

UNO Strategic Planning Forum – 5.14.2020
Q & A Follow Up with Chancellor Gold & Sr. Vice Chancellor Kopp

If most universities go to online education this Fall, what is UNO's marketing plan to differentiate itself from the hundreds of options that are available for virtual education?

UNO can rightly say that we have created affordable access to excellence right here in the Omaha metro area. Students concerned about paying \$70,000 tuition at a distant residential campus can stay close to home with family and take advantage of our programs at a very affordable price point. Further, UNO has provided numerous scholarship opportunities for first-time freshmen, existing UNO students, transfer students, adult learners, students considering graduate coursework, and students whose family are in the health care field. Finally, UNO is in a special position of having already been a leader in remote and online learning. Even before the outbreak, 25% of all credit hours at UNO were delivered online, 98.5% of all UNO students had at least one online course in the pursuit of their degree, and 10% of our students were “fully online” students.

Moving into Fall, please keep encouraging student research opportunities through GRACA and FUSE, for these are invaluable teaching and learning tools.

Absolutely, and in addition we will continue to make progress on the UNO Big Ideas projects that provide funding to faculty and students in areas of Security and Intelligence, Business of Healthcare, Health Humanities, STEM Education, Biomechanics, and the Bak Institute.

What should we tell students who depend on human subject interaction to complete their research for graduation next year?

We continue to explore safe ways to implement protocols for the research and creative activities of the campus. Each research unit will need to consult the checklist in terms of how to implement proper physical distancing, testing, PPE, etc. We recommend working with Ken Bayles and the ORCA team closely.

How will students be encouraged to wear PPE (face masks) in the buildings. Is this something that can be enforced? Will the university be making a blanket announcement to all students?

We will, as proscribed in the checklist, create an expanded “code of conduct” for campus operations this Fall. It will include, in the earliest phases, use of PPE, testing, screening, and physical distancing. Those who cannot or will not comply with the code of conduct will be redirected to other avenues of participating in campus functions such as remote or online learning.

Similarly, please know that service learning and experiential learning can occur in both online, remote, and in person classrooms. The Service Learning Academy is available and excited to support these experiences, and have been impressed with the rigorous learning experiences being implemented in online and remote spaces. Please email unosla@unomaha.edu with any questions.

We recognize that service learning has been happening in all modalities, in-person, online, and remote. For the fall, we will have to ensure that in-person experiential learning occurs in environments that can ensure the safety of our faculty, staff, and students. This means our partner institutions must work closely with us on requirements of PPE, physical distancing, etc.

Will there be advertising for Remote Learning at all the campuses?

UNO has been advertising online options as well as increased scholarship opportunities for this fall semester to stimulate enrollment in light of the public's concerns about COVID19. The scholarship opportunities include our Healthcare Heroes program, discounts for online tuition for in-state and MAP residents, the new chancellors, deans, and faculty scholarships, and the Jump Start program to begin a graduate program. Our UComm team has been doing an excellent job getting the word out about UNO being ready for the fall, both on campus and online.

Are there delineated benchmarks with respect to public health that would determine the conditions under which the university might revert to all remote midstream, say in the Fall? I ask because some faculty have expressed concern about the possibility or likelihood that they would have to suddenly pivot again regardless of their advance plans.

Certainly it has to be on our minds that the campus could be asked to return to remote operations mode again. As emphasized in the Strategic Planning Forum, and in the guidance shared with the deans, every course plan should have a "backup" for this scenario where the campus reverts to a remote teaching and learning mode. The decision to revert to this mode would come after close consultation with the NU System, the Governor's Office, and Douglas County Public Health officials. As one sees on the news, even the decision to re-open various parts of the country is being made on a relatively local level, as Governors nationwide are responding to local conditions of the outbreak. What we can assure the UNO community about is that we will base our decisions on scientific data and the primary desire to keep faculty, staff, and students safe.

How does our need to know about vulnerable staff/faculty blend with HIPPA?

Faculty and staff with concerns about returning to work on campus in the summer and fall need not disclose personal medical information. Supervisors are asked to work through individual accommodations based on individual requests and concerns.

Is there a way to help SLP students obtain PPE for their medical externships with community partners?

We will work on detailed plans based on the checklist with community partners for all experiential learning opportunities (research, internships, practica, service learning, etc.) that take place in-person in community locations. If such checklist plans cannot be developed, we will convert the experience to a remote or online option.

There are some in our community that unfortunately believe that COVID-19 is a hoax/conspiracy and who are refusing to wear masks believing false information that masks are bad for you when out in public. Will use of PPE and distancing be enforced on campus? What if people refuse to comply?

We will, as proscribed in the checklist, create an expanded “code of conduct” for campus operations this Fall. It will include, in the earliest phases, use of PPE, testing, screening, and physical distancing. Those who cannot or will not comply with the code of conduct will be redirected to other avenues of participating in campus functions such as remote or online learning.

The IRB will be offering guidance regarding human subjects research in the coming weeks.

Yes.

In what ways will we be taking the lead in following CDC guidelines (individually and collectively) with the released restrictions even as numbers increase?

UNMC’s Davis Center for Global Health has developed a 22-page checklist for institutions of higher education that is being widely circulated across the country. Our decisions regarding the degree to which we relax criteria for on-campus operations will be based on local public health data and our ability to achieve all the requirements of the checklist.

How can we work with governing/accrediting bodies to help our students who have requirements that involve human/community interaction meet the requirements of their programs?

We will work on detailed plans based on the checklist with community partners for all experiential learning opportunities (research, internships, practica, service learning, etc.) that take place in-person in community locations. If such checklist plans cannot be developed, we will convert the experience to a remote or online option. In some cases, this will require conversations with disciplinary accrediting bodies to ensure the activities comply with their requirements for accredited degrees. In all cases, we will keep the UNO accrediting agency, the Higher Learning Commission, apprised of our plans.

Following up on the discussion about protecting vulnerable people, what are our plans for helping students/faculty/staff who maybe aren't in a vulnerable group, but are afraid of coming to campus/prefer to be remote (perhaps because they live with a vulnerable person or to manage anxiety or other reasons)?

Faculty and staff with concerns about returning to work on campus in the summer and fall need not disclose personal medical information. Supervisors are asked to work through individual accommodations based on individual requests and concerns.

Following the CDC guidelines for everyone is VERY important, especially those that are on the front lines of customer service.

Yes. Our primary concern is the safety and well-being of faculty, staff, and students.

RE: recommending students to the working group, please let us know who we need contact to suggest students or have these students reach out to.

Recommendations for students to join one of the fall working groups should be sent to either Vice Chancellor Dan Shipp or Senior Vice Chancellor Sacha Kopp

Regarding marketing: Please tell everyone you know about the new Nebraska Promise initiative that is going to open up access to affordable college for so many more people! Plus, the other affordability measures and scholarships recently announced. We have unique programs in innovative areas, and we tend to have smaller classes especially for students in that first year or two. Lots of really good reasons to choose UNO for new students!

Yes, indeed!

Is there consideration on the idea of moving the start of the semester to later in Fall to see how the Covid situation plays out? Also, potentially is there any interest in doing shortened block scheduling?

We considered this option but decided that it does not provide as much flexibility as needed. The present plan of resuming campus in-person instruction in Fall through “de-densified operations” provides the safeguards we need and the flexibility to relax or take even further precautions (remote mode) as public health conditions warrant. There is simply not enough information at this time to assure ourselves that an alternate calendar for the semester would solve anything, because outbreaks and “hotspots” will likely occur (as we see already in the news).