

FACULTY RESOURCE

Institutional Pandemic Fact Sheet

The coronavirus pandemic has affected University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s faculty in many ways. Bans on travel created obstacles for research and creative activities. Requirements for physical distancing and de-densification in the classroom reduced normal in-person instruction for students and reduced hands-on time in lab and studio courses. Researchers have experienced interruptions in access to facilities, equipment and human subjects. Closures and limitations on childcare programs, remote instruction for school-aged children, and a 21-day statewide stay-at-home directed health measure have placed a unique strain on caregivers. The shift to remote work has created new demands for home office space, technologies and resources.

This institutional fact sheet describes the changes in access to campus and community resources experienced during the pandemic and provides context for faculty work and accomplishments during this period.

TIMELINES AND CONDITIONS BY AREA OF IMPACT

Federal, State and County Restrictions

- April 9 – Nebraska governor proclaimed April 10-30 as “21 Days to Stay Home and Stay Healthy in Nebraska” and announced a statewide directed health measure that ordered businesses where six feet of social distance could not be maintained to close through April 30.

University of Nebraska Restrictions

- April 8 – The University of Nebraska issued stay-at-home directive to all employees, except those whose physical presence was officially designated as necessary, effective April 10.
- April 21 – In accordance with the governor’s guidance to “stay home to keep Nebraska healthy” the University of Nebraska extended its stay-at-home directive until May 4.

UNL In-Person and Remote Instruction

- March 9 – Instructors were notified of the possibility that in-person classes may be suspended and they should prepare to work remotely if necessary.
- March 10 – Students were notified they should do a readiness check for possible remote instruction.
- March 12 – Classes were canceled for the week of March 16-20 and scheduled to resume after spring break with remote instruction on March 30.
- March 18 – Employees were notified that those who are able should plan to work from home starting March 23.
- March 23 – The Center for Transformative Teaching (CTT) offered a “Keep Teaching” course over spring break to help instructors shift to remote teaching.
- April 3 – Campus was notified that summer classes would be delivered remotely.
- April 24 – University of Nebraska announced all campuses would be open for fall in-person instruction.
- May 4-15, 18-29 – The CTT offered two condensed sessions of its Summer Institute for Online Training to help instructors with the shift to remote teaching.
- May 21 – It was announced that campus buildings would begin reopening June 1 with face coverings, social distancing, and de-densification protocols in place.

FACULTY RESOURCE

Institutional Pandemic Fact Sheet

- May 29 – Fall academic calendar changes were announced, including a fall three-week session in December. The CTT provided resources for hybrid teaching in the fall and additional Summer Institute for Online Teaching sessions with a self-guided course available in Canvas.
- July 30 – Instructor training launched to provide necessary information for teaching in-person classes during the fall semester.
- August 10 – Normal access to campus buildings resumed with face coverings, social distancing, and de-densification protocols in place. Classrooms were prepared for physically distant instruction, including furniture removal, capacity and safety guidelines, and enhanced technology.
- September 7 – Spring academic calendar changes were announced, including a spring three-week session.
- September 21 – Three course delivery methods were announced for spring semester – in-person, web conferencing, and online – to help streamline planning for instruction.

Travel Restrictions

- January 31 – University of Nebraska restricted travel to mainland China. UNL-sponsored study abroad programs were canceled for spring and summer.
- February 27 – University of Nebraska restricted travel to South Korea. UNL-sponsored study abroad programs were canceled for spring and summer.
- March 5 – University of Nebraska restricted travel to Italy and Iran. UNL-sponsored study abroad programs to these locations were canceled for spring and summer.
- March 12 – Non-essential UNL-sponsored international and domestic travel was suspended until the end of the semester. UNL students studying abroad were required to return to the U.S.
- May 1 – The university extended prohibition on UNL-sponsored international and domestic travel through June 30.
- June 18 – The university extended prohibition on UNL-sponsored international and domestic travel through July 31.
- July 23 – The university extended prohibition on UNL-sponsored international and domestic travel and UNL-sponsored study abroad programs until further notice. Domestic travel outside Nebraska is highly discouraged. For exceptional cases where university-sponsored domestic travel is absolutely necessary, two levels of authorization will be required prior to travel.

Research and Creative Activities

- March 12 – Researchers were encouraged to identify areas that could be impacted by COVID-19, but research was to proceed as usual.
- March 19 – Research and creative activities transitioned to remote work whenever possible. Research activities were suspended for in-person contact with human subjects; all unpaid undergraduate student engagement in research that could not be done remotely; and the initiation of new experiments with animals. Paid undergraduate student workers could continue at the discretion of faculty or research directors.
- April 8 – On-site work was limited to “critical research activities” including research related to COVID-19; activities that, if temporarily discontinued, would result in years of losses; activity that maintains critical samples, animal or plant populations, and biological specimens; activity that maintains critical equipment; seasonally dependent agricultural or environmental work; and several other specific types of research activities. Ongoing or new research not considered critical would need approval from relevant college and ORED administrators and would be subject to [appropriate safety considerations](#).

FACULTY RESOURCE

Institutional Pandemic Fact Sheet

- June 1 – Guidelines were released for the safe reopening of research and creative activity spaces. Plans must be submitted for approval. Access to spaces was expanded beyond designated individuals, although employees were still encouraged to work remotely whenever possible. New research projects involving the care and use of animals began a phased return.
- July 6 – The suspension of in-person human subjects research was removed, although personnel were strongly encouraged to continue conduct research with human subjects remotely whenever possible. Researchers planning to resume in-person research with human subjects must first provide a plan to demonstrate how their interactions with participants could happen safely.
- August 10 – Normal access to campus buildings resumed with face coverings, social distancing, and de-densification protocols in place.
- August 24 – Lab access was extended to any undergraduate or approved volunteer, not just paid student workers.
- November 10 – Due to the adjusted 2020-21 academic calendar, graduate teaching assistants who completed their fall duties as of November 25 were allowed to work as research assistants during December and January.
- January 12 – Human subjects were considered visitors and must be escorted into buildings by a UNL host.

Research and Creative Activities Funding

- March 19 – The federal Office of Management and Budget released guidance to federal agencies on allowing flexibilities for the research community including the allocation of idle time to research awards. The Office of Sponsored Programs issued guidance to all faculty noting that per OMB memo M-20-17, idle time on grants could continue to be charged on sponsored awards, provided that researchers followed university leave policies on tracking this time.
- April 3 – The Office of Research and Economic Development began accepting proposals for limited, one-time funding to support short-term activities in response to the pandemic. Faculty from any discipline whose expertise could address the crisis were encouraged to apply.
- June 18 – Federal guidance on idle time allowed through OMB policy M-20-17 expired and was replaced by OMB policy M-20-26. UNL allowed for idle time to continue being charged to the appropriate sponsored project, provided university leave policies were followed. The federal policy continued through September 30.

Research and Creative Activities with Visiting Scholars

- September 7 – Research teams allowed to have visitors, such as vendors or collaborators, in their spaces after informing supervisors of the planned visits.

Research and Creative Activities with Undergraduate Students

- March 19 - August 24 – All unpaid undergraduate student engagement in research that could not be done remotely was suspended.

Hiring and Staffing

- April 14 – UNL implemented a hiring freeze, with exceptions for urgent mission-critical positions.
- June 5 – [Principles and Guidelines for Alternative Work Arrangements Due to COVID-19](#) was announced.
- June 19 – Merit pay increases were eliminated for FY 21, but the proposed budget plans for increases in FY 22 and FY 23 for all faculty and staff. The university system instituted a [Voluntary FTE Reduction](#) program for staff.

FACULTY RESOURCE

Institutional Pandemic Fact Sheet

As of March 2021:

- New hires continued to be approved on a case-by-case basis, with campus-level approval.
- The hiring freeze continued, with new hires approved on a case-by-case basis.
- International hires, including graduate students, continued to experience additional interruption due to travel restrictions and immigration status.

Emergency Leave for COVID-19 Related Absences

- March 14 – University of Nebraska created an emergency paid administrative leave policy where employees could take up to 80 hours of administrative paid leave in the event of self-quarantine, quarantine or care of an immediate family member, childcare resulting from school closures, or other related scenarios through December 31, 2020.
- March 26 – The emergency administrative leave policy was expanded to 160 hours of administrative paid leave through December 31, 2020.
- December 17 – The emergency administrative leave policy was extended through June 30, 2021.

Pre-K Child Centers

- UNL has two campus childcare centers. The [UNL Children's Center](#) closed March 20 and reopened June 15. It is currently operating at regular hours. [Ruth Staples CDL](#) closed March 13 and reopened August 24. It will operate at regular hours once the Lincoln COVID-19 dial is green.
- Some community-based and private childcare centers [closed temporarily or permanently](#) over the past year. Those that have reopened operate at limited capacity and with strict time for illness exclusion.
- Many indoor [summer camps](#) moved forward with limited in-person capacity, reduced field trips, and more online programming, however others made the decision to cancel. Outdoor camps continued with most programming.

Lincoln Private K-12 Schools

- Lincoln private schools had [different approaches](#) to how they responded to the pandemic.

Lincoln Public K-12 Schools

- 2019-20 AY – Following spring break, Lincoln Public Schools canceled all student classes and activities during the week of March 16-22, including all practices, rehearsals, and competitions, to plan for the remainder of the school year. It then further canceled classes and activities until March 23, when it began asynchronous remote learning for students through the end of the school year.
- Summer 2020 – LPS had hoped to do in-person classes for summer session, but due to community health concerns, it shifted to remote, synchronous learning for classes.
- 2020-21 AY – On June 16, LPS announced plans to have all students return to in-person classes starting August 12 with an option for students to attend as full-time, synchronous remote students. In July, it shifted to a 3/2 plan for high school students to reduce population density in buildings. LPS provided the opportunity for all senior high school students to attend in-person classes full-time in January, and the same opportunity to freshmen in February. All high school students were given the opportunity to attend in-person classes full-time in March, at the beginning of the fourth quarter.