

May 11, 2020

**COVID-19: Committee on Return to On-Campus Operations**

***Community and Public Engagement***

Wanda Ward, Executive Associate Chancellor for Administration and University Relations (Chair)  
Gabrielle Allen, Associate Dean for Research and Research Education, College of Education  
Steve Anderson, Dean, School of Social Work  
Bill Bernhard, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs  
Jeff Brown, Dean, Gies College of Business  
Antoinette Burton, Director, IPRH  
Brian Farber, Executive Assistant to the Associate VC for Student Affairs/Director of Auxiliary Services  
Bob Flider, Director, Community and Government Relations  
Tony Franklin, Associate Director, ACES/Extension  
Kevin Hamilton, Dean, College of Fine and Applied Arts  
Jim Hintz, Associate Vice Chancellor, Student Success & Engagement  
Connor Josellis, Student  
Marty Kaufmann, Senior Associate Director of Athletics, External Relations  
Pradeep Khanna, Associate Vice Chancellor for Corporate Relations and Economic Development  
Ruby Mendenhall, Assistant Dean, Carle Illinois College of Medicine  
Rachel Switzky, Director of Siebel Center for Design  
Scott Genung, Deputy CIO IT Operations (*ex officio*)  
Brian Mertz, Communications Architect (*ex officio*)  
Katie Shumway, Director, Community Learning Lab (*ex officio*)

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the Community and Public Engagement team under the coordination of the COVID-19: Executive Steering Committee on Return to On-Campus Operations. Executive Associate Chancellor Wanda Ward will chair this team and Katie Shumway will provide staffing and support. Your work will complement the efforts of six other teams being charged as part of this effort: Academics, Finance and Operations, Human Resources and Staffing, Research and Scholarship, Shield: Target, Test, Tell and University Life.

A clearly enunciated, consistent and scalable process to allow the resumption of community and public engagement and public events consistent with state and local health department guidelines is essential to ensure the ongoing safety and health of our students, faculty, staff and local community as we return to on-campus operations. Developing this system and designing an implementation process is the fundamental charge I am presenting to your team. No one has ever done this and there is no established map. I leave it to you to determine the specific steps, actions that will be required and to prioritize them.

More broadly I ask your team to:

- Identify, evaluate and design the comprehensive and multiphase implementation processes related to safely resuming community engagement activities and university sponsored public events that will be a major component in the university's transition back to on-site operations, notwithstanding the persistence of COVID-19. These issues should consider our scholarly engagement, our role as a community convening authority, our status as a gathering point for athletic, artistic, entertainment and educational events and the impact of our location and scale on the health of our surrounding communities.
- In this immediate, first phase of your work, establish the framework and planning necessary for a **summer transition back to on-campus operations and activities** after Gov. Pritzker lifts current stay-at-home orders.
- In a second, ongoing phase (**planning for fall 2020 and beyond**), recommend the actions, policies and processes that must be implemented for resumption of our campus life activities for the fall 2020 semester, the total academic year and beyond as necessary.
- Develop plans for coordination and communication of your team's activities and recommendations with the Executive Steering Committee and the other six working teams.
- Articulate safety standards/guidelines, aligned with public health expert guidance, for faculty members and students engaging in university-sponsored community engagement activities (i.e., student internships, research activities, external training), both to protect university students and employees and the broader community.
- Develop health and safety standards/guidelines governing attendance at and delivery of all university-sponsored public events, such as allowable size and social distancing considerations. This includes activities such as events for returning students (student geared entertainment) for this summer or whenever they return; hosted events for UI students and public in our facilities beginning in the fall and third-party use of our facilities or events planned primarily for public.
- Outline the priorities that should guide our partnerships with state and non-profit organizations to ensure the health, security and well-being of our neighbors in East Central Illinois. Please recommend ways to build these priorities into our decision-making, with a special focus on where structural inequality and racism thrusts an unequal share of the pandemic's burden.
- Develop a conceptual framework/working concept (similar to the state "Restore Illinois" framework) that acknowledges we are not just re-booting but pivoting toward new ways of thinking about public engagement that rest on a constructive critique of what was not working pre-COVID and needs to be rethought in order to shape this new, unforeseeable world of work, education and "the public" itself.
- Develop a plan that includes providing logistical, technical, and other support for sustaining and expanding campus-community partnerships that focus on teaching, learning, social responsibility and active citizenship.
- Develop strategies for using technology to allow remote access to in-person public events, such that in-person events can proceed as safely as possible with reduced density while also augmenting overall access.

- As “societal actors for the public good,” develop a public awareness campaign to educate the community (especially communities with disproportionate death rates) about COVID-19 and ways to be resilient during the pandemic.

In addition, your team should operate using these three critical considerations:

- 1) Lead with the most vulnerable in our communities in mind: those who depend on public assistance and non-profit support (see the local agencies on [IPRH COVID Donation Website List](#)) and those in these organizations who serve them. It is important that they are offered positions of leadership in our projects so we are sure to prioritize their vantage points and experiences. These are the frontline people in Champaign-Urbana and they should be recruited as part of “the public” we aim to engage;
- 2) Make the local public school system -- for its own sake and as a pipeline to a better life through what Illinois can do -- central to our priorities and deliberations and action items; build on existing relationships and forge new pathways of connection; and
- 3) Work with local community agencies and others (e.g., United Way, Champaign County Coalition, Authority of Champaign County, local sports bars, etc.) to train 500 community members in psychological first aid.

This pandemic has brought us unprecedented challenges. So, we are asking you to assist us in determining the best approaches to address these challenges. I only ask that your decisions and recommendations be guided by these core principles:

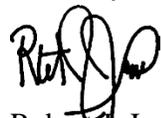
- Protection of the safety and health of our students, faculty, staff and local community
- Preservation of our land-grant missions of education, scholarship, service and engagement
- Processes that are transparent, open, consultative and respectful of our traditions of shared governance

As the first step of this process, I ask your team to coordinate with Mike DeLorenzo who chairs the Executive Steering Committee to identify some preliminary timelines and milestone goals for this first phase of planning.

As you know, there is both great urgency and great need for planning and actions, so I hope your team will begin meeting as soon as possible.

I thank you for your service as we navigate through this difficult time.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Jones  
Chancellor

