

**Update: Jan. 8, 2021**

Welcome back and Happy New Year! I hope you had a great semester break with time to relax and recharge for the spring semester.

As we begin a new semester, it is important for us to remain vigilant with health and safety protocols. There is a growing sense of optimism amidst the pandemic as more COVID-19 vaccines are becoming available throughout the state and nation. Louisiana expects nearly 60,000 doses next week, and the list of pharmacies and other vaccination locations continues to expand.

Health and safety protocols that we enacted in the fall semester will continue this spring. Your actions and attitudes have enhanced the safety of our campus and provided a framework for continued success in academics and student activities. We will maintain social distancing, wear masks, use hand sanitizers and take other precautions to do our part in mitigating the spread of the virus.

We will continue with face-to-face, hybrid and on-line academic offerings. Technology in classrooms and our innovation and flexibility in class delivery that was evident in the fall provides assurances that we can transition smoothly and quickly to alternate methods of teaching and learning if necessary.

As an added precaution to the University community, Health Services will offer free rapid COVID testing for students, faculty and staff as needed throughout the spring semester. All students and faculty and staff are encouraged to undergo testing. Please book an appointment at <https://www.nsula.edu/health> or contact Health Services at 318-357-5351. Also, please remember that updates, reporting protocols, frequently asked questions and other valuable information on Living and Learning during COVID-19 can be found on at <https://www.nsula.edu/return-to-campus/>.

Classes begin next week, and many students continue to reach out for assistance as they prepare for the Spring semester. Thank you for your empathy and responsiveness in answering their questions and providing outstanding student services. Nearly all of our students were impacted by the pandemic, hurricanes and other challenges during the fall semester, and your efforts to support them had a tremendous positive effect on their lives and greatly enhanced their opportunity for success. Your commitment to supporting our students as they move through the registration, move-in, appeal and payment processes is deeply appreciated.

As we announced yesterday, due to the potential for wintery conditions forecasted for late Sunday, Jan. 10 and early Monday, Jan. 11, all classes are cancelled for Monday, Jan. 11. Although conditions may change, a mix of rain and snow is predicted for Sunday night and with falling temperatures roads and bridges could become hazardous. It is with an abundance of caution that the decision was made to cancel the first day of Spring semester classes, as the health and safety of the university family remains a foremost priority.

Residence halls, which will reopen to students this weekend, will remain open. Iberville Dining Hall will be open from 10 a.m.- p.m. for brunch and 4:30-7 p.m. for dinner through Monday.

Non-essential faculty and staff will take Civil Leave (Local Conditions) on Monday, Jan. 11 for BW #2.

Predicting the weather is always uncertain, but if several inches of heavy snow occur, power outages will be possible and traveling difficult.

You can check for updates at [www.nsula.edu](http://www.nsula.edu) and on our social media channels as the situation develops.

Finally, we mourn the loss of one of our colleagues. On Dec. 30, NSU professor Phil Habig lost his battle with bone marrow cancer. Phil was passionate about his work and a career that focused on connecting people. He was an instructor of Marketing and Salesmanship at NSU for the past 15 years. Our deepest condolences go out to his family and friends.

As always, please let me know if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions.

Fork 'em Demons,

Chris