

Tennessee Technological University

Academic Affairs

Fall2020 Planning Task Forces

Over the summer of 2020, Provost Lori Bruce established several task forces to address a variety of issues related to Fall 2020 semester and the potential impact of Covid-19. These task forces were made up of 70 faculty members, staff, and students. They met numerous times and worked diligently to make recommendations on a variety of topics.

- Hybrid Task Force (chaired by Bedelia Russell)
- Large Classroom Utilization Task Force (chaired by Mark Stephens)
- Policies & Procedures Task Force (chaired by Christy Killman)
- Pedestrian Flow Task Force (chaired by Jerry Gannod).
- Student Success Task Force (chaired by Ed Lisic)

This document includes a high level summary of the task force recommendations. These were distributed to Deans and Chairs on July 2, 2020. Chairs and Directors were asked to share the document with faculty and solicit their feedback.

This document and the resulting feedback has served as a guidepost for many plans put in place for the Fall 2020 semester.

The university owes the task force members a debt of gratitude for their hard work, thoughtfulness, creativity, and most of all, their dedication to our students and academic programs.

Task Force Members

Bedelia Russell (chair)	Tom Timmerman	Doug Bates	Shannon Fayne
Christy Killman (chair)	Leila Gibson	Barbara Jared	Barrett Streeter
Jerry Gannod (chair)	Sandi Smith-Andrews	Sharon Huo	Daniel Sukowski
Mark Stephens (chair)	Jason Beach	Tracy Black	Mary Walker
Ed Lisic (chair)	Holly Stretz	Katie Williams	Jordan Anthony Jones
Melinda Anderson	Allen McKenzie	Chester Goad	Emily Buckner
Lee Ann Shipley	Jamie Sauve	Kyle Cook	Daniel Hines
Darron Smith	Steven Click	Cheryl Tays	Rachel Baker
Paul Semmes	Brittany Copley	Elizabeth Acuff	Bailee Kaufman
Linda Null	Brandi Hill	Edith Duvier	Zach Brown
Jeff Roberts	Dan Warren	Jason Beach	Aaron Lay
Jeff Boles	Kim Winkle	Allen Mullis	Nia Buntin
Allan Mills	Jeremy Blair	Rita Barnes	Alexis Harvey
Brian O'Connor	Wendy Mullen	Harry Ingle	Hannah Willis
Terri McWilliams	Colin Hill	Kester Nucum	Marisa Phelps
Matt Smith	Mike Gotcher	Kinsey Potter	Emma Kenner
Richard Rand	Steve Frye	Marlee Miller	
Tom Payne	Yvette Clark	Allanah Davis	

Hybrid Task Force

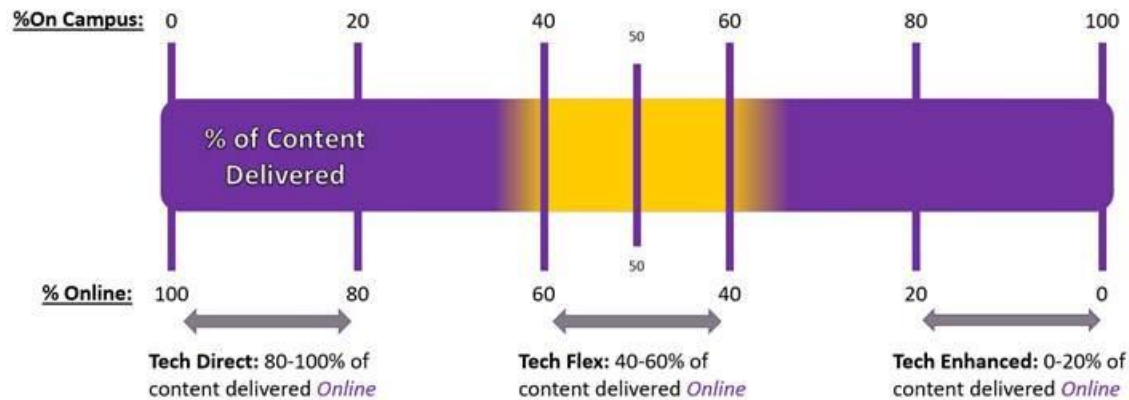
Best Practices for All Courses at TTU (regardless of defined category)

All courses will:

- Provide virtual office hours as an option for students
- Outline an online contingency plan in the event the planned on-campus activities within a course are required to move exclusively online due to extenuating circumstances
- Incorporate community and student engagement activities within the course or in collaboration with department initiatives or activities established in first-year experience courses
- Adhere with the Standardized Accessible Syllabus requirements and template and Accessibility Standards
- Align with one of the three designations, i.e., Web-Enhanced (“Tech-Enhanced”), Hybrid (“Tech-Flex”), or Online (“Tech-Direct”) and utilize the Banner

The Task Force acknowledged that “hybrid” is one example of a technology-infused course and so the distinction of “hybrid” is situated within that context. Therefore, as the Task Force sought to operationalize the definition of “hybrid,” alongside existing approaches to course delivery which also leverage the use of technology for course delivery, the following operational definitions/parameters were established:

- Web-Enhanced - Referred to as “Tech-Enhanced” where the course content is primarily delivered On-Campus but can include up to 20% of technology enhanced components
- Hybrid - Referred to as “Tech-Flex” where the course content is delivered through both On-Campus and Online approaches. The Online components average 40-60% but no more than 80% of course content is delivered online
- Online – Referred to as “Tech-Direct” where 80% or more course content is delivered online (**Note: Some courses may require testing, labs, or some comparable course activity which will be completed on-campus. All such activities are scheduled prior to the beginning of the semester so students can plan to be on campus or in synchronous virtual sessions during those designated times. The online and alternative delivery fee can only be assessed for courses determined to reflect 100% online course delivery).



Definitions and further clarifications located in supplemental materials

Large Classroom Task Force

- For general education classes that are offered in multiple sections, at least one section should be offered 100% online in order to accommodate students at high risk of contracting Covid-19 or that choose not to attend classes in the fall semester in person
- In general education courses whose sections are expected to have enrollments that exceed the revised room capacity, chairs should attempt to move those sections to a larger classroom even if it is outside of their normally assigned space
- For course sections where expected enrollments exceed the revised classroom capacity, chairs should consider changing from traditional face-to-face format to either the hybrid format (Tech Flex) or online format (TechDirect) based on the modality definitions provided by the Hybrid Task Force
- Where appropriate, chairs should consider changing the modality of large junior and senior level classes to an online (TechDirect) format to free up large classrooms for general education and freshmen level courses
- Classroom assignments should be adjusted to better accommodate constraints on availability of appropriately sized rooms (independent of who “owns” the rooms) as certain courses move to the Tech Direct format
- We strongly recommend that courses moved to online format (Tech Direct) due to the recommendations from this and other groups should not be charged the online and alternative delivery fee

Policies & Procedures Task Force

Syllabus Statements (and recommendations):

Grading:

Due to the circumstances of Covid-19 altering the normal classroom environment, Tennessee Tech seeks to apply consistency and fairness to Grades, Grading and Examinations as outlined in Policy 264. Grading of all items will be fair and equitable for all students whether the student is present in on-campus courses, hybrid courses or attending class via an online/virtual platform. Faculty reserve the right to change the course grading, examinations and assignments as outlined on the syllabus due to Covid-19 restrictions or an alteration in course delivery.

Recommendations:

Faculty and students should be prepared to exercise flexibility and patience in the event of technology difficulties. Faculty should develop and be ready to deliver contingency plans for online examinations and other online assessment items in the event of technology failure or a change in course delivery method.

Attendance will not be a part of the grading scheme for any courses during the Fall 2020 semester; rather, **meaningful engagement of students** in all deliver methods will be sought.

Academic Freedom/Classroom Safety:

Tennessee Tech seeks to support Academic Freedom and Responsibility (Policy 202) and expects faculty and students to adhere to all COVID-19 directives published by Tennessee Tech which alter the normal classroom environment/course delivery due to Covid-19. The safety and well-being of all students, faculty and staff of this university is our priority. Faculty should be free to alter and accommodate the learning environment of their classroom to best serve the learning needs of their students, while aligning with CDC safety guidelines for social distancing and personal protection equipment. It is the responsibility of students and faculty to promote and maintain a safe learning environment for everyone.

Recommendations:

If certain safety practices are **required**, suggested language for students could be as follows:

COVID-19 Case Protocol for Students

1. Students must take personal responsibility in following the recommended CDC COVID-19 guidelines. Students are expected follow all COVID-19 directives published by Tennessee Tech including, but not limited to, notices on Tennessee Tech's webpage, building and facilities signage, course syllabi, and similar publications.
2. A student displaying any symptoms of COVID-19 is expected to self-quarantine immediately, in an off-campus residence if possible, and call Health Services at 931-372-3320 to arrange for medical care and/or COVID-19 testing or to seek medical care and/or COVID-19 testing off campus.
3. A student awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test will be required to self-quarantine, in an off-campus residence if possible, until the results are reported.
4. Students who test positive for COVID-19 must remain in quarantine, in an off-campus residence if possible, until Health Services releases the student to return to class.
5. Students will direct all requests for excuses for class absences related to COVID-19, regardless of where the COVID-19 testing is performed, to Health Services.
6. Based on Health Services' recommendations, Student Affairs will provide notifications to faculty members of student absences and the expected length of the absence. No health related information may be released in this notice.

Attendance:

(note, attendance, if taken will not be included in calculating student grades)

Attendance will be taken regularly. Students and faculty are expected to follow TTU Policy No. 266. Specific attendance requirements will differ across classes. Excused absences due to illness should be reported through the Office of Student Affairs.

Recommendations for Faculty

1. In recognition of the likely implementation of alternative course deliver models for Fall 2020 and the possibility of extended absences due to COVID-19, faculty are encouraged to place no emphasis on attendance as part of their course grade for Fall 2020.

2. Faculty should include in their syllabus a clear statement on how attendance will be measured for
 - Traditional on-campus class meetings.
 - Synchronous, real-time class meetings.
 - Asynchronous course-related activities.
3. As Policy No. 266 does not address excused absences (except for fulfillment of military obligations), faculty should include a clear written policy in their syllabi addressing Excused Absences.
 - Students should be informed of the requirements for an excused absence.
 - Students should be informed of the process for making up work or exams missed during their absence.
 - Faculty must protect all private student information in compliance with TTU Policy No. 1206 (FERPA Compliance).
4. To mitigate the impact of a sustained absence from class, faculty should proactively engage in efforts to provide alternative access to course content. To the extent possible assignments should be accessible from an online platform and students should be able to submit their work through electronic means.

Health and Safety Precautions:

On a daily basis, TTU students should complete the COVID-19 pre-screening checklist before attending class. TTU students and faculty are strongly recommended to wear masks and/or face shields in all face-to-face activities on the TTU campus, including but not limited to: classrooms, laboratories, advising sessions, seminars, meetings, conferences, events, etc.

Faculty have the authority to require masks or face shields, even if the university only recommends masks or face shields. Necessary exceptions must be addressed through Accessibility Services. Faculty have the authority to require students not wearing a mask and/or shield to immediately leave the classroom. Failure to wear a mask/shield, if required, is a violation of Policy 302, defined as Prohibited Behavior (Disruptive Behavior and/or Violation of Policies).

Social Distancing and Movement in the Classroom:

Students must abide by predetermined social distancing guidelines and seating arrangements. Movement during class sessions should be limited as to not endanger other students or faculty.

Students should be conscious and respectful of others and their health concerns. Failure to abide by predetermined classroom guidelines will be defined as a violation of Policy 302.

Students should not attend class if they are not feeling well. Students should take responsibility to inform the instructor as soon as possible of missed class sessions. If the missed class is during a scheduled exam day, you must inform the instructor within 24 hours.

Honor System:

Tennessee Tech expects all students to be responsible individuals with high standards of conduct. TTU students are expected to practice ethical behavior in all learning environments and scenarios, including but not limited to on-ground, online, hybrid, in Teams or Zoom classrooms, laboratories, internships and practica, study groups and academic teams.

Students should conduct themselves honorably, professionally, and respectfully in all realms of their studies in order to promote and secure an atmosphere of dignity and trust. The keystone of the honor system is self-regulation, which requires cooperation and support from each member of the University community. Failure to abide by the honor system is a violation of Policy 217.

⇒ Consequences on Disruptive Behavior:

Students should be respectful of the health and safety of others. A student in violation of Policy 302 could be subject to disciplinary actions.

Pedestrian Flow Task Force

Travel Between Buildings

- Close one or both lanes of vehicular traffic on main inter-building paths, open lane to foot traffic. Adjust bus routes accordingly.
- Designate sidewalks and pathways for one-way traffic
 - Rationale: There are several sidewalks across campus that are not wide enough to support 2-way foot traffic.
- Foundation Hall Pedestrian Traffic - Provide RR crossing between FNDH and res life parking lot
 - Rationale: High traffic path, small sidewalk, students utilize shortcuts across RR track
- Designate each building exterior door as either “Entrance Only” or “Exit Only” (depending on recommendations from Intra-building WG)
- If exterior door is to be designated as ingress and egress location, and pathway to door is equipped with dual stairs, designate one-way travel
 - Rationale: Two-way traffic at all building exterior doors
- Create pedestrian crosswalks to encourage students to walk on the correct side of roads.
 - Rationale: Existing crosswalks are based on normal pedestrian and vehicular traffic pattern

Travel Within Buildings

- Use right-hand-rule when walking in hallways in all buildings.
 - Rationale: Helps maintain distancing with least restriction on free movement
 - Work needed: appropriate signage
- Use right-hand-rule when walking in stairwells except when marked as one-way due to available space in the passage ways¹
 - Rationale: Most stairwells are wide enough to accommodate pedestrians moving in both the up and down directions; some are not and should be marked
 - Work needed: Analysis is being conducted to identify those stairwells that should be one-way access
- Use right-hand rule when entering and exiting buildings except where marked
 - Work needed: Make certain to provide needed accessibility
 - Work needed: All external doors must be unlocked on both sides
 - Work needed: Investigate/change locations where opening one door forces the adjacent door open
 - Work needed: Creation of appropriate signage

- All should exit a room before any enter
 - Rationale: Reduces clog, helps maintain distancing
- Have all students exit promptly after class with questions directed to instructor via online forums
 - Rationale: improves benefit from prior recommendations
- Designated waiting areas for each room should be identified
 - Rationale: Less congestion when entering room, waiting area presumably placed to improve distancing from pass-by students
 - Work needed: Identification of appropriate waiting areas, Appropriate signage
- Designated study and “hangout” areas need to be identified for students with extended waits between classes
 - Rationale: A large percentage of students do not have classes back-to-back and need spaces in which to await their next course
 - Work needed: Identification of appropriate waiting spaces
- Building specific recommendations should be made after further study of the anticipated traffic of buildings.
 - Rationale: Various buildings have their own features that merit further examination
- Common areas in buildings should be marked with guidelines and reference lines.
 - Rationale: Physically marked guidelines will provide students and faculty the reminders needed to follow recommended movement standards
- The task force recommends that a team be assembled to identify available classrooms, gyms, and other indoor spaces for supporting transient occupation
- The task force also recommends that outdoor spaces (in green spaces) be made available with secured tents. In addition, it is suggested that students be allowed to bring lawn chairs, if so desired, for sitting in available shaded areas.
- The task force recommends that units determine their own specialized accommodations according to their own needs and situations

Recommendations from the Student Success and the Policies and Procedures task forces will be forthcoming. Additional information on student communication, syllabus statement recommendations, and other implementation guidelines will be also be included.