



Dear UT Community,

Let me start with a thank you for your role in our community's response to the surge of the coronavirus omicron variant and the resulting changes to the start of our spring semester. And we all owe a special thanks for those who have been working in person on campus to keep up our teaching and research, and to deliver world-class health care. We know that tensions have been high, patience thin, and in many cases, our people have stepped up to work extra hours and cover for one another. I'm proud of our people and grateful to be your colleague.

Since we announced our [changes to the start of the spring semester](#), our COVID-19 executive committee has been closely monitoring conditions on campus and in the surrounding area to determine when we would be able to return safely to our full in-person activities and operations. Multiple data points, including campus case counts and Proactive Community Testing (PCT) positivity rates, indicate the situation on and around our campus is improving, and therefore **we will resume all in-person classes and campus operations January 31, as planned.**

This return does not mean that things will always be easy or straightforward. Given that, I have a request: Please show each other some grace, be patient and flexible, and trust that we all want the same things – amazing learning experiences, great discoveries and inspirational works of scholarship and creativity. Please cut each other some slack and know that person you're interacting with may be juggling some difficult circumstances at that moment and trying hard to make good things happen.

This need to adjust won't be new to us, and it was present before this pandemic – albeit at a different scale. Prior to COVID, we have had students miss class and faculty and staff miss work, and we found ways for students to make up what they missed, for research to keep going, and for our university to continue to excel. To help us keep this up, we have resources and guidance at our disposal, including some key points below:

- If a student must miss class for health reasons, the student will need to make up missed work using standard procedures and resources, including contacting [Student Emergency Services](#).
- Staff members are expected to return to the approved Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) on January 31. FWAs are approved by supervisors, and as individual circumstances dictate, they can be adjusted through regular channels within a college, school or unit. If you are unsure of your status, please check with your supervisor.
- We recognize that some faculty members will be apprehensive about returning to in-person instruction due their own medical condition or the medical condition of someone in their household. Programs established last fall have been extended through the spring semester.
- Faculty and staff members may request Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations for their own medical conditions through the ADA accommodation process. (<https://equity.utexas.edu/employee-accommodations/>)
- Faculty members living with immunocompromised dependents may request a change in teaching modality for the spring semester by submitting an application for a Faculty Flexible Teaching Modality Agreement. ([https://utexas.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_50H0wYGuf4miSoJ](https://utexas.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_50H0wYGuf4miSoJ))
- Decisions about having in-person events remain with college, school or unit leadership. For indoor events, please continue to be mindful of our [masking recommendations](#) and consider a larger space to allow for social distancing.

- During this recent surge, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated their guidance, and we have updated our respective guidance accordingly. Please visit [Protect Texas Together](#) to get the latest information on [masking](#), [isolation and quarantine](#), and [vaccine boosters](#).

For employees returning to work on campus for the first time since winter break, we encourage testing **via the most convenient method before returning to campus**. Free testing – both [PCT](#) and [symptomatic](#) – continues to be available on campus, and testing on campus helps by allowing the university to reach out quickly to contacts of infected individuals to help stop the spread of the virus. Employees should report to the [Occupational Health Program \(OHP\)](#) if you have tested positive, have symptoms of COVID-19 even if you test negative, or if you have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive.

As a reminder for students who have not yet returned to the campus community, [please test within 72 hours](#) prior to your return.

As mentioned in my start of the semester [message](#), we have much to look forward to this spring. While taking this phased approach to our return was necessary, we know how great things happen when we come together here on the Forty Acres. We thank you for continuing to keep our campus community safe by taking advantage of vaccines and testing, as well as other healthy practices such as masking and hand washing. I have great confidence in our faculty, staff and students, who I know will continue to do their part to Protect Texas Together while we get back to what makes our campus so special.

I look forward to seeing you on campus soon.

Hook 'em!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Hartzell". The signature is stylized with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Jay Hartzell

President

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Protect Texas Together

[\*\*protect.utexas.edu\*\*](https://protect.utexas.edu)

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