



# Truett McConnell

## U N I V E R S I T Y

### **Truett McConnell University Fall Semester 2020 COVID-19 Q and A**

**Updated August 25, 2020 (Updates are highlighted in yellow)**

The onset of the COVID-19 in early 2020 has altered college life for everyone. As we finalize preparations for the beginning of the fall semester that starts on August 12<sup>th</sup>, the TMU faculty and staff are extremely excited to welcome students back to our campus. In the midst of that excitement, we realize that the fall semester will require adjustments for all of us. Our commitment is to place our highest priority on the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff. Many questions have been asked by students, parents, faculty and staff as to what life will look like at TMU in the fall of 2020. TMU's leadership, across all areas of the institution, has worked tirelessly to envision a safe and successful semester on our campus and to create policies and procedures in order to achieve such success.

The following decisions have been made with guidance from the CDC, the State of Georgia and Governor Kemp's Office. This information is fluid and is subject to change at the discretion of TMU's leadership. This summary, in the form of a set of common questions and answers, will outline our policies and procedures as they stand today.

### **Fall Semester Classes, Schedules and Activities:**

#### **Are we coming back in the Fall?**

Yes. We will have on campus, in-person classes with appropriate modifications that aim to enhance the safety of our students and faculty. Classes will begin as previously scheduled on Wednesday, August 12<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Will the Fall semester be in person or online?**

All residential classes will be on campus, in-person this fall. Students who may need to attend virtually for any part of the semester – due to illness, quarantine, or other approved conditions – will be able to “attend” their residential classes through distance learning, primarily via the TMU BrightSpace D2L Online Portal. All faculty and courses are already prepared if such cases do arise.

#### **Will classes be at the same times, in the same locations as previously scheduled?**

Yes. However, In order to accommodate the needed cleaning/sanitizing and movement between classes, we have directed our faculty to make sure to begin and end classes on time. We also ask that students leave classes on time in order to allow faculty and staff to sanitize each classroom space between sessions.

**Most other colleges and universities are planning to wrap up their Fall semester by Thanksgiving. Is TMU planning to do the same?**

Yes. TMU will observe a new fall schedule for residential classes, which will allow students to complete their residential classes, including final exams, by Tuesday, Nov. 24th. When students and faculty leave campus for the Thanksgiving weekend, they will not need to return until January, for the start of the spring semester. Many universities have switched to this schedule to lessen exposure following the holiday break. To accomplish this change in the fall semester calendar without loss of class days, the fall break, originally scheduled for mid-October, has been canceled. Please note that our regular, Online undergraduate and graduate courses will maintain their original fall semester schedules that end on December 8, 2020, for the Online B Session.

**Will there still be events and activities other than class (Chapel, Athletics, Mission Trips, etc.)?**

Yes, absolutely. We are currently discussing each of these areas in order to provide a full slate of activities and experiences for our students, while also maintaining appropriate safety precautions. We will have Chapel on Tuesday mornings in the SWC, maintaining safe occupancy requirements set by Governor Kemp's Office and the State of Georgia. We will not be traveling for mission trips in the fall semester. At this time, we are determining what changes may need to be made in order to conduct recitals and performances, intramural sports and recreation, and other such extracurricular activities at TMU.

Regarding music practice and performances, we are paying close attention to the guidelines being implemented by state and private institutions in our region for the safe conduct of musical practices and musical group performances. Our music faculty is developing a set of "best practices" which will keep students taking music lessons and participating in musical ensembles safe as they rehearse. It will probably be necessary to reduce or curtail travel for these groups for the fall semester.

Guidelines for athletics have been developed by the NAIA and our AAC conference. Our fall sports teams will compete, mainly in AAC conference games, including conference tournaments and championships, with the Fall NAIA National Championships to take place during the Spring 2021 semester (dates TBD). The conference has established a September 15 start date for outside competition. These policies will likely vary considerably depending on the particular sport involved and can be found on the [www.tmbears.com](http://www.tmbears.com) website.

**How safe is Cleveland, Georgia?**

Our small town is safe compared to many other areas of the state and of the country. There have been 5 fatalities in White County since the crisis began in March, and only 314 positive cases from inception. Comparably, the state of Georgia has seen 201,713 confirmed cases and 3,984 deaths across the state. There is currently no requirement in the state or county that citizens wear masks, although certain grocery stores and retailers require masks.

**COVID-19 Precautions:**

**What are the new health protocols for the Fall semester? What safety procedures does TMU plan to implement for Fall 2020?**

TMU's leadership has developed a set of guidelines with respect to social distancing, masks, informational signage, random temperature checks, quarantine due COVID-19 symptoms, attending residential classes while in quarantine and sanitization standards. The basic guidelines are as follows:

**Social Distancing:** We are encouraging students, faculty and staff to social distance, whenever possible. We do not have the square-footage capacity to social distance in most classrooms or dorms. However, we have setup our main Dining Hall seating for social distancing in pods, by separating tables in fixed locations. In our large venues, we will follow the occupancy standards according to the State of Georgia guidelines. We request that everyone act responsibly.

**Masks:** Masks are not required in **many** areas of campus. However, students, faculty, and staff are strongly encouraged to wear masks in any setting in which they are with other people and social distancing is not possible. Masks are required for those attending events in our larger, private venues, including the SWC (Chapel services, **sporting events, etc.**), Odell Hall (Sanctuary), Sewell-Plunket Hall (**recitals, other performances, etc.**), and the Volleyball & Wrestling Arena (**sporting and other events, etc.**). Masks are required for students in all classrooms, **where social distancing is not possible.** Those students who have asthma, or other respiratory-type conditions, are excused from this mask requirement policy. In addition, due to some of our high-risk faculty members, certain seating areas in the classrooms **may require** students to wear masks. That information will be included in each course syllabus. Students will need to comply with the requirement according to a particular faculty member's syllabus. We recommend that students carry a mask on their person at all times, because it may be needed from time to time. Disposable masks will be available for purchase in The Outpost Campus Store for \$1.00. All are advised to bring his or her own mask to campus, to suit their preferences in style, type, and comfort.

**Signage:** The university has signage across campus to help encourage safe practices and remind students, employees and visitors of relevant guidance.

**Temperature checks:** Random temperature checks may take place throughout the dorms and other locations on campus.

**Quarantine/COVID-19 Testing:** If any member of the campus community (students, faculty or staff) experiences symptoms that warrant a COVID-19 test, or the member chooses to be tested for COVID-19, then he or she will be required to quarantine from home. On-campus students will be provided a temporary (less than 24-hours) safe place to quarantine on campus, if needed, until family can take the student home, if student chooses not to drive themselves. As would be the case in most settings, there will be nuances as to how this process will look for different populations on campus. Employees, per CDC guidelines, will quarantine for 10-days from a positive test or from the onset of symptoms. In order for an employee to return to campus life, he or she will need to be symptom-free for at least 24 hours at the end of the 10-day quarantine. The employee will need to communicate that information with his or her immediate supervisor and the TMU Human Resources Office in order to be cleared to return to work.

For students to return to campus, in addition to the 10-day quarantine period with no symptoms for at least the final 24 hours of that period, they must receive documented medical clearance from a medical professional. We advise medical clearance from a student's personal physician. However, we do have TMU contracted medical professionals that may provide clearance for all students (A student seeking

medical clearance through TMU may email [SportsMedicine@truett.edu](mailto:SportsMedicine@truett.edu) to schedule an appointment). Please note, if a student travels back to campus to be cleared by a TMU contracted medical professional, and they are still exhibiting symptoms at the end of the quarantine period, they will not be allowed to return to campus life and will be sent back home until they can achieve medical clearance. At this time, a mandatory negative COVID-19 test will **not** be required.

**Attending Residential Classes While Quarantining from Home:** If a student is required to quarantine from home, for any period during the fall 2020 semester, he or she will “attend” his or her residential courses through distance learning, primarily via the TMU BrightSpace D2L Online Portal. All residential classes have been added to the online portal and all faculty members are prepared to instruct students in this manner if such a need arises.

**Cleaning/Sanitizing:** TMU’s custodial department cleans and sanitizes buildings and gathering locations thoroughly each day. In addition, every classroom and gathering space will be equipped with disinfecting spray and wipes, where employees will be disinfecting workspaces before each use. Sanitization of all classrooms will occur between all class meeting times. **TMU’s custodial staff performs focused sanitization using an electrostatic sprayer, with hospital-grade disinfectant, in dorm rooms where students live, who left campus for COVID-19 related symptoms and/or testing. The cleaning of a specific student’s personal effects will be the responsibility of that student.**

## **Housing:**

### **Will the move-in process and move-in dates be different for Fall 2020?**

Yes. We are spacing out check-in to our residence halls in order to enhance the safety of residents and families. Students were sent an email allowing them to sign-up for a designated move-in time once they were cleared by Financial Aid and the Business Office. New students will move in on August 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Returning students will move in on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>.

### **Will on-campus dorm/apartment capacity be lowered in the Fall?**

Capacity will not be lowered for the fall. According to current guidelines, we can safely accommodate two students to a room in traditional residence halls and six or seven to an apartment. We will maximize spaces between beds.

### **Am I allowed to go home on the weekends?**

Yes. However, students will be asked to stay at home if they develop COVID-19 symptoms while visiting family during weekends. The quarantine and returning to campus life protocols mentioned earlier will apply.

### **What if I get sick? What will I have to do?**

Students in residence halls experiencing COVID-19 symptoms (such as loss/change of taste or smell, fever of 100.4 or above, or other Covid-related symptoms) should report to their RA immediately, day or night, and send an email to [Covid19Questions@truett.edu](mailto:Covid19Questions@truett.edu). Residential students with COVID-19 symptoms will be isolated in a temporary location until a family member can come to campus to get them, unless they choose to drive home themselves immediately. Focused sanitization will occur in areas where residents resided who developed COVID-19 symptoms. We require that all students,

including commuters, self-report immediately upon exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms by emailing [Covid19Questions@truett.edu](mailto:Covid19Questions@truett.edu) . We will contact **all students** who quarantine, or are tested for COVID-19, regarding gaining approval from TMU Administration to return to campus.

## **Food services:**

### **Does MMI have its own plan for serving students safely?**

MMI, our food service provider, operates nationally and has immense experience safely serving guests on college campuses throughout the U.S. MMI has developed corporate procedures for maintaining the safest possible means of feeding campus residents and is already implementing these strategies. They will follow CDC and the State of Georgia guidelines along with other best-practices in this service.

### **What precautions have been taken regarding student safety in dining venues?**

Social distancing controls are in place for lines, seating, and for food service employees. Disposable gloves provided must be used at salad bar for service. All other food stations are served by employees. All condiments and eating utensils are served by employees. All patrons are to follow in and out flows of service lines. All tables must remain in place and cannot be moved, in order to provide proper social distancing. All TMU dining staff will wear masks during service hours. Hand sanitizer is provided throughout all eating areas. Beverages are still self-service, but we require that patrons use a new cup each time. There will be no complimentary water service or filling of water bottles at the Georgia Public House. Beverage service at GPH will have a no refill policy on beverages at this time. All dining surfaces will be sanitized between guests.

## **Personal Responsibility:**

### **How will TMU educate its students on the protocols and the importance of compliance?**

TMU faculty and staff are prepared to operate under the new guidelines, to inform students of the precautions in place, and to encourage them to remember that they are part of a campus community with a diverse population, regardless of their own personal perception of vulnerability. Reminders of such will also be included in course syllabi and posted on signage across campus. Students, faculty and staff are to behave responsibly in order to protect their health and that of the entire TMU campus community.