – International**
COVID-19 Future of Housing Checklist:
bit.ly/3cX3OfL

**FOR THE MOST UP-TO-DATE RETURN TO TU INFO:**
towson.edu/ReturntoTU