



## Office of the President

A Message from

**President Adela de la Torre, Ph.D.**

Dear SDSU Community,

As announced today during the California State University system's Board of Trustees meeting, all 23 campuses in the system, including San Diego State University, will move forward with planning for virtual instruction, with some exceptions, for Fall 2020.

CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White, in his board address this morning, stated that the system-wide virtual approach will allow for variability across the campuses, but that CSU courses, especially lecture-type courses, would primarily be delivered virtually. Only instruction and activities that cannot be delivered virtually will be conducted in-person, and with strict standards for safety and welfare.

“This virtual planning approach preserves as many options for as many students as possible, and is consistent with our guiding principle meeting students where they are,” White said.

Further, White said: “It would be irresponsible to wait until summer to plan for virtual learning across the curriculum. It is wise to plan now and over the next several months for enriched training and virtual learning environments and to be able to pull back again in the fall as in-person circumstances might be further allowed. It would be irresponsible to approach it the other way around.”

With this message, I am pleased to share an update about our SDSU community's Fall 2020 plans, which follow this updated guidance and direction from the CSU and respect existing and projected public health orders.

### **Fall 2020 Plans**

After thorough and careful assessment and feedback from faculty and staff who have shared their expertise, and following this directive from the CSU, our campus community will launch SDSU Flex.

With all lecture-based instruction intended to occur online in the fall, our SDSU Flex model will offer maximum opportunities for students to remain fully engaged with their

faculty, staff members, peers and SDSU alumni — no matter their physical location. It also provides flexibility to our faculty, reducing the number of courses that may be needed to transition to fully virtual in the event of a second wave of the virus. Our model will also provide extensive time for faculty to prepare and modify their courses for the fall, in ways that differ drastically from the emergency move this spring.

As we continue to develop SDSU Flex, our priority will continue to be to share information in a timely and transparent manner. We know that our current students and their families need to make personal decisions soon, which will require decisions to be made about individual courses by our faculty and colleges. Following the announcement from the CSU today, we will continue, and with greater specificity, to engage in course-level planning. Additional communications will follow throughout this month as this work progresses.

### **SDSU Flex Model**

SDSU Flex calls for high customization and will allow the maximum amount of flexibility to our community as COVID-19 conditions change in the future. Our preliminary model and the plans that will follow are informed by updated guidance from the CSU and expectations that physical distancing and certain other restrictive county, state and federal orders will remain in place through the fall.

Through the SDSU Flex model for Fall 2020, we will:

In consultation and agreement with the CSU, offer certain lab, art studio, and performance-based courses in person, including clinical offerings required for licensure, while offering lecture-based instruction via virtual modalities.

Expand existing, customized training for faculty members around course design and teaching, which will also address accessibility and inclusivity, to ensure quality education. A training institute was launched for faculty earlier this afternoon. Faculty can learn more or sign up by visiting the Instructional Technology Services Training & Workshops site.

Significantly expand online activities and student support service, and also maintain robust financial aid for our students.

Carefully open the campus in phases based on the guidelines shared in our campus update email last week, beginning with faculty who need to return to their research or creative work in on-campus facilities.

Continue to collaborate with county public health officials and to advocate the return of research and instructional faculty to campus as soon as permitted, and as we can safely increase support staffing to maintain campus safety.

Next Steps

What occurred this spring, with the rise of the first wave of this new pandemic was unprecedented. It required emergency flexibility, extraordinary adaptations to how we teach and learn, and other urgent and highly disruptive transitions, necessitated by a rapidly changing policy environment.

We now have the benefit of improved projections from global, federal, state, and county health agencies, and all warn of a significant fall resurgence. No vaccine is anticipated by August, nor is there certainty around the efficacy of any of the therapeutics currently being explored by researchers — including San Diego State Researchers — and clinicians around the Country.

Ultimately, we cannot gamble that testing and treatment will be so substantially improved by August that we may return to full or majority in-person classes, and therefore position ourselves for another large and emergency move away from campus, if required by the county or state.

However, these challenges will not stop us from investing fully in the classroom, technology, testing, and health and safety infrastructure necessary to ensure we can deliver in-person courses and experiences in fall for those areas that most need it. As noted above, these areas may include our lab courses, nursing and clinical experiences, art studio, life science and engineering projects, and a number of other areas. These decisions will be made in the coming weeks in concert with our faculty, public health experts, facilities experts, and the CSU system. For the rest of fall coursework occurring in the virtual space, we now have the benefit of four months of prep time.

Last week, I shared information about our guiding principles, which are informing all levels of analysis, planning and decision-making. These principles will guide decisions about additional details of SDSU Flex and our plans.

SDSU Flex is being designed with our campus culture in mind, informed by our strengths in offering high-touch and high-interaction experiences among and between faculty and students. Our solution will retain or improve student-to-faculty ratios for in-person, improve high-touch advising, with virtual offerings that are both diverse and inclusive, meeting the specific needs of our students.

## **Thank You**

As always, thank you to all of the faculty, staff and students who have and continue to make contributions to these plans, and those operational plans which will be used to open our campus once more. Our mission is our priority, and we will work to sustain the highest quality teaching and research during this global pandemic, with maximum flexibility for our faculty, staff, and students.

Adela de la Torre  
San Diego State University President

