When are you going to bring students back for on-campus classes?

SS: No earlier than July 6. The question of when isn't as much a date, but rather the COVID-19 situation in each of our communities.

LRS: To be clear about the July 6 date: We know that we will be doing exclusively online instruction for traditional academic classes through what is traditionally called the first summer session. We also know that not all of our programs have in person second summer sessions. So, we know until July 6, online courses will be our academic plan. In the meantime, we are going to be gathering information; we're going to be watching what's happening in our communities. And then we are going to assemble our Academic Task Force, which is comprised of our deans, many of our clinical leaders, and our student affairs group. We're going to take a look the situation and make the decision about whether it's safe for students to come back to campus after July 6th. We will provide information to you by May 22. We want to assure you that there will still be safety precautions needed if we do bring students back to campus.

Now, let's talk about what else can potentially happen in July. On the other side of July 6, we may make the decision that it's safe for us to bring students back to campus in a limited fashion. So, for example, if there is a gross anatomy course scheduled, or simulation, and we're able to conduct that course in such a way that students are safe, bringing them back in limited numbers with appropriate social distance and other precautionary measures, we may bring students back to campus for some of those type courses. So, there will be some flexibility, but we're going to communicate that to you in plenty of time to be able to make some academic planning. We're all hopeful that by fall we will be back to Phase 1, normal operations, but as Steve has said, it all depends on what happens with COVID-19. We've all been flexible, and we'll have to continue to be flexible as we move through this process.

I understand that the HSC will be enforcing checking individual's temperatures as they enter campus. Is it known that most COVID-19 positive individuals are asymptomatic? Thus, I'm assuming the campus will monitor possible asymptomatic carriers, how will we do that?

SS: In terms of monitoring asymptomatic carriers, the whole point is that they're asymptomatic so we don't know. So, I think the safest assumption is to assume that every one of us is a carrier, and everybody we see is a carrier. That's why maintain preventative measures is so important — social distancing and washing your hands if you touch something that someone else has whether it's an elevator button or the handrail on stairs or desk or tabletop.

LRS: And we'll also be asking questions for self-attestation: Have you been around someone who's had COVID-19? Have you traveled to an area that has a large number of COVID-19 patients? So those are all things that we're going to put into place to try to mitigate or monitor this as closely as we can.
Will vulnerable individuals have to break HIPAA and disclose their personal health care information to their work supervisor or academic programs in order to be considered for special accommodation for their safety, or will this be handled through the disability services office?

We encourage all students with a health concern or those who may be considered as vulnerable individuals to reach out to Tamara Mancini, and Tamara can help walk you through the process of how we can ensure your health and safety.

Is the West Texas region testing at a dramatically higher rate than the state as a whole, which the public might not be aware of. And will there be a release of a contingency plan for a breakout of infections among students and didactic instruction?

LRS: So first let’s talk about the testing. We’ve touched on this a little bit. This is an area that our task force is still exploring. We anticipate that we are on track to conduct testing as students are moving into the clinical phase of their education. We are not releasing anything yet because we want to make sure that information we do release to you answers your questions, and we feel like it’s a little too premature for that. And as far as a contingency plan, actually we’ve already had this in place. If you go to our COVID website, we actually have been very closely monitoring both employees as well as students who have been tested positive. We also closely monitor whether it’s community acquired or if it was acquired while they were on clinical rotation, or in a facility. So that is something that we will continue to do to keep students informed. We also have a protocol so if we do have an outbreak, we can initiate that.

I will be graduating from a master’s program this month but will be starting medical school in the fall. Am I eligible for the Cares Act funding?

LRS: A student may be eligible for the Cares Act funding because she or he was enrolled in an eligible HSC academic program, excluding fully online, prior to March 13 and is eligible to complete a FAFSA. So again, let me tell you the intent of that funding was to help students who are in traditional or hybrid programs, make the transition to online learning. That may have meant that they were required to move off campus or to acquire technology that they didn’t usually have. So this funding is helping support those students.

When might we open up campus for students who need to stay?

SS: Well, we’ve got a team looking at that, and safety is obviously the main concern.

When might TTU main campus open up, specifically the Rec Center? Paraphrasing my wife, “This summer is going to be long and rough if the outdoor pool space closed.”

LRS: We reached out to TTU to find out exactly what their thoughts are on this topic, and this is the statement they sent back to us: “The Department of Recreational Sports is focused on the safety and wellbeing of our members, the Red Raider campus community and the student and professional staff of our department. It is in this spirit that the recreation sports will continue to work in conjunction with the leadership of Texas Tech University to ensure we resume programs and services when deemed safe for all whom we serve. Like many, we hope to open the doors at the Student Rec Center in the near future; however, we must place the safety of those we serve at the forefront of our decision.”

Recreational Sports will provide updated information via their website, and we’ll make sure that the website gets posted. We certainly understand. I have deep respect for our faculty that are teaching and taking care of students, but I also understand that we have students who are at home teaching their own children and trying to maintain their own academics and find time to study, and you have my deepest respect. I know how challenging that must be.

Will we go back on campus in July?

LRS: As I mentioned before, we are not ready to make that decision yet. We are going to make that decision and will announcement that on May 22. However, we may have students who will come back onto campus for very limited experiences, such as anatomy, simulation or some other experience.

Do you have time set for the celebration on May 20?

Yes, we do. It is at 2 p.m. And we have a team putting together a graduation tribute, and a calendar invite will go out for that very soon.