

Fall 2020 Faculty Information

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Dear Saint Louis University faculty and instructors,

We want to start by expressing our appreciation for all your work to make the spring 2020 semester a success.

During our abrupt pivot to online learning, you showed dedication and selflessness in keeping student success at the forefront of your work. We received many positive notes from students and their parents about SLU's thoughtful, measured decisions, including the efforts of our esteemed faculty.

Let us share one important piece of information we just received: Prior to the pandemic, 107 faculty members had completed a Reinert Center online teaching workshop. Since the beginning of March, that number has more than doubled. Finally, between faculty who are currently enrolled in a workshop – or scheduled to take a workshop before the fall semester begins – an additional 410 faculty will take a Reinert Center online teaching workshop.

Having more than 600 faculty opting into such a professional development workshop is confirmation of your commitment to our students' learning and success. Thank you for all you are doing.

We know many of you have questions regarding the fall 2020 semester, and we want to answer some of those that we are able. **Specifically, we want to address faculty teaching preferences for the fall semester, course scheduling, faculty contracts, and the reopening of campus.**

Faculty teaching preferences

Recently, we surveyed all faculty to understand the needs for teaching online vs face-to-face this fall. We appreciate all of you who completed that survey. The information will help us better schedule course sections for the fall, and gives each of the schools and colleges a better understanding of what their faculty are thinking.

We heard from many of you with concerns about the type of information we gathered and how it may be used. Please know that the survey was designed with our Office of General Counsel, that any personal information you provided was kept confidential, and we are using what we learned only to schedule our fall classes. The survey was designed to gather information about teaching and was not intended to be coercive.

This week, we will share enough information with Deans and Chairs so that we can identify which course sections the Registrar's Office needs to move to online instruction. All information sharing will be guided by our Office of General Counsel, and we will be certain to reinforce that faculty who indicated a need to teach online be treated the same as those teaching on campus when it comes to annual merit review and other evaluations.

Please know we hear and understand your concerns about returning to campus, and we recognize the fears that come with COVID-19. As we are planning to maintain a number of public health safeguards, including 6-feet of physical distancing, wearing face masks, and checking symptoms, we are **only allowing faculty with one of the following two concerns to opt-in to remote teaching.**

We are committed to making accommodations for faculty and instructors who have **underlying health conditions** — either for themselves or within their immediate households — or who are in age groups most affected by COVID-19, [per the CDC](#). These faculty may elect to teach online in the fall term, and we will communicate with enrolled students in a timely manner.

We know many of you have concerns regarding **childcare and K-12 schools**. We are keeping a close eye on fall plans for local schools, and will be flexible if schools and daycare centers issue modified schedules. Though we have not flexed course section times from the original schedule, we are keeping this possibility open if necessary. For example, we could create evening sessions for faculty who have no daytime childcare.

Classroom scheduling

The University Registrar is hard at work scheduling more than 2,200 course sections for the fall semester. So far, we have been able to schedule more than half of those sections without any time and day changes — while still accommodating 6-feet of physical distancing in classrooms.

Given that we still have a significant number of course sections to place, we are working with Event Services to access all event spaces on campus (i.e. Wool ballrooms, Saint Louis Room, the CGC, various boardrooms and meeting spaces, etc.) during normal course times. We are prioritizing teaching and will use all available spaces to accommodate our teaching needs.

Between moving some course sections to remote delivery and using these event spaces, the Registrar's team should be able to successfully keep about **85 percent of all course sections at the currently-scheduled day and time**. The location, however, will likely change to account for physical distancing requirements, particularly those classes that ordinarily are held in fixed seated lecture halls. We plan to share the updated schedule with our students soon, too.

We understand how important it is for faculty to know the details of their anticipated class formats for planning purposes. We plan on sharing further details about the scheduled time for your courses by mid-July.

At the very least, faculty should be prepared to have students learn online, should they need to be quarantined, or if they are diagnosed with COVID-19 – whether symptomatic or asymptomatic – and required to isolate. However, we anticipate they will still be able to learn remotely.

Faculty contracts and course delivery

As President Pestello [announced in May](#), we will start the fall semester earlier than planned, on Aug. 17. This change does affect our faculty contracts and course delivery, as outlined below.

- Faculty contracts will be updated to show an [Aug. 10 start date](#).
- Some form of **hybrid courses are inevitable** during the fall term, as it is likely that some students will not be able to return to campus. We are committed to ensuring the success and progression of all SLU students, regardless of whether they are able to join us in person.
- The [Reinert Center](#) is available to help you effectively plan your courses for hybrid delivery. A hybrid delivery **does not mean** that you are teaching 2 versions of your courses. But we do recognize it will likely take more time to deliver such a course than a traditional exclusively face-to-face, on campus course. We appreciate you understanding that this semester is an outlier and we will require accommodations for our students.
- As we have noted on numerous occasions, like all of higher education we are under significant financial pressures due to the COVID-19 crisis. As a result, we are not in a position to oblige increased teaching demands by hiring more adjuncts or offering overload pay. Faculty who find teaching their courses in a hybrid manner adds significantly to their time spent on teaching should talk with their chair and/or dean to reassess their workload for this coming semester such that expectations in research/scholarship, and/or service are lessened.

Public health safeguards

As President Pestello and we have mentioned in previous messages, the fall term will look very different with public health safeguards in place across campus.

As you might expect, the St. Louis City guidelines will likely change between now and the start of the term, but we are prepared to follow them as they currently stand. This includes requiring face masks and 6-feet of physical distancing. Our interim face mask policy can be found [here](#). In fact, our public health advisors met with the City Health Commissioner recently and he affirmed that students and faculty in our classrooms must abide by social distancing and face mask wearing.

Additionally, Facilities staff members are installing more than 800 hand sanitizer stations around campus, and filling spray bottles with disinfecting solutions to enable cleaning of high-

touch surfaces after classes are dismissed. We also are installing devices to exit bathrooms, where possible, without touching doors. We are installing plexiglass barriers in high-use spaces, as identified by department chairs and deans. Water fountains are now limited to bottle refills only.

Please, when you do return to campus, be mindful of the maintenance and custodial team's hard work and make a point of thanking them for their dedication to our collective safety.

Finally, we are pursuing initiatives to actively monitor the state of the virus on our campus through symptom checking and contact tracing, in collaboration with city public health staff. As our public health safeguards are finalized for fall semester, we will communicate those plans. Thank you and God bless,

Chet Gillis, Ph.D.
Interim Provost

Michael Lewis, Ph.D.
Interim Provost Designate