

## Planning for Our Spring 2022 Return to Classes

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Dear Saint Louis University students,

We cannot wait to welcome you back to campus in just a few short days, and back to classrooms, studios and labs in exactly one week. Each new semester brings so much excitement and opportunity. I feel it, and I hope you do, too.

As President Pestello [mentioned last week](#), we plan to remain open and have in-person classes. That said, we know that many of you are feeling anxiety around the increase in COVID-19 infections nationwide, so I want to walk you through what to expect when you come back to campus.

My goal with this email is to share **how we will approach academics, in the context of what we anticipate will be an increase in positive COVID-19 cases on campus at the beginning of the term.**

*(Note: Any updates related to student support services will come from Dr. Sarah Cunningham, Vice President for Student Development. You can email questions about those to [studev@slu.edu](mailto:studev@slu.edu).)*

### **Flexibility is critical**

For at least the first few weeks of the semester, faculty, staff and students will need to remain flexible as the COVID-19 landscape continues to evolve quickly. Cancelled flights and other travel disruptions will impact some of our students' ability to return to campus, and instructors (or their household members) may test positive for COVID, which will prevent their return to campus for a period of time; staff may be in similar situations.

I shared a similar message with faculty and staff and will continue to call upon all of us to operate from a place of caring for and with others as we navigate the new ways in which COVID-19 challenges us.

### **What to expect: Some shifting course modalities**

I asked instructors to prepare for a number of possible scenarios depending on how COVID-19 could affect them and you.

For example, here are some scenarios that you *might* experience this semester:

- Some instructors may choose to hold the first few class sessions online if the situation warrants it. We have given instructors and their deans flexibility to make those decisions on a case-by-case basis.
- You could have classes that move online temporarily because...
  - Your instructor is experiencing COVID-19 related issues affecting them or a loved one.
  - COVID-19 is affecting a significant enough portion of a class that it meaningfully impacts the integrity of the learning in that course; accordingly, an instructor may choose to modify (temporarily) how they teach for some period of time.

- In very limited situations, it is possible that an in-person course will shift to a fully online course for the whole semester.

Since we heard from you and instructors that the “dual mode” approach (where students “Zoom in” to live, in-person classes) is not ideal for anyone, this will only be allowed at the instructor’s discretion, in classes where it is appropriate for the specific learning objectives, and for a short time period to help us navigate the shifting COVID-19 landscape. In some cases, external accreditation and other such requirements may limit instructors’ ability to teach in this manner.

Regardless, we have given extensive guidance to instructors on how to effectively modify their plans as we prepare for all possibilities.

### **Important reminders**

- The deadline for students to request to take classes fully online has passed.
- Unless you are restricted from class because of COVID-19, you **are expected to attend class in person**.
- If you are restricted from class because of COVID-19, you are responsible for communicating any absences to your instructors and for keeping up-to-date with the content and assignments in your courses.
  - Different instructors will approach this in different ways. Some instructors may allow you to attend courses via Zoom for isolation-related absences, but many others will use alternative approaches to help you stay current in your coursework. Please check with each of your instructors.
- **Check your SLU email daily for updates from instructors and other University administrators.** Things are busy, and we want you to stay informed.

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We will continue to assess the impacts of the pandemic on a weekly basis, and keep the community updated as we move forward.

I know this is another big ask for our entire community, and I really appreciate everyone’s efforts, flexibility, and attentiveness as we continue to navigate the ever-changing pandemic. May grace and understanding continue to be hallmarks that carry us through.

Sincerely,

Mike Lewis, Ph.D.  
Provost