

Faculty Senate Resolution on Safety and Shared Governance
During the COVID-19 Pandemic

WHEREAS: Texas A&M International University has an obligation to protect the health and safety of its students, faculty, and staff, as well as a civic duty to show consideration for the needs of the broader community, especially the resources of the severely stressed local hospital system;

WHEREAS: The Texas A&M International University community is not separable from the City of Laredo and Webb County and should support the efforts of local government to limit the spread of COVID-19;

WHEREAS: The University is a leader in the Laredo community and should act in solidarity with local leaders and take steps to ensure that our day-to-day functioning does not worsen the current public health crisis, which, at the time of our drafting this resolution (August 19, 2020), is at the highest level of severity, with 9957 total COVID-19 cases and 36.5% positivity rate for lab tests (according to the City of Laredo website), more than three times the positivity rate of the State of Texas (10.81%);

WHEREAS: Laredo Independent School District, United Independent School District, parochial schools, and charter schools in Laredo have begun or have announced that they will begin the school year with fully online classes, even as school-age children seem to be less susceptible to COVID-19 than are adults, as a recognition that symptomless carriers can transmit the disease and to protect the health of teachers and staff;

WHEREAS: Many members of the Texas A&M International University community are parents or caregivers for children who will not be in school or at daycare, making trips to campus especially difficult and risky;

WHEREAS: Many members of the Texas A&M International University community live in multigenerational households, which presents a heightened risk of transmission to vulnerable, often older, household members;

WHEREAS: The City of Laredo and Webb County have high rates of poverty, diabetes, and obesity among their residents—risk factors for severe impacts of COVID-19 that make our University population more vulnerable to the virus;

WHEREAS: Texas A&M International University serves a majority Hispanic population and the Hispanic population is disproportionately impacted by COVID-19;

WHEREAS: Texas A&M International University faculty and students responded positively to the online transition in the second part of the Spring 2020 semester and to the fully online delivery of courses in the Summer 2020 terms, as evidenced by the increase in overall enrollment for Summer 2020 over Summer 2019 (4.51% increase in headcount and 8.73% increase in semester credit hours, as per the University Registrar's final report);

WHEREAS: The faculty have received additional training during Spring and Summer 2020 in specially designed workshops to enhance the quality in the virtual delivery of their courses;

WHEREAS: The faculty are scholarly experts in their fields and disciplines, who design curricula, and who are granted academic freedom to deliver courses in the ways that are best matched for their courses and expertise;

THEREFORE, WE RESOLVE: That Texas A&M International University faculty be allowed to deliver Fall 2020 courses in the modality they deem most appropriate on the basis of safety, pedagogical concerns, and any other factors they consider relevant for their safety and the safety of their students and support staff.

(Adapted from the Faculty Senate Resolutions of Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi and Texas A&M University – San Antonio)