



SOUTHERN VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY
OFFICE *of the* PROVOST
ONE UNIVERSITY HILL DRIVE, BUENA VISTA, VA 24416

Dear Southern Virginia University Students,

Last week, we shared our SCHEV-approved [Healthy Campus Plan](#) for reopening the University in Fall 2020. With this authorization in place, we are pleased to share more details about our Academic Plan for the upcoming semester, including an updated [Academic Calendar](#).

With excellent progress on vaccines, treatments, and testing technology, we're hopeful that life and classes may begin to normalize as we move into Spring Semester. In the meantime, we will do all we can to ensure a safe, healthy learning experience as engaging and excellent as ever.

ACADEMIC PLAN FOR FALL 2020

As we reviewed the experience of online teaching and learning over the past four months—including listening to helpful feedback from students and faculty—the University concluded that we have learned a great deal and can now safely return to on-campus classes with an even stronger in-person, high-engagement model of instruction, built on meaningful student-faculty relationships that we do best, and our universal Apple iPad system. Our on-campus instruction, however, will be modified—and in many cases upgraded—in order to meet requirements from the CDC, Virginia Department of Health, and the Virginia Department of Education in implementing our University's Healthy Campus Plan:

SMALLER & SAFER CLASSES

Learning in small, interactive, high-engagement classes from caring, credentialed professors has always been one of the biggest benefits of attending Southern Virginia University. Now this benefit will be even greater. Following proper social distancing practices, our class sizes will be reduced even further this fall. That means students will receive even more attention from professors and opportunities for participation in class. For this semester, in addition to social distancing, we will further safeguard classroom spaces for all faculty and students by requiring proper masking, installing True HEPA-grade air filtering, and adding advanced air-purification technology in every classroom. These steps will keep everyone safer and reduce the potential for viral spread.

HYBRID INSTRUCTION MODEL

We are committed to ensuring that the majority of all instruction happens face-to-face. However, in order to accommodate smaller class sizes—which means more classes in our existing spaces—a portion of our instruction will need to be conducted online. Examples might include lessons or discussions posted to Canvas, online discussion boards moderated by the instructor, or online peer reviews and other forms of discussion and feedback. Additionally, in-person class sessions will be recorded and added to Canvas, so that students who must quarantine or isolate can continue to keep up with their course work. In these cases, faculty will work with students to help ensure that they do not fall behind.

INCREASED INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION

In addition to small classes, meaningful student-teacher relationships have always been the hallmark of our educational model. Since a portion of our classes will need to be online for at least this fall semester, our faculty are committed to providing even more individual attention and support for every student in their respective courses. For example, many professors will increase their virtual office hours—in some cases by more than 50 percent—in order to work one-on-one with as many of their students as possible. Furthermore, faculty will also check in with each student individually at least every two weeks to make sure no one falls behind during this unique, unprecedented semester.

FACULTY EXCEPTIONS FOR FULLY ONLINE INSTRUCTION

In a few cases, certain courses will be entirely, or nearly entirely online. These exceptions will be made to protect the health of faculty who are at a heightened risk of complications if they were to contract COVID-19. These respective faculty members have shared their complete commitment to their students and willingness to go the extra mile to help them succeed. We have total confidence in these professors to teach excellent courses while continuing to engage with students on a personal level. These few entirely online courses will be so identified on my.svu.edu by no later than **Aug. 1**, so students can adjust their schedules based on individual needs and preferences.

UPDATED ACADEMIC CALENDAR

In addition to the changes above, you can also review online our updated Academic Calendar. In doing so, please be advised of two important Fall Semester dates:

1. **Monday, Aug. 24 – First Day of Classes:** Attendance is mandatory for all students, as we will conduct essential onboarding and training every student must complete to attend classes, practices, or campus facilities, in accordance with our Healthy Campus Plan.
2. **Tuesday, Nov. 24 – Last Day of *In-person* Classes:** To avoid unnecessary risks of exposure due to traveling during Thanksgiving and the again after finals in December, *the University will not hold in-person classes following the Thanksgiving Break*. After the holiday, the semester's remaining four class periods of instruction will be held online, followed by online final exams. However, students can remain on campus during the holiday and through to the end of the semester, since University Housing, Food Services, and all normal facilities will remain open to students through final exams until the week before Christmas in December.

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

There are always opportunities in adversity, and the high character and strength of our students, faculty, and professional staff have been proven during this challenge while the dedication and ingenuity of your professors have been on full display. Faculty are continuing to learn new skills and adopt new tools to teach and work with you both in-person and virtually, and we are fully confident that students will have equal or even greater opportunities to succeed academically than they have had in the past. This new experience will make us better teachers and learners, and we will be better people, and a stronger University for working through it together.

Please reach out to the Office of the Provost if you have any questions or concerns about our Academic Plan for Fall 2020:

- Provost Jeremiah John: jeremiah.john@svu.edu
- Associate Provost Tim Knudson: tim.knudson@svu.edu
- Associate Provost Sam Hirt: sam.hirt@svu.edu

You may also direct questions to the Office of the Registrar at 540-261-8408 or registrar@svu.edu.

We look forward to safely welcoming you back to campus in four weeks!

Sincerely,

Jeremiah John
Provost