Okay, standby everybody.

Tom Cannon:

Welcome to the UTSA faculty town hall- Moving forward together: Faculty’s role in UTSA’s response to the coronavirus.

I’m Tom Cannon, professor in practice in the college of business and I will serve as your moderator.

Today’s faculty town hall is hosted by the UTSA Academy of distinguished teaching scholars.

Now the Academy was established by the Provost in 2012 to honor outstanding faculty who exemplify excellence in teaching.

Each academy member is also a recipient of UT systems regents’ outstanding teaching award. Twice each semester the Academy hosts a shared experience forum to share tips on teaching excellence.

Today’s faculty Town Hall replaces a faculty forum, originally scheduled for this very same time period. Now coincidentally, the forum was entitled, “Online teaching revisited: lessons from the trenches.”

Needless to say, many of us today are definitely in the online trenches but the good news is that UTSA has a wealth of resources to assist each of us in making that transition from face-to-face teaching to digital online instruction.

Our thanks to the original scheduled forum panelist Judy Peterson in the history department, Luca Pozzi in the anthropology department, Juliet Wiersema in the art history department, for their understanding of the need to reschedule their topic.

And also our thanks to the leadership of the Academy, Kirsten Gardner chair and Kat Brown Chair elect, for their understanding of the need to quickly respond and change today’s forum.

Each forum just as today’s faculty town hall is divided into two parts.

Our panelists will first provide a brief update from their respective areas or responsibilities about UTSA’s response to the coronavirus. The remaining time will be used to answer your questions.

Please submit your questions in the chat box and we will make every effort we can during the limited time we have together to answer them.

The faculty town hall is being recorded and will soon be posted to the Provost website.

Joining us today are members of the UTSA leadership team. Most of you should already know but some of you may not have had an opportunity to meet them.
In the center of our panel is Taylor Eighmy, president of UTSA. To his right is Kimberly Espy, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs. To Taylor's left is Veronica Mendez, chief financial officer and senior vice president for business affairs. Next to her is Heather Shipley, senior vice provost for academic affairs and Dean of the university college.

Coincidentally, joining us remotely is Melissa Vito, interim vice provost for academic innovations and as a side is her team, small though they may be, who for the past couple of weeks have been assisting all of us in making this transition to teaching online.

This is the time now for you to learn how UTSA is responding to the coronavirus and also your role as faculty to help move us forward together.

So let’s get started. Taylor I turn the Town Hall over to you.

Taylor Eighmy:

Thank you, I am grateful for the opportunity to be with all of you today, we are certainly in unprecedented times. Once in a hundred year event is on our doorsteps now, and it will have global national state and right here in San Antonio, deep implications as we go forward.

It won’t perhaps surprise you that in my role I’ve been working very closely with many individuals here in the community at the state level and nationally, higher education is being reinvented as we speak, in response to this pandemic.

We as you might imagine, we are not alone. Every institution in the United States is going through this right now. Some of the things that I am very cognizant of as we go forward through this challenging time is that we are part of a community here that is responding.

We have to be deeply coordinated with local government, with city and county government, with our k-12 and independent school districts, with our sister institution UT Health San Antonio, with our sister Higher Ed institutions here in San Antonio.

Obviously with the UT system and the governor’s office, it is something that is requiring deep coordination with the community state level.

If I had to guess how this is going to unfold over the next few months, I would say that the pandemic is at our doorstep here in San Antonio and it will continue to be a challenge for us going forward through May, June, July, and perhaps into August.

And it really speaks to what we do as an institution and how we respond to this situation, that will prepare us for the future. So fortunately or unfortunately, I am going to be an optimist here, fortunately all the effort that has been underway for the last few weeks about preparing to go online starting Monday has serves us very well as the events are moving very quickly around us.
and even more quickly than we sometimes expect and in fact I'll use this fact that Melissa or Kimberly shared with me the other day.

The fact that in our tutorials we've had such a huge response from our faculty to prepare for this and participate in the tutorials is one thing that I find great hope about as we go forward.

I've been working on communicating on a regular basis with our community and I intend to do so and I am seeing a lot of resilience already and a lot of compassion and care.

The founding principles for all we have been doing over the last few months as we prepared for this have been these two principles.

First, the health and well-being of our students, staff, and faculty, and our community is paramount, but also equally important is our ability to ensure the academic success of the trajectory of every one of our students. So it means in this time frame that we are faced with presently, that we are going to want to do our very best to complete this semester and prepare for summer and summer school and the fall semester and the spring semester for the next academic year.

As we think about these things, our plates are full, there is no doubt about that and we are asking a lot of our individuals and I want to specially say thank you to all of the faculty for all the work that you have done to get us to the place that we are at today.

I know that more work is required, I know that this is challenging, I know some of you have concerns and fears for yourselves, for your families, for your friends, for your community.

This virus is pernicious, I am going to say, and it is going to be targeting individuals in our community who are older and are in health risk categories.

Our young people that we serve are perhaps much less affected by this virus but there are integral components of our community that are going to be dramatically affected as we go forward and this pandemic grows within the globe and here in our country and here even in Texas.

I am hoping that Texas is going to be moderated about this a little bit but all of the modeling that I am looking at suggests that we are facing a few months of very difficult times and I think the pandemic will still continue through the summer time and into the early fall.

So as we prepare for this and we look forward and we respond together as an institution, there are things we are just going to have to do well and that's going to have to be online delivery.

Fortunately there are hundreds of people that have been working on this already and I am grateful to my partners here that are at the table with me and some of you like Melissa who is away but is helping deeply.
I have other Vice presidents sitting in the audience with me so we have the ability to answer all questions and we’ll do our very best and if there are many questions that aren’t resolved. We will do another town hall.

We are doing a Town hall with staff tomorrow and we have a town hall with students on Friday.

If we need to continue this we will. Did I get that right or did I flip it?

Let me correct the record, tomorrow is students and Friday is staff. If we need to do another town hall next week with faculty we will be happy to do that, and we will continue to communicate or over communicate as we go through this process.

I am not the subject matter expert in this topic by any means so I am going to turn the floor over to Provost Espy and then to Senior vice president Mendez and to others as necessary to AVP Shipley and others but I would like to make sure that I get a chance to have my wonderful team introduce themselves and talk about this a little bit as well.

So Kimberly.

Kimberly Espy:

Sure, thank you Taylor, very much so I am Kimberly Espy. I serve as your Provost and it’s a real pleasure to be here. Let me too start off by thanking you, thanking our faculty for their outstanding work that they’ve done in this very short period of time.

My role in this challenge has really been to focus on our academic community right? That’s our faculty but it is our staff and our students as well. We have really tried to approach this task and really thinking about how we support our faculty staff and students to be adaptive and to be resilient in light of this challenge.

So for example, for our faculty, you all know we have tried to stand up a bunch of support to enable those of you who are less familiar to become more familiar. I am so grateful for the faculty champions like time, and our ADTS faculty and folks in every single department who have linked arms with those who are less capacious and really work together to set up communities.

Our folks in AI who have been on the front lines answering questions, delivering our webinar.

I understand from Melissa, that of the 13 that we’ve done to date, 912 have participated. Okay y’all we only have like 1200 faculty I mean that’s awesome right? And I am heart warmed and bowled over with the program.

It is really amazing! And there is more to come, they are finishing up today.
It is really exciting, and it's not just the didactic work, it's the informal work that's going on between colleagues, I see Cat who is another member of ADTS and it's just the collegiality of our academic community that is so important. Number 1.

Number 2 we are doing a lot of college specific planning, academic continuity planning. Why is that at the college? Well because colleges are different, they use different kinds of pedagogy for their work and the kind of decisions that we may be facing as we move along through the semester, really require that specific disciplinary and pedagogical lens.

So I know your colleges and department chairs have been hard at work, working with each and every one of you to kind of think through how we are operating in this virtual, remote online environment.

We had to deliver new technology solutions to be able for that to happen. I know that our vice president Kendrick Ketchum will talk a little bit about what UTS has been such a critical partner in this.

But that's really a clear element and an important part for our faculty too. Now granted it's not, I hate to say this to my faculty colleagues, but it's not just about our faculty, our staff have really been critical.

It's the academic support and administrative support that lets us get our job done every single day. I am thinking about what our students are doing in housing, and how we are transitioning to what you had all learned yesterday, that we are expecting our students to be at home while they engage in our virtual, remote, online instruction.

That takes a lot of logistics and planning so our academic support units are really working hard. Academic innovations is another one, advising will be up online, the libraries, you know it goes on and on.

Lastly of course it is about our students. We are thinking really carefully about how do we continue to deliver the experience that typically would be happening on campus.

Online instruction can be wonderfully engaging in a different kind of way and that is what we are trying to deliver for our students.

How do we work on campus and off campus and how do we keep that important sense of community. We are roadrunners and that is something special.

We want to make sure we are able to keep those distinctive elements alive and flourishing in a way that is important. That is perhaps a good place to stop and transition over to my CFO colleague.

Veronica Mendez:
Thank you, my name is Veronica Salazar Mendez. I serve as the senior vice president for business affairs here at UTSA.

My role throughout this emergency management exercise has been to make sure that the operations are running so you can think about all the work that my division provides is it actually gets those wheels running for the bus, it greases them.

We have been working the infrastructure that everybody is supported by, whether by human resource support, procurement, purchasing things, contracts, expediting things that are needed to be able to serve in an emergency, are all kind of coming out of the areas that I oversee as well as the facility side of the Campus Safety side.

I want to just remind us that the university has had planning efforts for a long time that have got us thinking on how to respond for emergencies.

We have set up an emergency response team that has been stood up in the university and it goes well deep into the organization with systems and processes in place on what to do in case of an emergency.

Obviously this is a very different kind of event but we can always pivot for those things that are different and we can adapt quickly and be able to respond and that is maybe something that may be opaque to many of you or maybe it’s as transparent because it is working.

I just wanted to remind us that there are some processes in place already where we were preparing for emergencies and that we were using that as a basis as we go through every single day.

Now every single day things change and we have to pivot, and that is what we are saying, that just means we are adapting and we are trying to be very agile as the situation evolves.

I didn't say this and I apologize but I do everybody it's been so great to see that the academic community is still rolling forward and taking the first step into uncharted territory.

We are going to go next with our telecommuting workforce so it's really nice to see that you will be able to support them as well through this process.

One thing I wanted to mention just so that you know. The division of business affairs has over 200 employees that are already telecommuting, so what we’re thinking about the telecommuting workforce, we have an internal resource that can support all of you and you know the departments and all of the university in that process as well. So we intend to have similar support like we had for faculty for our staff and departments, so that they can think through all of those issues and the things that we have already lived through by having a workforce that is already telecommuting in the division of business affairs.
Hi, I’m Heather Shipley. I’m a senior vice Provost of academic affairs and Dean of the University College and I just first want to start by saying thank you for all your hard work this week.

I know it has been a heavy lift but you guys are jumping in and I really appreciate that.

I want to focus on a couple things that are a little different than the teaching piece because I know Melissa will come back to how we are converting stuff to online.

It's those other parts of your job that focus on research and service. So we know that that's been disrupted too. You've had conferences canceled some of you are up for promotion and tenure next year, CPE reviews, we know all of this is happening and you’re wondering about it so we are thinking about it and we will have more details for you on what that looks like, timelines, resources, to help you think about how to put these things in your CV and how you keep carrying on your research productivity, some of the service activities you do, so I know your focus has been on teaching and getting those classes online but we are also going to have resources for you there and look at our timelines and processes as we move forward during this time.

Melissa do you want to share some thoughts from your vantage point?

Sure! Absolutely! Thank you. I am thrilled to be a part of this team, I truly am. I got to start and thank everybody, every faculty member, every member of the academic innovation team, Veronica, my colleagues, because this has been a full team effort.

A couple of things to know, a lot of schools outsourced their online. So in situations like this they might call Pearson or Wiley and say “we have to hurry up get some things done”

We don't here because we focus on the quality for the faculty and our students. So it has been a real partnership working with the deans who identified points of contact for us, the department heads who identified faculty Sherpa, faculty champions to work and to get this done.

We are committed to not just getting the webinars through and getting everybody up and running but we are committed to making sure to continue to refine the courses that are being built to make sure that we embed proctoring as a part of these and so we, Veronica, thank you for helping us move our proctorial contract quickly so faculty will be seeing more training on that but we will have an academic integrity solution ready to go to make sure we’re meeting
accessibility issues and then also we have a plan for webinars that will continue through April, that will continue to build on the community that we have established through these virtual webinars.

We will also respond to a lot of the questions that faculty are raising, that we are going to develop as the semester goes on.

A big piece for us is how we make sure that these experiences are engaging for our students, and we will continue to focus on that. But the big picture, from the bottom of my heart, thank you so much for your participation.

We have 80 percent of our faculty who have already participated in webinars, more now, if we acknowledge the fact that we already had faculty teaching online, we will virtually have touched almost every faculty member by the end of this week. So thank you.

Taylor Eighmy:

I would like to get to questions right away, but let me offer this perspective as well, the coronavirus arrived in our thinking back in January when it was first reported out of Wuhan China.

We started our emergency operations planning back in January around this, we were dealing with the coronavirus back in January when we had members of our community who were on official business at the time, trying to come home, wondering what to do. So our student health services and our office of global initiatives was deeply involved with working with those individuals coming back from china and going through self-isolation.

When we brought back our program folks from Urbino Italy and now through the rest of Europe and anybody returning now from outside of the United States… We have been deeply engaged in all of this since early January.

Looking ahead, we as an executive team, have been meeting every day for three weeks now about this and the world is changing quickly and some of the scenarios we are modeling going forward in addition to what was announced last night.

Are more prevalence of community spread here in San Antonio and possibly the city or county or state invoking some level of lockdown in the community that is similar to what we are already seeing in Dallas and Austin?

We are also modeling what happens if we end up having here in Texas or in any of our metropolitan areas or here in San Antonio a more stringent lockdown like what you’re seeing in San Francisco. Our attempt throughout this, independent of the scenario that we are with at this time between now and the end of the semester is our intent to try and deliver our academic enterprise for the rest of the semester and to prepare for summer school, independent of these scenarios.
We are thinking about changes in the situation that are occurring very rapidly, but our planning is deeply tied to the success of our online enterprise going forward.

So with that Tom, I would like to open up the floor panel for questions.

Tom Cannon:

That would be great, just to remind most of you online, there is about 400 of you now watching. If you know a colleague who may have an interest with what is going on right now, why don't you send them an email or text them to let them know that they can participate.

The first question line, I think Veronica you can handle this.

Can we please keep some food services, rec center, and JPL open? They are crucial.

Veronica Mendez:

Given the fact that we have implemented and the directives that we received from the system yesterday, to encourage telecommuting workforce we are going to have limited services on campus, the intent is to keep the roadrunner cafe open and so that food service will be available on campus. There will be available services in downtown center throughout this period of time and the food pantry on both campuses. The food pantry is actually offering packaged meals for pickup as well. There are services for food on campus that will be in limited locations but we will have them available.

Kimberly Espy:

Let me answer the JPL. The Dean of libraries Dean Hendrix has been in active planning with respect to the library. And the library really serves two functions, it now only provides information to faculty, students, and staff. But it also serves as a facility for many students who access the web and other things via computer terminals.

So we are committed to keeping the library open, so physically open so that folks can access, at the same time though we need to respect the distancing requirements with respect to the number of people who can be in specific spaces at one time.

What you will see is that some of the spaces that were designed for group collaborations and group meetings will not be open but terminals will be.

Obviously online access, the library currently has online access all the time.

The plan is to go from a 9 to 6 open from Monday through Friday. At least for the first week and then we will continue to evaluate relative to usage.
That is both here on main campus as well as on downtown campus. The current thinking about the rec center is that the rec center will unfortunately be closed.

I know that is disappointing for some and certainly the ability to exercise is one key element to how we all manage stressful circumstances.

At the same time, when one does things like exercise, one also is typically, depending on how hard you are working, is emitting things that probably aren't very useful with respect to our social distancing. That is the current thinking at this point, but unfortunately we will work as quickly as we can.

When hopefully we are pass this we can reopen that as soon as we can.

Tom Cannon:

Kimberly this question is also probably one you can handle.

How does the transition to online particularly affect NTT faculty who often teach three to four classes per semester. Are NTT faculty provided with additional support?

Kimberly Espy:

Yeah sure, I don't know if Melissa you want to answer that? My understanding is that our support is open to all of our faculty. The requirements and the help that folks need doesn't fall along lines of how your particular appointment is structured.

We have some NTT faculty who are incredibly experienced in this domain, then we have other tenure-track faculty who are or not. So our approach has been that everyone needs to come and join the merry band.

Melissa I don't know if you want to add…

Melissa Vito:

No, I think you captured it. So although some of our very best online faculty are NTT and we recognize what they are doing and we want to make sure that they receive compensation consistent with departmental standards and college standards.

But they have been huge champions so we're really looking at this as really one team one goal and you know, looking across all of our faculty.
Kimberly Espy:

We are experiencing some gap, this is partly why we set up the system of having both faculty champions in each department as well as a kind of point of contact in each college.

Please funnel that information through your department and to the person in charge, because then we can think through “oh my look there’s five faculty in this college and four in this that need training and how to use x, y, or z”

Then we will go ahead and deliver sessions to address those needs. So please be vocal, you are welcome to send me an email if you like or Melissa and we will think about how we will address that.

Melissa Vito:

Actually we have set up an academic education email that is checked regularly by Joe Cabarrus, and his team and then triaged across whatever area needs to respond.

So we are checking that regularly. It is solely devoted to responding to issues that we are dealing with.

Tom Cannon:

So Melissa it’s an email hotline essentially?

Kimberly Espy:

Actually that is a way better thing. Don’t send me an email, use that academic innovations email.

Melissa Vito:

I thought I would toss that in. We are checking that all the time.
Kimberly Espy:

Thank you!

Tom Cannon:

Melissa as a faculty member, I know Joe’s sitting here in front of me, how does the faculty access that email? Where would they find it online?

Heather Shipley:

So it's on… I can answer that and then Joe can chime in as you walk over here I'll kind of try to help you…

So it's on the FAQ pages of the coronavirus. So make sure you are paying attention to the coronavirus website. We are constantly updating the FAQS. There are specific ones for faculty, staff, and students.

So it is there, it has also been in the materials that have come out from academic innovations, but its academicinnovations@utsa.edu. I will let Joe chime in.

Joe Cabarrus:

You can phone in 210-458-4520 which is our main line, so my team which is helping classrooms is now converted to being a call center. We are actually funneling all the requests to the proper departments so that they don't get lost in translation, so we want to make sure that is happening for you.

Like I said if there is something that's happening, just email us, it's probably the easiest for routing purposes, so we can capture whatever information you have or questions, and we can get them to the right place.

Tom Cannon:

Would you repeat the phone number again and tell us how we can access the email?

Joe Cabarrus:
Its academicinnovations@utsa.edu and the phone number is 210-458-4520

The email went out I think to the faculty yesterday with that information, so you can find that there. You can visit the academic innovation website, it’s also there as well.

Taylor Eighmy:

I should say this, in times where the unexpected is happening all the time, we are moving to a new form of communication where I recognize that not everyone wants to read emails that I send out. I understand that.

But we are moving towards a social media focus around letting the community know that we’ve sent out important emails and we are updating our…

If you go to our home page for our website, you will see the coronavirus webpage right at the top of the homepage. That is where we are trying to put all of the information, mainly in the FAQ section and so a lot of the questions you might have can be found there.

We are going to err on the side of over communication using our social media channels, using our website, using our emails, and how we distribute those emails. That might be a bit of an overload but we would rather overload than under communicate at this time.

Tom Cannon:

Taylor you brought up summer classes and that’s really on the students will be registering and some are already…

So the question is, are all summer classes going to be online?

Kimberly Espy:

We are not prepared to make that decision at this point. I would really like to get through first of all implementing our online instruction on Monday. Number 1.

Number 2, I think we will do some evaluation with respect to what is on the books in terms for classes and then evaluating what has been stood up as a part of this process and then talking to faculty on how that will go.

Our instructional designers under Marcella and Shelly have been deployed towards this assistance so that naturally too will have some impact on some of the courses that they were building already in collaboration obviously with our faculty for this summer. So no, Tom, we
have made no decisions and obviously it would be at a college specific level, interacting with departments.

But the question is a good one and some of that depends too on how the pandemic persists or not.

Taylor said he’s an optimist, unfortunately I have to plan to be the pessimist, so between the two of us we are well planned and relative to going forward.

Taylor Eighmy:

Wait I thought I was the pessimist?

Kimberly Espy:

Then I get to be the optimist on occasion. So we are trying to think through what are the steps that would be needed in order to then make those decisions as they come.

Tom Cannon:

So it’s like one thing at a time.

Kimberly Espy:

Exactly, and what we try to do is forecast. You know what are those kind of action steps in a logic model so that when we come to them we already know then, what are the cascades that come forward from that?

Taylor Eighmy:

You know, I would add. I think I said this earlier, that our ability to successfully deliver, the remainder of this spring semester, so that our students who are graduating in May will be able to be graduated, not necessarily attend the graduation ceremony but be graduated in May is our highest priority relative to the academic enterprise.
I would say this in concert with Kimberly, that if we can do this well for the remainder of the semester, it sets us up well to be planning for how we deliver for our summer school, our programs offered in the summer. So thanks.

Melissa Vito:

I had a quick thing to add, actually, if you look at the trends for summer session enrollment, they have been moving online anyways. So organically the shift has already taken place, so that those are the courses that are filling, that is where the growth is.

So once the conversations occur and there is a broader academic decision about this, it’s not a hard move to make. We are already going in that direction.

Tom Cannon:

I would imagine in some cases, I teach a summer class, it's online. Because it’s an elective course it already has several hundred students, the cap could go up a little more to help students get out of here.

The good news is that you are already talking about that…

I think that's what faculty needs to know.

The next question concerns disability services, when will they communicate to faculty what if any new special accommodations will be necessitated for or needed for students by this new norm.

Heather Shipley:

So Students Disabilities has already been reaching out to faculty who have students that have accommodations, to remind them that those are accommodations that need to occur and then what accommodations work in the online environment compared to what we would have in a face to face or deliver on campus for students on a daily basis.

They’ve also asked those faculty to work closely with academic innovations to help set up their classrooms.

There are online courses in a manner that’s successful for those students, a lot of times that deals with closed captioning type things, or software that allows to do that compared to live streaming and recording.
So faculty have been contacted so please work with them on that and we also have software and resources that they’re developing to help with that.

We will as you saw in the email yesterday, keep limited services available through student disabilities. There are some things that we can’t do remotely for students and so they will have a limited staff available to help students who still have those.

Also we are putting adaptive processes into place in case students have new accommodations that they want to review that are different from those that have already filed with disability services and have a set of accommodations. They are putting a process into place that they can keep reviewing those and then those notifications would happen accordingly.

We usually have a handful of those, I won’t say a handful, a smaller number that happened after spring break so we don't expect a large number to come in but we are planning for that.

Kimberly Espy:

This is perhaps a great place to talk a little bit since we are talking about technology.

What UTS has done to enable the kind of remote working infrastructure, be it faculty online instruction, or be it our operations.

Kendra do you want to talk a little about that?

Kendra Ketchum:

Thank you faculty. I am Kendra Ketchum the vice president for information management and technology, and we have been working very closely in step with all of the academic units to come up with some strategies to ensure services are continued and provided.

So to do that we offer things to enable remote instruction, things like our network bandwidth, we have increased that bandwidth going in and out of the organization, to the technology and into the resources by about 20 GB.

That is pretty large considering we were sitting with about 2 GB since Saturday.

We feel very confident, we have tested that as well. I have utilization charts and everything, we have never even hit the 3 GB capacity going in and out of the organization.

So we’re very confident that we have the throughput to do the academic instruction and things we need to do even in sharing videos and online streaming content.
I will mention right now across the United States, we’re not the only group that is doing some telecommuting and internet service providers like Comcast and all of these people.

They were not expecting 90% of the workforce to go remote so right now they are experiencing some online connectivity issues. You might start to see at home what was normally a fast throughput for you might degrade a little bit.

There are great tools we put out on the university technology solutions website. The website is our tech cafe, it was sent out in an email on Friday as well as the coronavirus site. We have got a technology resources tab at the top of that.

All of these tools take you back to the things that we are serving back to the organization, utilizing our tech cafe resources.

Those are all our services we were providing. VPN increased network connectivity, we are going to be offering your telephony options from home.

That VPN connectivity is extremely important, virtual private networks. Especially for Veronica’s teams that are doing pretty extensive work in PeopleSoft that need to actually come back in securely.

We’re also integrating Blackboard. We are working with Joe and the Web Ex extensions into Blackboard. We have got plenty of licenses, we’ve provisioned this across the campus.

I’ll also mention the tech cafe, we will be doing some great testing with them tomorrow. I will say that normal call volume for us is sitting around 120 a day and yesterday we hit 390. Out of that I actually got numbers that more than three-fourths of that was asking how do we remotely connect.

So I feel confident that faculty, staff, and students are asking the right questions right? So we are going to get these resources to them.

Our tech cafe will be open daily from 7am to 7pm. So this means even if they’re off site providing this remote support and you have a question, you simply call the 2104585555 number and that will get you to the tech cafe, or simply email techcafe@utsa.edu and that email will get answered by our teams.

Taylor Eighmy:

And Kendra that information is in one of the FAQs subject topics.

Kendra Ketchum:
Absolutely, it is listed on the corona site. It says tech resources and there’s a tab you click on it and there is an entire list of all of those tools we are providing to the organization.

Tom Cannon:

It’s interesting you say that, I have been monitoring all of the updates. Every time I have a question, fortunately, I just scroll and something is already there in answers.

So kudos to you all…

Another question online, and is concerning, since we talked about the rec center.

So for clarification is the University stopping the deductions for Rec Center and parking?

Veronica Mendez:

So with an email that came back out yesterday, we made the decision as directed by system to be able to reimburse or sub those for students. We are now going into consideration for what’s going to happen with faculty and staff.

Obviously we would apply the same rules and I feel that we would come up to a decision to you that will be satisfactory.

Kimberly Espy:

The only thing that I would caution is that this is going to take a little bit of time given we are you know halfway through march, it may be that if you are a faculty member for example and you have a membership at the rec and they do a monthly draw, that might still be against your pay stub, just save it and we will have a process and the whole point will be to get those resolved.

Don't panic, it's the same financial staff that are working on all the other pieces and we intend to diligently work through these.

I really appreciate the patience everyone has shown so far and give us a bit more time to do some of these sorts of things.

But obviously no one is going to be paying for something that no one is using or not able to be using.
Tom Cannon:

Also your questions are important because it gives the leadership team if they haven't already thought about “okay this is the next thing we need to be addressing”

Taylor Eighmy:

Tom actually, let me provide a little bit of clarity. As you might imagine, each president is deeply engaged in his or her community coordinating about these things locally. I mentioned that I talked to the ISD superintendents, I talked to the other presidents of Higher Ed institutions here, I’m talking to city and county government. I am also talking on a daily basis with UT system. There is a desire obviously that as one institution goes within the 14 institutions.

Let’s separate out the six health science centers from the eight academic institutions. The eight academic institutions are trying to work very closely together so that the things we do are generally in alignment with each other even though they may not happen exactly at the same time.

The sort of the urgency at Austin is a little bit different than the urgency of pivoting in RGV because there is community spread already happening at Austin and there isn't at the valley at this time.

We are all trying to be in lockstep about this to the best extent possible and the Chancellor is working really diligently to make sure that all of us are all in as close alignment as close as possible given the unique circumstances we’re each facing.

Yesterday afternoon the Chancellor who had been working very closely with all eight academic presidents, put out a general consensus that we all had agreed to. Around I guess four or five o’clock yesterday, about what system academic institutions are generally agreeing to and there was consensus amongst all eight institutions that refunds were important.

As you can imagine and as what has been alluded to, the concept of returning refunds and the process of doing that fairly and completely for a community of 40,000 people is non-trivial.

So we are doing our very best as we go forward. Even while the situation on the ground is changing in real time.

So it is our promise to you, it’s going to take a little bit of time for us to figure it out but we understand how important that is, how fair it is to do it correctly and we are doing it along with every other academic institution in the University Of Texas System.

Tom Cannon:
We appreciate the sensitivity that the other presidents are considering too.

Another question, I am downtown and teach evenings for students without computers and or Wi-Fi who work full time days. I have some concerns, if the library closes at 6 pm my students won't have access to a computer.

Any thoughts?

Kimberly Espy:

Yeah, so Dean Hendrix and I had a conversation about just that, that you know relative of the critical role libraries play in terms of access as well.

Obviously we are trying to balance that access also with respect to our requirements for social distancing. So he is looking at that quite carefully.

I think to date this past week, which of course doesn't reflect an ongoing week.

I think he told me that there were 75 individuals who came through downtown and almost 400 here on main campus, so he’s going to be evaluating that.

The trick is that we are trying to be as thoughtful about the health of our workforce too, and there are some limits with respect to that, but he shares those concerns and is working quite hard to think about how do we make that accessible.

Heather Shipley:

Technology resource piece that Kendra’s resource team has through the FAQs and emails that have gone out to you. Spectrum and other internet providers are providing 60 days of free internet access for students. We highly encourage you to make sure your students know that because that is another resource for them to be able to get that potentially at home that they wouldn't have had previously into this situation.

Taylor Eighmy:

And we are prepared to lobby like crazy with spectrum and other internet providers to extend those kinds of benefits to our community.

So if that is working well, we want to know, if it is not working well we want to know and that is a very important resource to put out there.
Tom Cannon:

Thank you for addressing that because several of those online expressed the spectrum concern.

Faculty is concerned about staff is presented in this question.

How will we be caring for staff who may be furloughed or temporarily laid off? With the millions going into new buildings it seems we could find a way to support them.

Taylor Eighmy:

Can you repeat that? I missed the last statement.

Tom Cannon:

It says with the millions going into new buildings, assuming on campus, it seems we could find a way to support them. Are staff anticipated to be furloughed or laid off?

Veronica Mendez:

No… We anticipate to telecommuting workforce means that they are just working from home. So the message we are sending to our staff is we need you to have all of the things you need to perform your duties from home.

But just let me kind of pause a bit and tell you about the process we are following to understand the different situations that the different staff may have on campus.

Last week we asked all of our leadership to go down to the department level and identify person by person, staff member by staff member, what the critical nature of the work would be if it needed to be done remotely, if it could be done remotely, or if it had to be done on campus, or if it is essential or non-essential.

It was to categorize them and to understand how the workers would be deployed and how they could perform their work from home.

Our intent has been and this goes to the principles that President Eighmy responded to.
We will do our best for our community. We will support our staff and figure out a way to make sure that everybody is engaged and has a role to play and just you saw something here an example, folks we are doing class now they are helping support the academic enterprise with call centers.

We are looking for the community to come together and work through that and support all of the new areas that we didn't imagine we needed.

So first of all we’re going to make sure that we work as hard as we can to make sure that there’s enough work for people to do that we can help them out and they can help us out to carry and deliver this mission.

Our conversation has been, “we are on emergency mode, we are asking people to participate and engage and do their critical functions now so that this plan can work”

So we are asking that everybody can garner up their strength and help us through this time. I know that people are worried about themselves too and their families but we really need to rally as a community and come together and help each other out so that we can deliver on this academic mission.

We will then have processes in place to make sure that folks that are ill have some emergency or if they don't have sick time or vacation time, that there will be some sort of emergency leave so that they can take care of themselves and families.

Just with this focus in the first week was really to make sure that we have the infrastructure to deliver the academic mission. So that has not even come into our conversations.

Taylor Eighmy:

Veronica, thank you.

There will be more communications coming out this week and next week as we pivot to put into place and implement these things that have to happen as we obviously evolve into a new way of doing business for the rest of the semester and perhaps into the summer and beyond for a little bit.

So there are additional communications that are going to be coming out today, tomorrow, early next week, there is much underway that we are working on that are really reflective of our preparing for different scenarios and there is still a lot of communication that has to come out relative to the phase that we are going to be operating under at least for a little while, based on the emails and announcements last night.
We have more communications that are coming relative to this and it’s specifically, we know about the concerns and fears that the staff have and we are going to be communicating about that, which is why we are very happy to be having a town hall on Friday with staff.

Veronica Mendez:

I want to take the opportunity since we are talking about staff, the services that we are providing whether they are remote or on campus, require people working and it’s important to know that there are some functions on campus that will remain operational, there is, you know we intend to continue to have some research as you know going on campus. That needs to be supported. It is supported through facilities, security, and other things, so there is an expectation that there will be a core group of staff that will be required to work.

We need to make sure we are diligent with following all of the social distancing rules and that we can keep them as healthy and as safe as possible. But there will be a need for some staff to report to campus and do work here.

Kimberly Espy:

Another way to think of it as faculty, is that I have yet to encounter a department or college that doesn't have a ton of projects that they say they will get to them this summer. Those are perfect things to assign staff whose jobs will be changing but can get done remotely.

We have asked supervisors to get creative and think about those sorts of things that we can deploy to our workforce flexibly.

I am 100% confident that we all have a very long backlog of those sorts of things that we can tackle in that environment.

Tom Cannon:

I don't know what role UTSA has with this, but there are quite a few questions about child care, and the fact that many faculty are going to be having their children at home, having to deal and educate them in many cases, while trying to educate our students at the same time.

They are concerned about the performance expectations that they would have, has this been thought of, do you have anything you can share?

Heather Shipley:
We understand this situation isn't normal and it's not like you're working remotely while children are at school or spouses or partners or whoever. We know this will be a little different and we ask patience. We know that sometimes you know especially if you are doing virtual meetings, people may pop up into your camera screen and things like that.

We just ask people to continue to be patient with each other, it isn't a typical remote working type of environment, it is under a little bit different situations.

But as I said earlier, yes we are thinking through those in review pieces, those TMP pieces, all of those. How we look at those, the timelines of those, what is evaluated, how people get credited with things like that. What is happening at other institutions, our sister institutions and peer institutions as we evaluate that.

More to come on that, we don't have details on that yet, as we try to tackle transitioning to online first, but you will get more information.

Kimberly Espy:

I want to agree with Heather that the whole point is to be flexible and to be caring and to keep our key interests of faculty and staff at the core.

Taylor Eighmy:

These are unprecedented times, 1 in a 100 year event for the globe you might say. When you have such challenging unprecedented times, one of our core values as an institution is the health and well-being of our students, staff, and faculty.

We are going to have to do our best around the well-being component of this by doing our very best to do no harm relative to your academic trajectory, your tenure process, your annual reviews, all of those things, we have to be very flexible as Kimberly says about this, because these are such unprecedented times and we just have to..

Our ability to pivot and be creative and be thoughtful and be caring. And to care about health and well-being is implicit here.

I also have to say, our core mission going forward, we are going to have to work hard to make sure we deliver for the rest of the semester, and perhaps into the summer, and perhaps into the beyond. At least for this semester for now and that is one of our principal areas of focus.

Tom Cannon:
One of the questions revolves around pass/fail.

If there is so much stress with faculty and staff who have never done online, is there any consideration to making all classes pass/fail?

Kimberly Espy:

I am not a fan of a one size fits all application of a rule.

We have worked really hard to enable our faculty to support them in standing up the appropriate pedagogy to enable us to deliver the original learning objectives of the course.

That’s what we’re operating now, some universities, for example Stanford or Berkeley, who are on a quarter system, they closed two weeks before the term ended and they used, they had three different applications that you could use relative to completing the students' work.

Those are recommendations right? But at this point I am not in favor of a one size fits all.

I am 100% confident in our faculty to be thinking deeply about their pedagogy and how to complete those learning objectives, and as the situation evolves, or perhaps will stay stable to the end of the semester classes I hope, that then we will be able to complete as intended and we’ll be able to provide grades in a way that is best suited as a part of that academic continuity plan.

Taylor Eighmy:

I will also say that there will be a group starting up of system folks and the general academic institution Provost to be discussing these kinds of things going forward, because we all have to be working with our crediting bodies whether it’s SACS or ABET etc.

So we are going to be working out these things around maintaining the integrity of a faculty member to be able to manage the academic progression of their classroom, while adhering to these very extenuating circumstances that are out there.

So there is going to be discussions amongst the aid institutions with a system about this with our crediting bodies but the one size fit all model may not be necessary if we can have a little bit more clarity about how we might approach this if things get a little more complicated between now and the end of the semester.

Tom Cannon:
I like the robust chat room that you all are sharing. Many of you all are answering each other's questions which is great, and referencing many faculty to links that have already been created online.

We have a few more minutes, our leadership team needs to get back to making this all move forward.

Are there any questions? I don't see any additional questions that I don't think I've addressed.

Taylor Eighmy:

In the chatroom?

Tom Cannon:

Right

Taylor Eighmy:

Wow…

Tom Cannon:

We have got a couple here. Taylor shouldn't have said anything.

This is concerning fellowships, these are very important to graduate students as graduate school costs a lot, three jobs, many government, and high paying jobs have GPA requirements, internships, I have an intern in fact in the president's office that is working right now.

Does anyone want to address internships, GPA requirements, fellowships, and the concern that students are going to have about not getting the better grades because of this whole situation.

Kimberly Espy:

Tom, that is a great reason why the one size fits all, here is how you have to do it, wouldn't work. Because the internships and field placements vary tremendously with respect to where they're accomplishing that.
So for example, the college of education, students are out there doing their student teaching, now the schools are closed, that is a different scenario than we were under even two weeks ago.

So you want something that will take into account, not only what is happening at the ground at that location, but also in the context of the state rules, you know the state has rules with respect to how many hours you have to have for your student teaching.

That is why the college level planning is particularly important, and those guidelines will be developed according to those situations that are very specific.

Taylor Eighmy:

Actually Kimberly, I think it would be helpful for everybody if you could just briefly go back and talk about the academic planning exercises you've asked each of the deans to undertake. Because I think that would provide another level of compassion and concern that is in place on how to manage all of this.

Kimberly Espy:

To your point Taylor, we started this exercise at the colleges, oh boy, what seems like an eternity ago now, but it was about a month ago.

Using the emergency preparedness material out of Lorenzo shop, developed some specific guidance to help the colleges really get down to the level of each course in thinking through how we would continue, under what kind of circumstance and to think through some of these impacts.

Then those were collated at the level of the department and each of the colleges has a specific academic continuity plan that addresses the variation and how they deliver their courses and what the course objectives are to be able to address these kinds of circumstances.

They have been working on those for the last four weeks I believe, the libraries and the Vice Provost units as well. So we really are somewhat, I would say well prepared but I don't want to say that pending another… You know.. Other circumstances to which we have to deploy them. The point really is to address and take into account those very specific circumstances that each and every one of our colleges has right?

Tom Cannon:
I appreciate the fact that you’re giving us as much information as possible, general guidelines to the colleges and letting those at the front be able to make decisions that make a lot of sense.

So there is a question online, Melissa you may be able to answer this, or one of your team that is here.

We are getting a lot of emails about Blackboard Collaborate, that it is being overwhelmed and that we should use zoom. Is that true now? Or what is the best? And Marcella is here.

Melissa Vito:

I will make a blanket statement and Marcella can jump up with some more details.

When we started to build how we were going to work with faculty and do our training, we wanted to get faculty comfortable with using our LMS which is a blackboard because we knew that not all of our faculty used it.

Their feature collaboration is what allowed us to do some of our work. It’s probably not the best on the planet and so I’ll let Marcella jump in with some of the details, but we did have a kind of an overall goal to why we started with blackboard.

Marcella Ramirez:

Blackboard Collaborate is great with having a synchronous meeting with your students as long as it's under 200 students all together in one session. So that is why there may be some comments out there that might not be great, but it is actually really good for under 200 students.

If there are over 200 students we recommend splitting it into different sessions so all students can participate at different times.

That is the only limit of Blackboard Collaborate is the 200 students.

There is also WebEx. We integrated it within Blackboard, so you can utilize that tool and have synchronous meetings there and that can handle up to a thousand students per session so those are two recommendations.

Tom Cannon:

I ask you to introduce yourself.
Marcella Ramirez:

Oh yes, my name is Marcella Ramirez and I am the executive director of digital learning. So I have been assisting with faculty to help them move online and my staff has been working closely with faculty on the webinars to be comfortable with the technology as well as the pedagogy to move online.

Tom Cannon:

So that's why you look so tired?

Melissa Vito:

Her team is amazing! Big shout out to Claudia and Mayra and Marcella, awesome team!

Taylor Eighmy:

I don't know how much time we have left, I wanted to share one final thought with everyone in this current session.

Thank you for joining us, thank you for all the things you have been working on, and thank you for your patience. We understand your concern and frustrations, thank you for being nimble.

I can't believe that 80%, what was it, Melissa? That 80% have now participated, it's a fabulous number.

We are in uncharted territories, we are sailing in some rough seas right now. I know that…

Whether it is taking small joy in the fact that 80% of the faculty have already participated in some webinar training or updating, that is something really golden to hang your hat on. Sorry to mix metaphors here…

But I also want to say this, I talked to a lot of presidents around the state, I talked to obviously my colleagues within UT System. We are ahead of a lot of institutions on how we are pivoting and responding and planning and preparing.

We’re looking over the horizon farther than most institutions, I have presidents calling me and asking for advice on how to do this, that, and the other.

It's because of everyone sitting here around this table and all of you that we are able to be in this position to be as well prepared as we can be for the uncertain future that’s coming. So I just
wanted to say thank you from my heart to each and every one of you for all you are doing to support our institution as we navigate these very rough waters. I appreciate it very much so thank you thank you thank you.

Tom Cannon:

Our time together has now come to an end, we set aside an hour. I appreciate all of you. We had over 400 attending online, on behalf of the Academy of distinguished teaching scholars, thank you to Taylor, and Kimberly, Veronica, Heather, and Melissa from afar. Thank you so much.

Especially taking time, and making time in your extremely busy schedule to visit with the faculty. Your ongoing transparency through constant timely updates has been sincerely appreciated by the faculty.

We all know the situation as Taylor said is uncharted territory, and that all of us will learn to adapt as necessary. We also do want to say thank you to the hundreds of UTSA staff who keep this university functioning, we don’t always see you, but we all rely on you. Thanks for all you do, all you are doing now, and all you will be doing in the weeks and the months ahead.

And finally to the faculty who are watching, I have learned during my two decades here at UTSA, the important role that we have as faculty, to encourage students, to motivate each of them to succeed, to instill confidence in themselves, and in this unique situation to have a role to come to students fears.

We are on the front lines with our students, and though they may not always act as such, they are relying on us for guidance and leadership.

Remember that no one is not telling you to teach, students come to UTSA for your professional knowledge and expertise that has not and will not change. You the faculty bring value to UTSA. The only change is the methodology for delivering it to your students.

I have confidence that with the support of the UTSA leadership you see today, the hundreds of UTSA faculty, plus your dedication of a teaching professional, our collective creativity will definitely help us to move forward.

But now it is time for us to get back to our computers so thank you for coming.