

From: [Office of the Provost](#)
To: [KU Lawrence All Staff, Faculty and Affiliates; Active and Incoming Lawrence and Edwards Students @ KU](#)
Subject: We Can Do This, But We Have to Commit
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We Can Do This, But We Have to Commit

Dear Students, Staff and Faculty,

It's Friday before the start of fall semester. We are so close to opening campus for learning and teaching for the first time since early March – it may be the longest period in the history of the University of Kansas that our classrooms have been empty and devoid of students and faculty.

Acknowledging Contrasting Concerns

I check in daily with student, staff, faculty and administrative leaders at KU. I also receive emails regularly from students, parents, faculty, staff members, and alumni. I know that the closer we get to Monday, the stronger people's emotions are, and these emotions range in widely different directions.

I've received emails expressing true fear about returning to campus, emails expressing raging anger about our decisions and actions. I've also received emails expressing profound relief that needed programs and services will soon be available in person, and emails offering great appreciation for the comprehensive planning and preparation to reopen for fall semester. What I see in common between all groups and messages is that people are anxious, and people are worried about what others are doing.

Our Efforts Have Been Monumental

We've said repeatedly that **the fall semester will not look like anything we've ever seen before at KU**. We will see fewer students on campus at any one time. Most of our courses are online or hybrid classes with a reduced on-campus presence. We still offer a significant number of fully in-person classes for labs, studios, practice sessions, and class discussions, and there are substantial opportunities for teacher interaction. There will still be numerous opportunities for appropriately staged student events and co-curricular activities, many outdoors and in tents while the weather is good.

The number of changes and the level of effort that have gone into [preparing](#)

[for reopening](#) are truly extraordinary. Here are only a few of the hundreds of considerations and changes:

- The coordination of health and safety plans between our medical advisory and public health planning leaders between KU Medical Center, KU Lawrence and KU Edwards Campus, along with officials in Lawrence, Kansas City, Kan.; Overland Park; and Douglas, Johnson, and Wyandotte counties, as well as state leaders in Topeka, has been and continues to be unprecedented.
- We've adjusted thousands of courses, as well as the academic calendar and semester schedules, and added course adaptation options for students who can't attend in person.
- We've modified classroom spaces and added tents to support physical distancing.
- We've adjusted policies and procedures to guide and support us through this pandemic period.
- We've built [an extensive website](#) and worked to keep the community informed in a timely fashion through a variety of communication channels.
- KU Information Technology has prepared classrooms and instructors with technology to handle demands for all instructional formats.
- Our faculty have gone to extraordinary lengths over the summer – when they usually focus on research – to develop the most engaging courses, regardless of format.
- Deans and chairs have worked tirelessly to align and detail the work of university-wide teams into each academic unit.
- The Pandemic Project Management Team, which brings together representatives of several constituent groups, has asked difficult questions and initiated hard conversations for the good of all of us and the university.

I want to thank University Governance leadership for their sincere participation and most importantly for their role in ensuring the concerns of students, staff and faculty were heard, considered and addressed by me and other administrators. Thank you Apramay Mishra, Grant Daily, Abby Ehling, Tim Spencer, Lua Yuille, and Sanjay Mishra. It's clear we share a deep commitment to the university and the people who make its great spirit and achievement possible.

I'm so deeply impressed and grateful to everyone who has come together as a team with the commitment to better protect the health of our community members. You've done so with an understanding of the essential nature of our mission and in stewardship of the long-term viability of the university. Though I know you are exhausted at this point, you should be proud of your efforts, and I hope you know you have my deepest appreciation and gratitude for your service.

Now, It's Up to Us

Though we've redesigned most every aspect of campus to encourage and support people to live up to our [Protect KU pledge](#), it **could all be undone between now and Monday**. Our best efforts have provided a safer on-campus environment. Though **it is entirely do-able** for us to get to Thanksgiving together, **it will only happen if each and every one of us is willing to commit to the personal responsibility pledge we have put into place**. Now, it's simply a matter of willingness. It's not overly burdensome to:

- use an [app to assess your health](#) each and every morning,
- [put on a mask](#),
- stay six feet away when you are with others and avoid large gatherings,
- wash your hands regularly, and
- stay home when you aren't well.

For the health of our community, for the good of the university, for your own safety – we can do this.

No doubt about it, this is a critical moment in the history of our beloved university. Let's rise to the occasion. It's up to you. It's up to each one of us. I believe together we can do it. Let's show the world that we truly are an exceptional learning community that lifts each other and advances society.

Rock Chalk, Jayhawks!

Barb

Barbara A. Bichelmeyer
Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor



Visit the [Protect KU website](#) for complete information about policies, resources and changes to campus for the fall semester.