

UT Southwestern Medical Center

Delaying Phase 3

June 12, 2020

To the UT Southwestern Community:

I am writing to follow up on the message I sent to the UT Southwestern campus community last Thursday, June 4, and the comments I made this week during Wednesday morning's briefing session about our plans to move from Phase 2 to Phase 3 as the next step in an orderly restoration of campus operations.

As I indicated then, our overriding objective has been – and will continue to be – the safety of our campus community and our patients. At my request, the Emergency Operations Center/Return to Operations Committee (E/ROC) developed specific criteria (which I will discuss further below) to guide our decision-making about when we could safely make the transition from Phase 2 to Phase 3.

Those criteria can still be met, and I believe that our campus remains a safe environment for our employees and patients. However, I recognize that we are all concerned about the local and regional upward trends in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations over the past few days, and I am now announcing that we will pause on most of our plans for a broader opening beginning on Monday, June 15 for two weeks. This means that **all those employees currently still working remotely can, if they choose, continue to do so.**

At the same time, **those who would like to return to work on campus next week are welcome to come back, if approved by their supervisor and if they can return to a safe work environment in regard to social distancing.**

Over the next few days, all supervisors should contact any employees in their units who are still working remotely to determine or confirm updated plans for their return to campus next week, or assuming circumstances warrant, after the next two weeks.

As further background, I would like to note that our criteria for moving to Phase 3 are: the Clements University Hospital census of COVID-19 patients; our PPE supply; Occupational Health metrics related to contact tracing and the number of UTSW employees who have experienced workplace acquired cases of COVID-19; and the combined results and projections for Dallas, Collin, Denton, and Tarrant counties.

Clements University Hospital is well prepared to care for an increase in COVID-19 patients. Although the patient census has increased back to levels last seen in mid-April, they are still well below the hospital's capacity to care for COVID-19 patients while still being open to patients who need care for other medical

conditions. COVID-19 patients continue to be cared for by a dedicated team of clinicians in a special unit as a “hospital within the hospital.”

Out of our 18,500 total employees, approximately 14,000 are currently working on campus, and they are all subject to requirements for social distancing, wearing masks or other face coverings, and regular handwashing or sanitizing. Guidelines for social distancing and hand sanitizer materials are in place throughout the campus, and tables and chairs in eating areas and other common spaces have been re-arranged or marked to allow for social distancing.

We will continue to track all of our Phase 3 metrics, and we will plan to reassess our return to campus plans over the next two weeks.

Please contact your supervisors or campus leaders with any questions you might have at this point – and please know that we appreciate everyone’s commitment and forbearance as we navigate these uncharted waters. We are all living and working in a dynamic environment, and we will continue to adjust to it as changing circumstances warrant.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding – and my best wishes to all for staying safe, healthy, and productive.

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.
President, UT Southwestern Medical Center