Dear faculty colleagues,

I hope that you and those close to you are staying healthy and well during this challenging time. Your work to adapt your teaching to remote modalities this semester has been extraordinary. It’s also been very hard—which I acknowledge with deepest appreciation.

Understandably, many are now asking about the university’s plans for fall 2020, and I’m reaching out in order to give you an update and ask for your help.

We are actively planning for several possible scenarios. While many questions remain open—first among them, the future COVID-19 directives from the county and state that must guide us—it may become likely that the majority of fall 2020 coursework will be offered through remote modalities, with some very limited learning experiences offered in face to face (F2F) forms, either on campus or off, during some part of the semester.

We need faculty to be part of the planning process, since you are essential to the success of any future plan. To that end, this week we will be sending surveys to faculty and chairs in order to assess campus needs around both online and possible F2F teaching and learning for the fall. I hope you will respond promptly and fully: those survey responses will form the core of our campus plan.

Here are the issues we need to address at this stage:

1. To support faculty in designing high-quality learning experiences through remote modalities, CEETL is building an extensive program of summer faculty development opportunities, with financial supports available to participants: we need to assess the range of faculty needs in order to scale those appropriately.

2. While we also hope to support a limited number of face to face (F2F) learning experiences, both on campus and off, these will be restricted, given the need for safe physical distancing, to those that: 1. Are extremely difficult to offer through, or substitute with, remotely-delivered options; 2. Are required and necessary to student degree progress; 3. Would be prohibitively challenging to delay until the spring.

3. We need to think creatively about scheduling these F2F experiences. In the event of a possible COVID-19 resurgence in the fall, any F2F learning experiences may need to be quickly halted. To increase flexibility, we should consider whether they can be offered in shorter, concentrated blocks, rather than spread across the semester. Nearly half of our students come from outside the immediate San Francisco Bay Area, and we will need to work with housing to determine optimal solutions for them; others are likely to use public transportation to gain access to the campus, and this may limit their safe participation in possible F2F activities as well.

4. Maintaining the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff must be our highest priority. Students who are immunocompromised, caregivers of immunocompromised people, or especially vulnerable to COVID-19 infection will not be required to participate in F2F learning experiences—nor will faculty who fall into the same categories be required to lead them. We should ensure that students who cannot participate in F2F learning experiences are offered credit-bearing alternatives or exceptions that allow them to maintain degree progress.
5. The disruptions of COVID-19 have affected not only teaching but also the research, scholarship, and creative activities of both faculty and students: we need to determine what facilities and materials should ideally remain accessible in order to allow these vital activities to continue as much as possible.

As you can see, the challenges we face are significant, and they require creative and flexible solutions. Again, please look out for the survey that you will receive this week, which will be critical to the planning process. In addition, I will be holding an open (online) forum this Friday, May 8, 12-1:30p.m., sponsored and coordinated by the Academic Senate; I invite you to attend that forum.

With your help, we will be able to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis in ways that uphold and advance our most important values as an institution. We know that the time ahead will not be easy. Even after the pandemic subsides, significant financial challenges that result from it are likely to affect our campus as well as the entire CSU system, state, and nation more broadly. At the same time, these very challenges will make our mission to deliver high-quality education in the service of equity and social justice more important than ever. I know and very much appreciate your dedication to that shared mission, which makes me confident that we will be able to meet these challenges together and emerge better than before.

Best wishes,
Jennifer

Jennifer Summit
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
San Francisco State University