



## OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS PLAN FOR FALL 2020

This plan for the academic operations of New Mexico Tech (NMT) in the fall semester assumes that Phase Three of the New Mexico Higher Education Department Reopening Plan has been implemented. Our plan was informed by a May 5 - 9 survey of NMT students on their preferences for Fall 2020 academics. Survey results include a strong preference for on-campus, face-to-face instruction (61%), but substantial minorities who either indicated that they would like to take all courses online (15%), or a mixture of face-to-face and online courses (24%).

New Mexico Tech is continually assessing potential risks to students, faculty, and staff and has developed contingency plans for different eventualities. This plan will likely be modified as conditions change, and in response to modifications of the Governor's public health directives. Our current academic plan for the fall semester is as follows:

### **1. Fall course offerings will consist of a mix of face-to-face and online classes.**

Under the anticipated conditions of next Fall, we are planning to return to on-campus, in-person instruction for classes of under 30 students in order to maintain proper social distancing, online delivery for classes of above 30 students on campus, and a "hybrid" delivery option for those students who require a distance education option for all class delivery.

The number of online classes will be greatly expanded over those offered in a typical semester, but some classes will only be offered face-to-face. Expanded online offerings will help with social distancing and will allow students to take all their classes online if they wish. Students participating on campus will be allowed to take as many classes as they wish online as well.

A number of factors will go into the decision of whether a course will be delivered online or face-to-face, including:

- Class size. Classes with over 30 students will be online to help with social distancing and provide more options for students wishing to participate online only.
- Whether hands-on, face-to-face activities, and/or use of on-campus facilities are an essential part of the class. For example, courses utilizing microscopes or other laboratory equipment, or 3D printers, should ideally be better taught on campus, face-to-face, with the understanding that safety protocols will be in place and strictly enforced.

- Individual faculty preferences, including health concerns of faculty with underlying medical conditions or at-risk family members.
- Departments will attempt to offer enough courses at different levels so that their majors participating entirely online will have more options.

The details of which classes will be offered online versus face-to-face is being determined using the following procedure:

- (1) Department chairs and program directors are developing plans in consultation with their faculty, keeping in mind the above considerations. As questions arise they consult with the appropriate Dean (Arts and Sciences or Engineering) or the Associate VP Academic Affairs (AVPAA) in the case of trans-disciplinary programs.
- (2) The appropriate Dean or AVPAA will review the plans and suggest changes if necessary.
- (3) The Fall 2020 Academic Task Force (described below) will review the draft course schedule and suggest changes if necessary.
- (4) The VP for Academic Affairs (VPAA) will review the schedule and request modification if necessary. We hope to have the details of the schedule worked out by mid-to-late June.

## **2. A Fall 2020 Academic Affairs Task Force is assisting in planning, implementation and communication and coordination with other Divisions/Units of New Mexico Tech.**

The AA Task Force is helping to design and implement the Fall 2020 course schedule, is advising on other matters related to online and on-campus academic activities, and is facilitating communication among AA, academic departments, offices, and other divisions. Membership includes:

- Representatives appointed by the Chair from each academic department, as well as a representative for each transdisciplinary academic program
- A representative from the Office of the Registrar
- VPAA
- AVPAA
- AA Chief Finance Administrator
- Deans of A&S and Engineering
- Graduate Dean
- A representative from ACT
- A representative from the Library (which also represents OSL)
- A representative from the Office of Admissions
- A representative from the Office of Financial Aid

As well as representatives from other Divisions or Units within NMT, to ensure communication and coordination of effort:

- A representative from the Office of Student Life

- A representative from the Office of Research
- A representative from the Office of Finance and Administration

### **3. Strategies will be in place in the fall to maximize social distancing for on-campus courses.**

Having greatly expanded online offerings will assist in allowing significant social distancing by depopulating classes and making more classroom space available for those classes meeting on campus. In addition, we will enact policies to allow greater social distancing for on-campus courses, such as:

- Scheduling evening classes, which will allow use of larger classrooms for more classes.
- Managing student traffic patterns in academic buildings to avoid problems of congestion that compromise social distancing. For example, hallways and stairwells in some buildings could be made one-way to keep people from getting too close as they move past one another. Such traffic control is particularly important when classes let out or commence.
- Marking some seats in classrooms as off limits so that students can only use seats that are appropriately distanced from other students.
- Requiring specialized physical distancing plans for courses in which physical distancing is particularly difficult (e.g., laboratories, design clinics).

Note that all academic operations will also follow any campus-wide directives on PPE use, social distancing, etc.

### **4. Continue to work to identify and help off-campus students who do not have sufficient Internet and/or computer resources.**

New Mexico Tech is committed to ensuring that students will have the necessary computational and Internet resources to succeed with online course instruction in the fall. To this end the Academic Center for Technology (ACT) is identifying incoming students who need laptops and have insufficient Internet bandwidth for online education. ACT works individually with such students to address their particular needs and circumstances.

### **5. Academic departments and programs will develop co-curricular activities for fully online students.**

This could include informal Zoom social events, online participation in department seminars, etc.

### **6. Provide tutoring online.**

The Office of Student Learning (OSL) is currently providing high-quality tutoring entirely online. This will continue in the fall semester.

**7. Faculty will provide socially distanced office hours.**

Faculty will conduct office hours in a manner in which social distancing can be maintained. Most faculty will probably continue to use Zoom for this purpose.