Good afternoon Roadrunners. Thank you for joining us for this virtual town hall for students. There will be another for staff tomorrow at noon. Today’s town hall will focus on information related to academic continuity and business operations impacted by the corona virus. I’m LT Robinson, Senior Vice Provost for student affairs and Dean of Students. I will serve as the moderator. I’ll introduce the panelists and allow them to make brief statements and then we’ll continue with your questions. Share your questions in the chat box of this stream.

It’s my pleasure to introduce Dr. Taylor Eighmy (president), Kimberly Espy, Ms. Mendez, Veronica Salazar-Mendez, Heather Shipley, Melissa Veto, we also have some divisional leaders available to answer your questions. I’ll turn it over to President Eighmy and we’ll start.

Dr. E: Thank you for joining us today, we appreciate you spending time with us, this is an unprecedented time in the history of our country. This is a pandemic once in 100 years. It'll be profoundly impactful to the global community and to the nation and the state of Texas and San Antonio. We've been paying close attention to this since January when the pandemic was first declared or the outbreak. We’ve been working closely with the office of global initiatives for getting people home from Europe and China. We’ve been undergoing much planning as we prepare for these kinds of events. I can imagine that this is a very troubling moment for all of you.

I will share this I did see some Runners in cap and gowns at the front of the university taking grad photos. There are moments of levity like that and creativity. I can imagine there is a lot of concern, worry, and fear. You might be fearful for family and friends who are older and in risk categories.

I did see today that this isn’t just impacting the 60 or older age group, or the high risk categories. There are for those 20, 30, and 40 years old. This is serious. It won’t surprise you to know that things are being done with deep synergy with other organizations specifically other UT system colleges. Here locally, we’ve been deeply coordinated with the ISD’s and with SA Metro Health. The mayor and judges office as well.

Especially with UT Health San Antonio. All of us have been collaborating and working closely to be prepared for this time. There are decisions that are being made about our institution that will keep these 2 guiding principles at the fore front. The health and wellbeing of each student, staff, and faculty is most important. We’re going to do our very best to get you to graduation and continue your academic trajectory. Your student success is essential and we want to make that happen.

As this situation becomes more complex I expect some decision making will be made by the governor and city and county governments. There are things we’ll be deeply engaged in but there are quick moving elements that we have to prepare for. We have been working diligently over the last 10 weeks to be prepared for all this.

We’ve been looking at other scenarios that involve additional things. Today, we’re here to talk about next week and the rest of the semester and getting you to graduation. Getting you ready for summer school and the fall as well. We want to spend some time answering your questions about the rest of this semester.

I’d like to turn this over to Provost Espy
Provost Espy: I’m disappointed we’re here but let me say that you’re our first priority and at the center of our hearts. Under these circumstances we’re trying to deliver the best student experience you can have both inside the classroom which is virtual now. Outside of the classroom will take place through virtual and remote modalities.

The colleges are working very hard to provide and transition into online instruction. Some of you are familiar because you’ve taken some classes through online means. Those who haven’t or aren’t as familiar… We’ve setup webinars and transitions and trainings. As of yesterday 85% of faculty have participated in these trainings. It’s been heartwarming and a robust response.

Talking about our external experience. Knowing things like cancelling graduation and move to an individually tailored experience isn’t what you’re looking forward to for those seniors. At the same time we’re working hard to make it a distinctive experience and hopeful news from over the summer. My other colleagues are working really hard whether its student affairs, housing, dining, etc. So we can continue to belong.

Lastly, you’ll be hearing more about support mechanisms for online learning to enable success for graduation or your track.

Veronica: First of all, I feel for you roadrunners. I know it’s been difficult and challenging transitioning to online. From all the campus services that have to work so you can have that online experience we’ve been working diligently to make sure your experience is as good as it can be. Even our staff are taking on this challenge. We’ve stood up emergency response teams that has been operational for 6 weeks. We’ve had to work to bring students home from abroad and know we have your wellbeing at heart and will continue to work to the best of our abilities.

Heather: Good afternoon, our hearts go out to you. I know it’s a hard time and I know it’s hard going online. As Provost Espy said we’re working to get your classes up and running. I encourage you to interact and reach out to them. They’re here to work with you and provide that support. Your academic success is the most important aspect we’re working on. They’re there to help you and they want to hear from you.

I encourage you to work with your academic advisors and other student support services. Whether its student disability or tutoring. They’re still here to support you not just that 1 on 1 class time. We’re here so reach out.

Dr. T: Melissa I know you’re calling in but take it away

Melissa: I’m a proud remote roadrunner. I wanted to let you know part of my role is to see the area that builds online classes. We’ve been working and growing with faculty over the last year and a half. We want them to be high quality. With faculty we think of the courses through the eyes of a student. What will it look like for that student to be engaged and feel a sense of community?

Even though we’ve been working quickly we started knowing this was coming about a month ago. We started to pull the team together to really accelerate our work. Over 1000 faculty have worked with us over the past week. There is high commitment and interest with whom you’ll be doing classes with.

Again, we’ve done this quickly it might not be the most perfect class online but know we have our team there ready to tweak and improve and continue to make sure you get everything you
need. The other thing is that I’ll seek student feedback over the next couple months about the experience to make sure we’re improving.

We have an email address for academicinnovation@utsa.edu and if you have thoughts or experiences use to let us know. Thank you and I’m honored to be on this panel and team.

Dr. T: Couple more points I want to make real quick. One, as you can imagine we have a lot of talent in the UT system about public health and epidemics and pandemics. The current thinking as a collection of 14 institutions is that this is likely to continue into May, June, July and perhaps August. That’s some of the best estimates and predictions.

That has guided some of our thinking. You should also know we’re 1 of 14 institutions and one of the subset that are academic institutions. The system wants to be uniform with decisions being made moving forward. Some decisions you heard of yesterday were made by presidents of the system and schools. Postponing graduation was needed because of all the restrictions being put on us. Some things being decided will be driven by collective decision making from the system and all component institutions.

LT: First, we’ll start with a comment. They want to express their thanks for staff and faculty for keeping them informed in all the ways you have. Everyone they’ve spoken with have been helpful.

First question, it’s about tutoring and the details with that.

Dr. Espy: Make sure you’re checking the coronavirus website, it’s continually updated and we’re going to a daily digest format that students will get. We’re happy you find it useful so keep at it.

Tammy: I’m Tammy vice provost for student success. Many student programs report through our division. Tutoring services and Thomas Rivera Center, I can talk about tutoring services through TRC and Math Matters. Both will be deploying using Blackboard collaborate or GO board. They’re working with respective faculty to set a plan together for small groups and individual tutoring through one of those scenarios. We’re going to reach out to students and faculty for that.

Supplemental instruction I’ll answer some of that as well. We’ll be providing services through Blackboard collaborate students will be in their same classes. Academic coaching will be available virtually through WebEx. Our academic advisors, its registration next week, they’re working diligently to support you. They’re going to be available through phone and WebEx so they can still meet with you.

Female Speaker: Some of you use services through your colleges. They should be communicating with you for how those services will be offered. The other thing I want to say along with the corona virus website and the daily digest is that sometimes as students you have a preferred email and UTSA email. We encourage you to check both accounts. They might come to various forms of your email depending upon the list being pulled. Most of your faculty will be communicating through Blackboard as well.

Espy: You’re saying registration starts next week let me turn it over to Lynn Barnes

Lynn: We’re on schedule to continue with registration. Our team has been working very hard to make sure that goes without any problems. The scheduled times will be available. We’ll have support available through One Stop and chat capabilities. We’re working behind the scenes with
other offices to make sure when you run into issues we’ll respond quickly to your needs. We are business as usual as far as the service you’ll expect whether it’s financial aid or through the veteran’s office.

The main are to communicate with us will be through One Stop.

LT: Our next questions go back to those general course work items that are face to face like wood working, labs, architecture. How will that work?

Espy: Each college has developed an academic continuity plan. Each plan looks at the course offerings from each college. Each faculty member comes up with a suitable activity that will be delivered moving forward through whatever format is occurring.

Your faculty member will be in touch about how that will unfold. Heather do you have specifics?

Heather: I don’t have for each course. But for a course where you’re doing the lab yourself, your faculty member or GTA may be conducting that lab through video for you and you’ll use the data set formulated to apply that material. Different colleges are approaching this in different ways. If not they’re modifying your projects.

Some students do projects with Fiesta so they’ll approach that project differently. They’re modifying that to give you the same skillset that you would have gotten in the face to face manner.

LT: We have a question about refunds and how that will work.

Veronica: We are committed to the message that went out in terms of what will be refunded. We ask for your patience since we’re focusing on your ability to start classes. That takes a lot of effort for us. The next step …. Remember we’re also sending our work force home. Once they’re setup that’s the first order of business. We have the arrangements we’ve made with you and we’re going to honor those it’s just a matter of time.

Dr. T: I would add this as a follow on to what Veronica shared with you. The presidents of the 8 academic institutions are talking each day with the system and chancellor. It was our collective decision that we all behave in an identical fashion in how we’re going about tackling refunds. We’ve all agreed this is going to happen but as Veronica indicated this will take time. We’re working closely with the UT system and other universities. On Monday morning there is another conversation between senior staff and presidents about refunds. It’s going to happen it’s a matter of what’s going to happen and how we’re going to get it done.

There are concerns about the resources you need and wanting these dollars to come back. We understand how important that is and we’re going to do our best to get to that but it’s going to take some time.

Espy: Those of you who have lived in dorms, housing has sent out a survey relative to an exception process. Please respond. Generally, if the service isn’t available you’ll receive a prorated reimbursement. The rec center is closed and not available for faculty, staff, or students. So effective the day it’s closed you calculate days and we’ll apply that to your account.

Veronica: Make sure you’re up for electronic transfers so we can send it to your bank when we process it.
LT: Question about computer labs. Will some be available and some labs have software that no others have availability how will that work?

Espy: Generally, we understand most students use facilities because they don't have that access at home. You go into the library to access materials for your course work. The library is planning on being open relative to the facility. Folks are able to come use the terminals. Using our social distancing procedure. The library will be setup so that things are roughly 6 feet apart. The group collaboration rooms will not have furniture. Those facilities will be open.

Generally, access to software will be enabled electronically but check with department and the courses they're taking.

Heather: For specific software we're working with UTS to create a virtual desktop environment so you can access that while at home so you can do projects and faculty can assign projects. Please interact with your faculty members and colleges. If you have more technical issues related to accessing it virtually you can do that through the Tech Café and Kendra is coming to explain it more.

Kendra: Greetings I'm the VP for information management for UTSA. We have several resources for everyone. Some of those resources are the tech café as of 10 minutes ago all are answering calls remotely. They're at home working. As of 10 minutes ago we've handled 290 calls. It's a testament to us organizing quickly to adapt and respond to this situation to provide services.

If you're experiencing issues at home and can't get connected there are things on our website nestled on the corona virus site. If you click on the tab you can see the services we offer. In some of those situations you're going to have be patient and you can test your speeds. Our internet bandwidths are being measured and monitored to make sure it's getting taken care of. Zoom and WebEx are all supported and we're monitoring 24/7. The tech café is open 7am to 7pm. They started bright and early so if you need help go to techcafe@utsa.edu you can also dial their number.

Espy: What about folks who don't have internet at home

Kendra: On that website the FCC made an announcement for ATT, Time warner, etc… They are providing 2-3 months of services for internet connectivity. They're offering small hot spots that can connect to your phones and allow you to do file transfer etc. We've also worked with the academic enterprise to make sure the content is being delivered so you don't have to stream that.

LT: Final question what if students have no access to laptops at all?

Kendra: There are units offering virtual desktops that they can use that on your iPads and phones. As well, I would recommend them reaching out to individual groups because some groups have loaner laptops. The departments have that. Good luck!

LT: We have some questions about grading and if there is a consideration for pass/fail options

Espy: The faculty have had to access the students in their courses. As a part of the continuity plan each faculty is considering how they're going to handle that fairly. The deans are monitoring those plans making sure it's happening and that's the current plan in place. For
some students it’s a pass/fail option and it can be different for each class. It’s suitable to the best and most fair way for that.

Dr. T: I will add that this is a subject we’re obviously aware of and the petition for pass/fail and the petition for not having finals. You might imagine the 8 academic institutions are going to be discussing these issues and managing it at a system level around uniformity of approach. It’s a decision that is driven locally but there will be considerations about how the UT systems and components will handle this.

It’s not strictly a decision left to me or the provost it’s a collective decision involving UT systems.

Espy: Some students prefer pass/fail and others are for grades and GPA. So far there is a consistent preference going forward probably reflecting the diversity of courses and circumstances in which students find themselves.

LT: A question about CLEP hours?

Heather: The testing center is not open on campus so they’ve been working with those groups to decide… Oh wait, they are open…. I will let Lynn talk more to that.

Lynn: We’re evaluating the services we’re offering at the testing center and how those can be available for students who need to come on campus. We’ve seen SAT and ACT tests being cancelled. But if we need to offer on campus tests then we’ll do so responsibly. Smaller group settings, we’ve secured additional spaces to make sure that computer resources are there for students. We’ll keep you updated as we are able to.

LT: We have questions about counseling and the health center. We will have availability for both of those services they are available with tele health and tele counseling, but you can meet by request if you make an appointment if it’s necessary. Reach out to them first to make sure there is availability.

We have a question about final exams and how that potentially works and additional changes to academic calendar.

Espy: We haven’t made a final decision about how finals will be conducted in part because we’re hoping… Maybe optimistic that the situation will resolve. At the same time, back to the earlier question about faculty responsibility the whole point of any final is to properly assess a student’s performance in a final manner. That varies depending on the course.

You’ll hear more information over the next couple weeks. We haven’t gathered all the recommendations from various departments. To president T’s point we’re going to focus on getting the classes ready and then pivot toward the tests.

Heather: The academic calendar has been reflected online with the extended spring break. This situation is fluid and if there are changes we’ll communicate that to you. It’s updated and you’ll see online different pieces.

Espy: Remember the academic calendar has been extended to May 8th and finals start May 11th. That calendar is revised and the strategic enrollment is working hard to finalize the final exams for courses.

LT: The question is about work study and student employment.
Heather: More information will be coming out this afternoon. It'll talk about our plans for that. Contact your supervisor, as we’re transitioning to a remote work force our students will to as well. Your supervisor is working on plans for that to work remotely. They’re going to think creatively from a remote situation that you’ve done on campus. More details to come on that.

Espy: The scope of your work may change. Your supervisor may ask you to do different things. There are so many training resources online. We’re asking all supervisors to think creatively. Each student who wants to work should have work to do.

LT: The questions about internships, clinical hours, and student teachings and impact to graduation.

Espy: I can speak to generalities, but seek guidance from your colleges. Student teaching the dean has been working with the TEA with requirements and how student teaching will be handled. They’re trying to be flexible as schools close and given K-12 is closed there is no place to teach right now. They recognize that so they’re trying to implement more flexible guidelines. The colleges and specific programs for example social work has information and same for college of Ed. Consult with your college.

Most colleges have websites with college specific websites. If you don’t have your questions answered consult individual departments.

LT: Questions about summer classes, will they proceed?

Espy: Our plan is to deliver our summer courses as scheduled. We were asked if a decision was made about all remote online instruction for the summer, we haven’t made that decision yet. I’m cautiously optimistic that our public health challenge will be resolved by that point. We’re actively making plans for what that looks like. Many summer offerings are online anyways.

Most students take advantage of that because they go home for the summer. We already had plans we worked on to ramp up those opportunities since students want to be off campus. If you haven’t registered for summer please do and when we realize when it’ll be we'll stay in touch.

LT: One more question about changing majors online.

Heather: As Tammy comes up, all those services are still open and she can elaborate but they will be open.

Tammy: We’ll follow the same procedures that you would if you were meeting with academic advisors. Perhaps you’re thinking of going into public health which we need great individuals to be epidemiologists at this time. I recommend you contact your academic advisor. We’re trying to figure out what processes we can make virtual. You can still have those conversations but it’ll be virtual instead of in person. I hope that answered the question.

LT: Do we have any additional questions? We’ll wait a little bit…. We have a question about off campus apartments and about housing. For off campus the question would be for students living off campus but would want to leave San Antonio what would they do about leasing and closing it out because they can’t do so?

LT: With a private entity that is not UTSA connected?
Dan: Good afternoon I’m the director for housing and life. At this point our approach to working with students in housing. We’ve been focusing on the on campus population. The off campus landlords we work with here, they are ultimately going to make their own decisions. I would encourage you to reach out and explain your situations. They’re well aware of the situations and hopefully would engage you in that conversation and ultimately identify the best resolution.

We as an institution work closely but we don’t have a relationship that would allow us to provide them with direction or instruction but we understand the need to support our students and make sure we’re all safe. They may have space and do some things we’ve considered doing and moving students around to quarantine and isolate individuals if necessary but reach out to them directly for their response.

LT: Dan we have more questions, one is about the move out process and how that would work and if University Oaks would provide refunds.

Dan: Sorry, okay, so I may need to ask to go back… The first is about the move out process. We’ve asked residents to respond to a survey with various options based on what their status might be. Whether it’s on or away from campus or being able to move out. We asked you to respond to that survey we’re working with that right now. We have about 1300 responses. We’re anticipating 2300 responses so we’re getting close to hearing from most of you. We’re obviously working with you to help you move out.

We have carts and disinfecting supplies so as you move out and currently you are able to do that as smoothly as possible. We targeted March 31st as the time frame to complete the move out. We have students that have indicated that they can’t return or out of state. We’re working with them individually. We have a number of residents who want exceptions because they don’t have alternatives we’re fully prepared to provide those students with housing and dining. Teams have been working to make sure that is all prepared.

We have students in housing who are eating and doing what they need to do during this extended break period.

LT: We wanted to get info on the different processes

Veronica: That is one of our private providers of campus housing. My team has been engaged working nonstop with their folks in Australia to make sure we have an agreement to honor the same conditions as on campus housing units. If you’re in Oaks you haven’t received a survey because we’re negotiating that contract. We’re trying to get a resolution with their headquarters to get something resolved. It’s our intent to provide the same offerings.

LT: We have a question about the operations at the Child Development Center

Epsy: The CDC reports through the college of education and made the decision yesterday to close. They are accredited and their accrediting body recommends that when the school districts close they close as well. When we move from phase 1 to phase 2 where most folks are telecommuting. The number of children was rapidly dwindling and it was in the best interest to close. There should be info online as well.

LT: We have questions about financial aid and it’s if there are resources available for students who face financial hardships.
Lynn: Our team is ready to identify difficult situations. Early on in our announcements that current financial aid won’t be affected by this and it’ll be in place for students who had funds available. We know students will have trouble so I recommend making an appointment as quickly as possible and have advising sessions to help you address.

Dr. T: Some of you may be aware that we’re planning on going to phase 2. There has been some direction that has come to us from the chancellor that is based upon the discussions from the 8 academic presidents and the system with questions for graduation and reimbursement. It’s to my knowledge that there is going to be a fund for hardship cases. I don’t know how it’s going to be made available but in addition to what we’re doing and what Lynn described additional resources will be brought in and we’re waiting for it to be worked out.

LT: We have a question about textbooks. If students are away from Texas how can they sell them or return any rented textbooks?

Veronica: Our bookstore is available online. They’re offering free shipping to students. You should be able to access all course materials through the book store and receiving them via free shipping.

LT: Students health services and if they can provide the test for COVID – 19. No they will not be able to provide the test. They have the screening information though so you can receive a referral to receive that resource. We touched on this a little bit but they’re asking about parking permit refunds.

Veronica: We’ve agreed to refund the prorated rate for parking permits and that will be the process of all refunds that will be credited to your account.

LT: We’ll wait for a few more questions to come in. There was a question about services for students with disabilities. What resources and accommodations will continue to be available for online learning?

Heather: Student disabilities is open limitedly especially for those that are servicing equipment that can’t be taken home or you don’t have it at home. Reach out to both faculty and the counselor you work with. Also student disability has contacted each faculty member that has a registered student to make sure they have the appropriate resources and accommodations when it relates to captioning or visual impairment or hearing.

Those of you needing more time on assignments or a quiet space you need to work with your faculty member to see how you can do that in the virtual environment. Some of those accommodations will be handled with you and your faculty members some of that can be handled differently online than in a larger classroom.

LT: What about students planning international trips and students who are working as international students.

Heather: Student disability with other questions are on the FAQs on the corona virus website. We encourage you to work there since we’re constantly updating those with correct information.

Lisa: I’m the vice provost for global initiatives. The first question is for students who want to study abroad. We’re excited that you still have those plans as a UTSA student. Just looking forward in terms of a timeline. Because of the situation before us and the wellbeing and safety is important we cancelled our summer programs. We’re in conversation with faculty who were all a
part of that cancellation. Also with international partners who were a part of the experience so that we can plan for next fall and spring and the following summer.

We're already planning for next summer, the opportunities will be there provided the global situation allows it. Taking into account safety of our students and safety involved that planning you can be assured is on its way even today we were talking about next year. The other question is about international students?

LT: Actually how will international students be supported?

Lisa: We’re working on a specific communication going out tomorrow morning to the international students. We’re prepared to provide services to international students virtually. Our team is standing up all of the technology they need to support themselves. There is an international student saying some things are in person and we can’t do them virtually. We’ve asked all those questions and there is quite a lot that we can do digitally and we’re exploring that. Let’s learn together across time and become more efficient in taking the next step to working in the virtual space. Thank you

Epsy: I think it’s a good time to recognize Lisa and her team on bringing students home.

Lisa: Thank you everyone here contributed, thank you.

LT: What about the student union?

We’re going to limit the services, only the food pantry will be available. Meeting spaces will not be open. Separate question about veterans and the GI Bill, what is the process on that?

Lynn: For veteran services it’s related to financial aid there is no impact on benefits students received this semester. They’re processing paperwork for future semesters as well. They’ll be available virtually and we’re monitoring some legislation that may come down to provide additional relief to veterans. We understand we need to provide the same level of service to all students and we’re ready to serve that population.

LT: We have a question about experiential learning. How do they complete their requirements as students?

Espy: Some of that varies by course. Our faculty have made an example of some courses taking advantage of FIESTA and we’re using alternative events to develop the same skills. That’s on a specific course by course. Faculty are finding alternative experiences that are suitable to reaching those learning objectives.

Heather: Yes reach out to your faculty member, they’ll communicate it out to you as we come back. The goal is to give you the same marketable skills that you would have gained in those experiences in the real world environment. They’re going to do their best to simulate that experience for you. In future semesters you can take advantage of other opportunities.

Espy: Reach out to Dean Kelly and their staff they have a wealth of information and alternatives.

LT: Is there a central corona virus email address? That email address is coronavirus@utsa.edu

Espy: Check out the website!

LT: What about graduate student access to labs for research?
Espy: We’re on remote work force next week. The goal of graduate students are here to study. They’re usually performing work as part of their studies. Some activities require ongoing maintenance of samples and so we recognize the lab are open for those limited activities. At the same time for everyone’s protection across the university. Students are expected to conduct majority of their work from homes.

LT: Can they meet with their faculty members?

Espy: I would expect you to contact your faculty member virtually since we have many tools to do that.

LT: There was a question specifically about graduation supplies and how that connects with commencement if they purchased invitations and regalia. We’re still working on the details of that. There were details earlier but we’re still working through the details of how that might look in the future and have more answers as we move forward.

We’ll continue to communicate with you all as we help to determine some decisions. I know that you all will have more questions of course. There was one question about if there will be any interest in another town hall for students specifically as we move forward.

Dr. T: We can do that, definitely.

LT: Thank you all for your time and patience. Thank you to our panel for answering the questions. We want you to know that we appreciate you and that students are at the center of everything we do. Your health and well-being is a top priority. We know and see you online and communicating with one another and the community here. It’s a great reminder that the Roadrunner community transcends obstacles and barriers.

We’re going to continue providing updates and we look forward to staying connected and we’re with you every step of the way.

Dr. T: Thank you LT!