

**From:** [Office of the Provost](#)  
**To:** [KU Lawrence All Staff, Faculty and Affiliates](#); [Active Lawrence and Edwards Students @ KU](#)  
**Subject:** Preparing for the Spring 2021 Semester  
**Date:** Friday, October 16, 2020 9:30:11 AM

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## Preparing for the Spring 2021 Semester

### **Summary:**

- *[As enrollment opens](#), students who know they need online options should work closely with advisors to find courses offered through remote instruction that, as much as possible, allow them to stay on track with their learning goals.*
- *[Course adaptations](#) will again be available, however, not for some courses.*
- *[Instructors set attendance expectations](#) for their courses; students who need to isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19 must work with instructors to communicate their situation and develop a plan to continue progress during the absence.*
- *[The spring 2021 semester](#) will begin Feb. 1, except for School of Law and first period 8-week courses, which begin Jan. 25. Some fully online programs have different start dates for courses.*
- *[Our campus safety protocols](#) – mandatory masks, physical distancing, enhanced cleaning, CVKey app and more – will continue this spring.*
- *[Teams continue to work on plans for re-entry testing and Commencement.](#)*

Dear Students, Staff and Faculty,

The fall semester has taught us all lessons that will allow us to improve during the spring as we continue to deliver and access engaging educational experiences, conduct rigorous research, and serve the state and the nation.

There are some areas where we can safely make changes to our approach, and other areas where we must continue with our current course. The Public Health Planning Team and the Pandemic Medical Advisory Team continue to meet regularly to assess conditions and make recommendations to leadership as circumstances change.

### **Beginning with the Basics**

The spring 2021 schedule of classes has been published, and enrollment for spring begins today, Oct. 16. Students need, and deserve, ample opportunity to review the instructional mode and make adjustments to their schedules that fit their degree program, their learning needs and their health considerations.

Our fall experience showed us that our students have a variety of needs that can only be addressed by providing them with a variety of instructional modes. At the same time, our experience this fall also demonstrated the incredible challenge instructors face when trying to teach students in multiple locations through multiple formats all at the same time. This challenge has stretched instructors very thin and has in some cases made it difficult to serve students in the manner we would like.

As we prepare for the spring semester, our challenge is to reconcile our obligations to serve the needs of our students with our commitment to protect the health of our instructors. I ask on behalf of students, if circumstances warrant that an instructor needs to change instruction mode for spring courses, the instructor follows their academic unit's protocol as soon as possible to receive approval to change the course schedule. We want to ensure students have abundant time to decide whether they need to change their schedules accordingly.

### **Course Adaptations**

Students who need online courses for spring 2021 should focus on enrolling in courses based on what is already being offered online. **Students who need online instruction and who cannot find a course they need in an online format, will have an opportunity to request a course adaptation.** The request must identify how the course fulfills a degree requirement and why the course **must be** taken during the spring 2021 semester. We've adjusted the request process to allow instructors and administrators to focus their energy and attention on the needs of students planning to graduate in May 2021 and on students in highly-structured academic programs. Advisors, if a student needs online instruction, please work with the student to identify course options that are already being offered online that also apply toward their degrees.

Some courses may be unsuitable to transform into engaging online adaptations. As part of our adapted approach, instructors and departments who know their course cannot be adapted to online for spring 2021 can submit the course information to [course-adapt@ku.edu](mailto:course-adapt@ku.edu) so it can be listed as unavailable for adaptations. This list will be shared with students, academic advisors, and departments to assist with course enrollment planning for spring 2021.

### **Attendance**

University Senate regulations are clear that instructors are responsible for the attendance and grading policies in their courses. However, students who have COVID-19, COVID-19 symptoms, or who are following state or local quarantine guidelines, simply must be given an excused absence from in-person class activities without the need for a doctor's note. As a community we support those who are taking steps to protect their own health and the health of others.

Students who find themselves in isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19 have the responsibility to communicate with their instructors to ensure the excused absence is recorded and that a plan is developed for making progress during the absence.

### **Spring 2021 Semester Calendar**

Earlier we announced proposed changes to the spring calendar and those were approved by the Kansas Board of Regents at one of its fall meetings.

- First day of class: **The start of spring semester 16-week courses will be Feb. 1**, except for School of Law courses, first period 8-week courses, which start Jan. 25. Some courses for fully online programs may have different start dates. Please check the [Schedule of Classes](#) for details on specific courses.
- The 100% refund period for course withdrawal has been extended to Feb 12, 2021, and proportionately for 8-week courses.
- Spring break has been shifted from the middle of the semester to before the start of the semester. Put another way, there will be no official break from class activity mid-semester.
- The last day of 16-week (semester long) courses will be May 6. Finals week runs from May 10 to May 14.

The Office of the University Registrar's website provides information about a number of [important academic dates](#) for the spring semester.

### **Safety Measures Will Continue**

There are many policies, measures and approaches that will remain the same during the spring semester.

- Face masks and physical distancing will continue to be required while in campus spaces for the foreseeable future.
- Extracurricular activities and programming should continue to follow all applicable safety guidelines and continue to be offered in a variety of formats to provide accessibility for students who are unable to come to campus. Student services will continue to provide some in-person office hours, while services will primarily be available through online means.
- Classrooms, work spaces and common areas will continue to have enhanced custodial service and will be configured to support appropriate physical distancing. I appreciate all who have resisted the temptation to move furniture to be in closer proximity to others.
- As a community we will continue to use the CVKey app for daily entry into campus buildings.
- Staff who have been able to work remotely should continue to do so if they can.
- Planners of mission-critical, in-person events should continue to register those events through the [Event Request Form](#).

### **To be Determined**

Our teams know there are a few items that are on the minds of many. We continue to work on these topics and don't have plans finalized yet. Two items I want to mention now are spring semester COVID-19 testing and Commencement.

Testing: We plan to have mandatory re-entry testing in spring, though since testing capabilities are evolving rapidly, we do not yet know exactly the format our testing will take. In the fall, KU was fortunate to receive federal funds that could support the exceptional cost of testing every member of our community who might spend time on campus. Our KU Pandemic Medical Advisory Team continues to review efficacy, accuracy and costs for re-entry testing in hopes we can offer testing through the most up-to-date technology when many students, staff and instructors return to campus for the spring semester. The team is exploring a wide variety of possibilities.

Commencement: A team is working on plans for what an appropriate in-person Commencement program might look like. Of course, we all know that even the most promising conditions can change quickly. Tentative plans will be announced soon.

### **Thanks and Care**

Jayhawks, thank you for your commitment to community and for supporting each other. Thank you for your perseverance this semester. I want to acknowledge your concerns, your fatigue, your hard work, and your strength as you have had to make many difficult personal and professional decisions this semester. It is amazing that we are beginning to turn our attention to spring 2021.

Please continue to take care of yourselves. Consider getting a flu shot at your earliest opportunity, and continue to follow the [Protect KU guidelines](#) that help make our spaces safer for all members of our community.

Respectfully,

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**Barbara A. Bichelmeyer**  
Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor

