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TO: Boston University Faculty

FROM: Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer 

DATE: May 29, 2020

SUBJECT: Fall 2020 Planning: Undergraduate Programs, Learn *from* Anywhere, and Other Updates

I would first like to congratulate all of you on a successful conclusion to the spring 2020 semester. It was a semester unlike any we have ever experienced. As a result of your hard work, flexibility, and commitment to your students, we enabled all Boston University students to complete the semester and earn academic credit for their work – no small feat. I know that the global pandemic has taken a tremendous toll, requiring you to juggle childcare, family needs, and health concerns while rapidly pivoting to an entirely new teaching model. Please know that we are deeply grateful for all that you have done – and continue to do – as we navigate this challenging time.

As [you have heard from President Brown](#), we have been deeply engaged over the last few weeks in a process of planning for what teaching, learning, and residential life will look like in the fall semester. Our focus in this planning effort has been to do all that we can to ensure the health and safety of our community, while also working toward the goal of returning to on-campus teaching and learning. The residential educational model is at the core of our mission, and we have heard repeatedly that our students hope we will do everything in our power to welcome them back to campus in the fall. I write today to provide you with an update on where we are in this planning process.

Although we have made substantial progress in planning for the fall, which is summarized below, important questions remain. One of the most important of these is the question of what our return to residential education, with students on campus and in classrooms, means for faculty returning to the campus classroom. We understand that this issue is critically important. Our job, along with you, in the upcoming weeks is to understand how to balance BU's firm commitment to residential education and the need for a high degree of faculty presence and participation on campus, with the legitimate concern that people have about possible exposure to COVID-19.

We want to better understand those concerns and your views on the best way in which to resume residential education. To that end, we will be distributing a survey to BU faculty early next week to gather input on the specific elements and challenges that are of importance to you in returning

to the classroom; please look for an email from my office containing this survey. In addition, we continue to be in discussion with the Deans of the schools and colleges.

Undergraduate Programs

Following consultation with the deans, Faculty Council, and undergraduate department chairs, we have approved a plan, developed by the Undergraduate Programs Working Group, to offer undergraduate courses in a blended modality of remote and in-person learning this fall. This approach, which we are calling **Learn from Anywhere (LfA)**, will enable students to participate in courses either in the classroom or remotely, ensuring that they can attend Boston University in the fall and potentially beyond. While retaining our focus on reactivating the residential campus and bringing our students back to campus, this approach provides flexibility that will likely be of particular importance to our international students, students who are in quarantine or may become symptomatic, or students with underlying health risks. It will also give us the ability to reduce the density of classrooms in accordance with state and local public health requirements. You will receive additional details about **Learn from Anywhere** and how it will be implemented from your dean in the coming weeks. President Brown will announce this plan to our undergraduate students on Monday.

Graduate and Professional Programs

Last month, we [announced](#) that a select number of graduate and professional programs would be offered both in-person and remotely, now as part of **Learn from Anywhere**. These programs have already begun work preparing for the fall, and we have [expanded](#) the number of programs approved to utilize this model. There remain a small number of graduate and professional programs that are particularly challenging to convert to the hybrid modality, including programs with significant experiential or hands-on components. The Graduate and Professional Programs Working Group is working with individual schools and colleges to develop plans for how these programs will operate in the fall.

Research

The Research Working Group has developed and [announced a process](#) to gradually return researchers to lab spaces on the Charles River and Medical Campuses. Schools and colleges are working with the Office of Research to review and approve proposals submitted by individual research labs, outlining how they plan to safely return to on-campus work. As these proposals are approved in the coming weeks, researchers will be allowed to gradually return to their labs.

Libraries

This week, K. Matthew Dames, University Librarian, shared his plan to gradually reopen Mugar Library and resume Libraries' services. The University Libraries have continued to provide many services remotely since March, and will gradually reactivate the remainder of their offerings over the next few months. We recognize that many faculty rely on Libraries' services for their research and scholarly work, and are working to ensure that all services are available as soon as safely possible.

Classroom & Technology Support

The Remote & Online Working Group has developed a multifaceted approach to providing the additional teaching and technology support required as faculty transition to the **Learn from**

Anywhere modality. We have begun implementing a set of technological upgrades to classrooms across campus to ensure that they are equipped with the hardware and software necessary to offer instruction both in-person and remotely. In addition to these technological requirements, we recognize that it is critical that faculty be adequately supported with both training and in-class support. We are planning for the addition of new student workers, “Classroom Moderators,” to assist with classroom technology management and to help faculty engage with students who are participating remotely. We are also developing a suite of training resources – both pedagogical and technical – for faculty and teaching fellows, which will be available over the summer.

COVID-19 Testing Facility

Last week, we [publicly announced](#) that work is underway to stand up a COVID-19 testing facility at Boston University. This is a complex effort that is being undertaken in a short amount of time, but we are optimistic that we will have the ability by the fall to regularly test faculty, staff, and students. This testing capacity is a critical step in our effort to repopulate our campus and welcome students and faculty back to our classrooms and residential halls.

Classroom Planning

We are in the process of analyzing all of the classroom spaces across campus to understand what safe physical distancing would look like in each of them. As soon as that analysis is done, we will work with individual schools and colleges to share that information and to think creatively about how to best accommodate all scheduled courses given our new physical constraints.

Once again, thank you for all that you have done – and will do – over the next few months. We will continue to provide updates as the planning process unfolds and appreciate your patience and understanding as we work our way through this extraordinary planning effort.

Cc: Robert A. Brown
University Leadership Group