



Dear CNS Faculty,

Your commitment to your students and their learning is deeply appreciated, and we know it hasn't been easy to respond to the COVID-19 situation and all of the changes this semester. As challenging as it has been for you, our students, too, say that this transition has brought a lot to navigate. Some are excited to be back on campus and feel they are learning better than they did last year. Some have enjoyed remote learning experiences and have health-related concerns that represent a real barrier to reengaging in person.

This message is intended to offer practical guidance, amid all of the contradictions, for learning environments in the days and weeks ahead.

Encourage participation in testing and other measures. Testing is currently expanding across campus, and **proactive community testing is now available** in the Texas Union, as well as SSB, Jester and other locations. The testing ramp-up complements other steps UT is taking to improve outcomes in campus contact tracing and to strongly encourage and incentivize masking and **vaccinations**.

Transition mindfully. The president's message acknowledged some of you will have times when you need to not be in person, and likewise, there will be many students this academic year who need to miss class, whether because they are experiencing symptoms, quarantining, sick or immunocompromised. We aim to have in-person learning experiences that are more aligned with the expectations we set out by October 4, but the health situation is fluid, and we ask for your flexibility in light of this. Consult with the **TIDES Instruct Group** if you need some suggestions about transitioning back, alternatives to requiring class attendance or suggestions for hybrid learning environments.

Support effective contact tracing. Where it is reasonable and possible to do so, please follow the instructions in the president's email about using a **seating chart** or instructing students to use the Protect Texas Together app feature. Make sure your class TAs are added to your Canvas page so that they can easily be found by a contact tracer if there is a need, and consider bookmarking the **online self-**

[reporting form](#) to report to students in case any of them self-disclose to you about a positive COVID-19 test.

Restarting college celebratory events: We will continue to transition during an academic year that, while shaped by COVID-19, is also characterized by the difference in our lives of having widespread vaccinations. More of our college events will begin being held in person, including one of our first in-person celebrations this coming weekend to honor students who graduated in spring of 2020. This weekend's events will be held outdoors, and faculty with regalia are invited to sit on the stage Friday evening in the space south of the UT Tower as we hear from speaker Brené Brown and enjoy a reunion with former students. [Learn more and sign up to attend here.](#)

Sincerely,

David Vanden Bout | Interim Dean

Michael Drew | Interim Associate Dean

This communication is from College of Natural Sciences – Official.

View this email [online](#).

The University of Texas at Austin | Austin, TX | 78712 US